



School of Journalism and Communication

An Exploration of Indigenous Communication Practice of *Shekacho* Community, *Ooto* as a Means to Promote Peace, Cultural Values and Cultural Identities

By

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**Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
June, 2020**

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Cultural identities**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgment	I
Acronym	II
Abstract	III
Chapter One	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study	1
1.2. Problem Statement.....	5
1.3. Objectives of the Study.....	9
1.3.1. General Objective.....	9
1.3.2. Specific Objective	9
1.4. Research Question	10
1.5. Significance of the Study.....	10
1.6. Scope of the Study	10
1.7. Limitation of the Study.....	11
1.8. Organization of the Thesis	11
Chapter Two.....	13
Literature Review.....	13
2. Introduction.....	13
2.1. Culture and Communication.....	13
2.2. Understanding Culture and Communication	14
2.2.1. Conceptualizing Communication	14
2.2.2. Conceptualizing Culture.....	16
2.3. The Relationship between Culture and Communication	19
2.3.1. The Social Science Perspectives	19
2.3.2. The Interpretive Perspectives	20
2.3.3. The Critical Perspectives.....	21
2.3.4. The Dialectical Perspectives	22
2.4. Characteristics of Culture and its Relation to Communication	22
2.4.1. Characteristics of Culture.....	23

2.5. Understanding Indigenous Communication	25
2.5.1. Forms of Indigenous Communication	25
2.5.2. Roles of Indigenous Communication	26
2.6. Things Considered to Set Theoretical Framework of the Study.....	28
2.6.1. Paradigms in Cultural Studies	28
2.7. Theoretical Framework for the Study	29
2.7.1. Theoretical Framework of the Study: Ethnography of Communication.....	29
2.8. Review of Local Related Studies	31
Chapter Three.....	36
Methodology of the Study	36
3. Introduction.....	36
3.1. Research Design.....	36
3.1.1. Reason for Choosing Qualitative Approach to this Study.....	37
3.1.2. Why Ethnography?	38
3.2. Study Area.....	38
3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques	41
3.3.1. Purposive Sampling.....	41
3.4. Data Gathering Tools	42
3.4.1. In-depth Interview	43
3.4.2. Focus Group Discussion.....	44
3.4.3. Participant Observation	45
3.5. Data Analysis Procedures and Techniques	46
3.6. Ethical Consideration.....	47
3.7. Trustworthiness of the Study	48
Chapter Four	49
Data Presentation, Discussion and Analysis.....	49
4. Introduction.....	49
4.1. Nature/Characteristics of <i>Ooto</i>	49
4.1.1. <i>Ooto</i> as an Indigenous Cultural Communication Practice.....	53
4.2. The Roles of <i>Ooto</i>	54
4.2.1. The Role of <i>Ooto</i> in Communicating Different Issues.....	54
4.2.2. The Role of <i>Ooto</i> in Promoting Cultural Values.....	56

4.2.3. The Role of <i>Ooto</i> in Promoting Cultural Identity.....	59
4.2.4. The Role of <i>Ooto</i> in Promoting Peace and Solving Societal Conflicts	60
4.2.5. The Role of <i>Ooto</i> in Encouraging Intra-cultural Communication.....	63
4.3. The Current Challenges in Practicing <i>Ooto</i>	63
Chapter Five.....	65
Conclusion	65
5. Introduction.....	65
5.1. Conclusion	65
References.....	68
Appendixes	73

List of Figures

Figure 1. Sheka Zone Map. Courtest of MELCA MAHIBER	40
Figure 2. Organic honey for sale.....	84
Figure 3. Banana farm land.....	84
Figure 4.Coffee farm land.....	85
Figure 5. Elders/seniors of Sheka	85
Figure 6. Inset farm land.....	86

List of Tables

Table1. Profile of interview participants

Table2. Group1 profile of FGD participants

Table3. Group2 profile of FGD participants

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Acronym

E.C – Ethiopian calendar

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

UNESCO – United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization

Abstract

The role of indigenous communication still exists in different communities of Ethiopia. The people of Sheka are one of the longest lived people of Ethiopia, who practiced the indigenous communication, i.e. Ooto as a means to promote peace, cultural values and identities. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of indigenous communication of Shekacho community, Ooto as a means to promote peace, cultural values and identities. Interpretive approach through the ethnography of communication theory was used as a theoretical framework for the study and ethnography was applied as a research process, i.e. the qualitative inquiry with ethnographic design was applied. In-depth interview, focused group discussion and ethnographic observations were applied to collect data. Then, thematic analysis was applied as a data analysis method. Under the main six different themes, the study found Ooto very important in promoting peace, cultural values and identities in the Shekacho community. The study finding assured Ooto as it is a means to transfer indigenous knowledge and skill among the community. The study also found that Ooto is helpful in encouraging intra-cultural communication. However, the study finding showed that this indigenous communication practice is facing challenges nowadays. Ooto is missing its target and role as it is used for political purposes with no significance to the mass. The transfer of this asset from generation to generation is weakening. Thus, to avoid such dangers from the community's asset and not to have generation without indigenous knowledge, skill, cultural values and identities, it is better to work cooperatively to teach the new generation about the indigenous cultural communication practices and its role.

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter introduces the background, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance, scope and limitation of the study. The first section introduces communication in general and the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community specifically. Under this section, important points about the *Shekacho* community are included. And then, the main concern of the study *Ooto*, i.e. the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community is discussed. In the next sections, the most important points: motivation to conduct this study (the problem statement), the purposes (general and specific) and the research questions of the study are discussed and the other basic concepts like significance, scope and limitation of the study are also included under different sections of this chapter.

1.1. Background of the Study

As human beings, we crave connection, socialization and communication. People communicate every day using their own ways of transferring knowledge in a way that is proper and suitable to the community. Frey & Cissna (2009) argues that to evoke and keep up harmonized interpersonal relationships; to talk together constructively with local, national, and international settings; to make effective and collective decisions about important, controversial, and contested issues facing communities, countries, and the world, communication is absolutely crucial.

Every society has own ways of transferring knowledge, information and share experience in a way that their culture and norm allow them. Culture, personal values and norms play an important role in communication. When talking about communication, directly or indirectly culture, value and norm are raised. Culture and communication have a great influence on each other. Hall (1959), states that culture is a communication and communication is a culture. However, the relationship between culture and communication is complex. According to Novinger (2001), culture reflects the contemporary model of reality, whereas communication helps create the cultural reality of the society.

In Ethiopia, different communication practices are taking place for different purposes. From the different communication practices, indigenous cultural communication practice is a communication practice used by a certain community to maintain peace and resolve conflict, regulate culture, promote cultural value and cultural identity. Through indigenous communication practice, important aspects of culture are preserved and adapted. As Mund & Lin (1991) argue, indigenous communication is used in transferring news, advice, persuasion, announcement, entertainment and every type of social exchange. Having this, the focus of the study is on the practice and role of *Ooto*, the indigenous communication practice, used by the *Shekacho* community living in *Sheka* zone.

Based on the 2008 census conducted by the Central Statistics Agency, *Sheka Zone* has a total population of 200,000; the majority is the *Shekacho* ethnic group and the remaining populations are composed of the Amhara, Kafficho, Oromo, Bench, Sheko, and Majang ethnic groups. *Sheka* is bordered by Bench Maji to the south, Gambela to the west, Oromia to the north, and Keffa to the east. The administrative center of *Sheka* is *Masha* town. The language of the people is *Shekinono (Shekigna)*. *Shekigna* is an omotic minority language spoken in South-western Ethiopia. *Shekigna* represents the three main language families: Semetic, Cushitic and omotic, respectively (Fufa, 2009).

The *Shekacho* community is rich with indigenous cultural practices. *Ooto* is one of the indigenous cultural communication practices which lasts for a long period of time. It is used to communicate different issues like social, economic and political. It plays an important role to post tribe leaders, amend and set rules that govern the community. It is also used to inform the community with new information. Moreover, it helps the community solve different problems and share experiences. *Ooto* is not only used to communicate issues, it is also used to reprimand a person, who is guilty and compliment a person, who is praiseworthy through an indigenous practice called *Woraafu*. Thus, *Ooto* is used for both positive and negative actions.

Woraafu is an indigenous cultural practice that is performed during *Ooto*. The literary meaning of *Woraafu* is blameless. It is a means by which the members of the community easily identify a person who is guilty and not. The term is used to describe a person who is decency or morally. If

someone from the community members is deprived, stolen, domestic animals killed and farm lands damaged, the victim (the person who is stolen, deprived...) informs the problem and the person who he/she suspects to the clan leader or to the person who is assigned by the community members as a leader. Then, the clan leader or the assigned leader calls for *Ooto*. To do this, a person who is selected to inform the issue of the *Ooto* to the community member honks horn. The way the horn honked help the community members identify what the issue is, but nowadays, around town this practice is getting weaker and weaker.

The community members come together and sit for *Ooto* to solve their societal problems. In doing this, each participant of the *Ooto* including the leaders and elders come in front of the community members one by one. When the community members said *Woraafu* by raising their hands for the one who stand in front of them, it means that the person is not guilty whereas if they kept silent and didn't say *Woraafu*, it means that the person is guilty. Then through the indigenous communication practice, i.e. *Woraafu* in *Ooto*, the guilty person can be identified easily. Sometimes, the law court failed to find the criminal person absence of witnesses. But, through *Woraafu* in *Ooto*, the criminal person can be easily identified and judged by the communities' rule and regulation.

Ooto is a communication practice performed at the field or under a big sycamore at weekend mostly. But if the weather condition is not comfortable to sit outside, it can be performed at selected elder's house or at *kebele* hall. Most of the time, it takes place on Sunday when people come back from religious practices, but if something that needs immediate discussion happen, it can take place any time. There is no fixed time for the practice; it can take place for one, two, or more hours i.e. it depends on the issue and situations. It can take place at different neighborhood.

Ooto has a great value for the community. Through the *Ooto*, the community shares ideas about social, political and economic issues. It is grounded by rule and facilitated by leaders. At least one person from a household must participate. Then, the person who has been there must share what the discussion was about to the family members. And leaders are selected by the community to lead and facilitate the practice.

It is important to look at the indigenous cultural communication practices of our community as it plays a very important role in promoting peace and resolving different societal conflict, in promoting cultural values and cultural identities even if there are various advanced channels of communication in today's age of information technology. Moges (2010) discusses the role of the traditional communication as it is a communication practice that functions more than communication. He discusses this point further as the role of the traditional communication practice is beyond the communication aspects as it regulates culture. Indigenous cultural communication is a means to information flow comparing with modern media practice. N'gombe (2000) defines indigenous communication as it is a reliable and appropriate source of information which helps the community transfer knowledge. Thus, researching and exploring the indigenous cultural communication practices help us understand how the people transfer knowledge and solve different problems via it.

For the researcher, the motive to conduct this study is developed when she witnessed the practice. The researcher witnessed the practice, i.e. *Ooto*, when members of the community sat together and discussed for hours. Then, she asked her grandfather what they were doing there. He replied, "It is *Ooto*, a communication practice on different issues." And he used to say, "I have *Ooto*". Then, in the mind of the researcher, different questions started to be raised about the practice i.e. *Ooto*. Once she was motivated to understand about the practice, she started asking questions to her grandfather and got some information about it. This was when she was in grade six (6). Then, after some years she went there and started schooling. During her stay, she observed the practice again. Different questions about *Ooto* like what, why, how the practice is performed came to the researcher's mind.

Having the different questions in mind about the *Ooto*, the researcher interest is developed to have a closer look at the practice after joining Journalism & Communication School. The effect of modernization and globalization in which cultural values of the societies are blamed by the new generation are highly seen. This possibly resulted from the understanding of such indigenous cultural practices among the new generation is blurred. To better understand the indigenous cultural communication practices of our society, studying culture and communication practices is very important.

1.2. Problem Statement

Communication may take place in different ways; it may be mass communication, intra-personal, interpersonal, intra-cultural or intercultural or co-cultural communication. Anteneh (2012) discusses that theory that deals with culture and communication have been studied in different ways using disciplines from cultural studies, communication science, education, literature and linguistic. These disciplines have added a value for the study of culture and communication in a way how culture and communication are conceptualized. He discussed theories on intercultural competence from the context of intercultural communication were expanded in the late 1970s and 1980s. According to Anteneh (2012) most of the theories take the social science approach than the interpretive/the critical approach; very few theories assume the interpretive or the critical approach.

There are different conducted studies about the indigenous cultural communication practices of a certain community, but nothing is said about *Ooto*, the *Shekachos'* indigenous communication practice. From the study of communication and society in cultural contexts, *Dagu* of the *Afar* community by Moges Endris and Jemal Mohamed, *Wukiyer* of *Cheha Guraghe* by Anwar Mussema, *Sidama* folk media by Nigussie Meshesha, the role of indigenous communication practice as a means to resolve inter-ethnic conflict between *Gedio* and *West Guji* by Aster Dagnachew and the role and utilization of indigenous communication practice of *Gedio* in conflict resolution by Desalegn Bekele are the related studies to this research from the others.

The first study in relation to this study is the M.A thesis by Moges (2010). It is about *Dagu*, the traditional communication practice, of the *Afar* people. The title of the study is '*Dagu as a cultural Regulator among the Afar people: The communication aspect*'. The study explores *Dagu*, as a means to regulate culture. It deals with the role of traditional indigenous communication practice i.e. *Dagu*. In this case, the theme of the study matches with the current study as both deals with the role of the indigenous cultural communication practices. But the current study focuses on the role of *Ooto* to understand and explore how it promotes peace and resolve conflict, how it promotes cultural values and identities of the community, i.e. *the Shekacho* whereas the previous study emphasizes how *Dagu* regulates culture. In addition to this

variation, the study area of the current study is so much different by the culture and as well by the socioeconomic background of the people.

The other study by Jemal (2016) '*Dagu: Its nature Attributes and Reporting Praxis*' is related of this study. It is also about the *Dagu* of *Afar* people. The focus of this study is how information transmission takes place in the *Afar* community in comparison with the modern trends of mass media. But the current study focuses on the role of the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* of the *Shekacho* community without comparing it with mass media. The study is related to the current study as both focus on indigenous communication practice of a certain community. But the focus point of the previous study is comparing the practice with the mass media, which is not the focus point of the current study, i.e. role of the practice. And as well the study area of this research is quite different.

The third related study is the study of Nigussie (2016) '*Socio-political discourse and communication in sidaama folk media.*' The study aimed to analyze the folk media in portraying socio-political realities of the *Sidaama* community. It is discourse and communication analysis; it is discourse analysis of the folk media to understand the societal knowledge and their way of life. Thus, the content, scope of the study matches with the current study. But the previous study focuses on the analysis of *Sidaamas*' political communication trend and explores the power relation in the society using discourse analysis. Whereas the current study attempts to explore the roles of the cultural indigenous communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* as a tool to maintain peace, promote cultural values and cultural identities.

The other study, which highly matches the current study, and which is the most recent one is the M.A thesis by Anwar (2019). It is '*Exploration into Wukiyer Intra-cultural Communication Practice in Promoting Cultural Values and Cultural Identity: The Case of Cheha Guraghe*'. The content scope of this study is related with *Ooto*. Both studies focus on the role of indigenous cultural communication practices. But the way the role of the Practice focused, and the study area of the current research is different. The previous study explores the *Wukiyer* as a means to promote cultural values and identities whereas the current study emphasizes the role of the

indigenous communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* as a means to promote peace and resolve societal conflicts in addition to exploring it as a means to promote cultural identities and values.

The M.A paper '*The Role and Utilization of Indigenous Communication in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Gedeo People South Ethiopia*' by Desalegn (2019) is the other one which matches the current study. It is about the Gedeo peoples' indigenous communication practice as a means to resolve conflict. As the current study, it is aimed to explore the role of indigenous cultural communication practice. But the roles discussed in the current study add some important roles of the practice. The study area is quite different too.

The sixth one '*The Role of Indigenous Communication Mechanism in Resolving Inter-Ethnic Conflicts: Gedeo and West Guji*' by Aster (2019) is another related study to the current study. It explores the role of the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Gedio* and *West Guji* people as a tool to resolve conflict. Like the study '*The Role and Utilization of Indigenous Communication in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Gedeo People South Ethiopia*' by Desalegn Bekele (2019), it mainly focuses on the causes of the conflict and mechanism used to resolve the conflict. The study by Aster focuses on how the indigenous cultural communication practices solve the inter-ethnic conflict of the *Gedeo and West Guji* people. But the current study focuses on how the *Ooto* solves the societal conflicts, not inter-ethnicity in regard to promoting cultural identities and values of the community under study. Also, the study area is different.

There is also a study of co-cultural communication in *Sheka* by Behailu Ayele (2016). It is titled with '*Exploration into Co-Cultural Communication between Manjo and Donjo in Sheka*' (Behailu Ayele 2016). The study explores the lived experience of the *Manjo* to communicate with the *Donjo* i.e. the co-cultural relation and communication *Manjo* has with *Donjo* People. Though the study area of this study is similar to the current study, nothing is said about *Ooto*, the indigenous communication practice in *Sheka*. Therefore, the current study aimed to explore the role of *Ooto*, the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community.

As in *Ooto*, face-to-face communication by using words of mouth has been an alternative channel of communication which serves the community for decades. In regard to the

community's social value, culture and tradition, information and accounts of events have disseminated via face to face communication. Face to face communication lets people feel comfortable and allows immediate feedback on the spot. However, the way and the characteristics of the face to face communication differ across culture. The *Shekacho* community favors this medium for their indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto*. But nowadays such cultural communication practices are weakening and deteriorating over time. The way the people of *Sheka* valued such practices before and today is different. Such indigenous cultural practices with their elements were valued much a few years back, but not today. Thus, the future fates or chances of such practices are under question.

In day to day activity of human life, there is communication. And such kind of indigenous communication is a one type of communication that distinguishes one community from the other in a way it is performed. The *Shekacho* community has their own indigenous communication system used for different purposes. However, nowadays this indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekachos'* has faced challenges. *Ooto* is missing its target and role. The transfer of such indigenous knowledge and skills to the younger generation is weakening.

Communication between and among people has changed over time. The virtual world, social media, mass media, modernization, globalization and advanced technology are changing the communication style from time to time, i.e. the global media effects are highly seen in today's communication practices. As a result of this, the fates of the indigenous cultural communication practices are under question.

Nowadays there are conflicts, intolerance, and deterioration of values and norms of the indigenous community. The societal values seem to weaken. This possibly resulted from the weakness in researching and cultivating societal identity and indigenous knowledge or practices.

Having the above points in mind, the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community seems weakening. The habit of coming together to solve different problems, the strong desire of helping each other and the indigenous practices of the community to promote peace and to carry on their culture is failing. Moreover, studying cultural

communication practices of a certain community is essential to improve self-knowledge and self-perception. Most self-knowledge can emanate from communication. To improve our understanding of relationships and to develop important life skills that resulted from the indigenous cultural communication practices, better to conduct such study, i.e. study focusing on the role and importance of the indigenous cultural communication practice is fundamental to strengthen the practices.

And so, the study focuses on the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community, i.e. *Ooto* as a tool to promote peace, cultural identities and values and as well to encourage intra-cultural communication. The study also tries to cultivate the society's cultural value, their way of life, the way they build up and develop knowledge.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The main purpose of the study is to explore the nature, content and roles of *Ooto*, an indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community, as a means to promote peace, solve societal conflict and promote cultural identities and values and as well to encourage intra-cultural communication.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To describe the nature of *Ooto* as an indigenous cultural communication practice in *Shekacho* community.
- To examine the roles of *Ooto* as an indigenous cultural communication practice.
- To examine the advantages of *Ooto* to promote peace and resolve conflict.
- To explore how *Ooto* functions as a tool to promote cultural value and identity.
- To explore how *Ooto* encourage intra-cultural communication.
- To identify the current barriers in practicing *Ooto*.

1.4. Research Questions

This thesis tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of *Ooto* in *Shekacho* community?
2. What are the roles of *Ooto* as indigenous cultural communication practice?
3. How does *Ooto* plays an important role in promoting peace and resolve conflict?
4. How do *Ooto* functions as a tool to promote cultural value and cultural identity?
5. How do *Ooto* encourage intra-cultural communication?
6. What are the Current barriers or challenges *Ooto* faced with?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study of indigenous cultural communication practices of a certain community is essential to the community, researchers and scholars. At first, the study has contributed to the community, i.e. the *Shekacho* in cultivating and developing the practice to enrich the *Ooto* after understanding the role of it as a communication practice. It also shows how indigenous cultural communication practices are advantageous to solve different societal problems in the local community and the citizen in general, i.e. it can help in fostering peace building practices in the study area in particular, and it can be a good alternative for the concerned bodies who are working on maintaining peace and stability of the country.

Secondly, the media houses can have insight from the study and pay attention to strengthen the practice of resolving conflict and maintaining peace. It also gives insight to the government or policy maker to choose the best communication mechanism to address such community. So far, no prior research has been done about the indigenous communication practice of *Shekacho* community, researchers who love to explore on related studies can be served from the study taking it as a benchmark. And it may initiate scholars in various fields of study to multidisciplinary approaches to understand a society.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study explores the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community living in *Sheka* zone, *Masha woreda*. The study is delimited to *Masha* town and *Masha woreda*. This is because *Masha* is the administrative capital of the zone where the researcher has full

access to the bureaucracy and documented materials, and it is a place where people from the same culture are living together. This helps the researcher see the *Ooto* from the context of intra-cultural communication practice. And the researcher experience and attachment to that society are pushing factor to study the indigenous communication practice of *Shekacho* community in *Masha, Sheka*. The main domain of the study is culture and communication. Peace promotion, conflict resolving, cultural value and cultural identity are the variables and concepts which the study focuses on.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

The method to the study is ethnography and ethnographic research needs and uses in depth interview, focus group discussion and participant observation to understand the cultural indigenous communication practice of the *Shekacho* community. It is time consuming and needs a large amount of data, i.e. a bulky nature of the study became a challenge of the study. And to manage this, the researcher planned to be strategic in selecting appropriate and manageable size of information in a way that does not affect the data.

The other possible challenge to the study is a lack of documented material which is related to the topic. This is also managed by having primary data via interview and observation. It is also managed by having access to ideas and concepts from other related studies. Thirdly, *Shekinono* or *Shekigna*, which is a language spoken by the *Shekacho* community is a challenge to the study as the researcher is not fluent speaker of the language as the natives. To manage this, the researcher planned to have translator when needed.

1.8. Organization of the Thesis

This study arranged into five chapters. Chapter one presents the background of the study, motivation to the study in line with problem statement of the research, objectives of the study (General and Specific), research questions and significance of the study, the scope of the study, limitations of the study and organization of the study. It introduces the main concerns of the study in general. The next chapter, chapter two contains the review of related literature that serves as a baseline to measure the collected data and theoretical frameworks for the study. In this chapter, the foundational concepts, theoretical frameworks and related studies are discussed

to familiarize the concepts in the study. In the third chapter, methodology, which is the nucleus of the study, is discussed. The research design, study area, sample and sampling techniques, data gathering tools, data management mechanism, procedures of data analysis and ethical consideration are explained here. Data presentation, discussion and analysis are presented in chapter four. In the final chapter, i.e. in the chapter five, the implication, conclusion and recommendations are presented. Then finally, the appendixes are attached at the back pages.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2. Introduction

This chapter discusses the foundational concepts, theoretical frameworks and related studies as a review of related literature to draw a road map for further works of the study. The basis of the discussion like analysis points, measurements and standards is included in this chapter to familiarize the concepts included in the study. In General, under this chapter, the important conceptual issues are reviewed to understand them. Also, models, theories and perspectives are reviewed, compared and contrasted here. Then, the chapter discusses the theoretical framework for the study.

2.1. Culture and Communication

Culture and communication often ground conceptual definitions for the researchers of the field; they are the two key components of cultural communication studies. Anteneh (2012) argues, culture and communication are the two nucleus thoughts and are tricky to define. Thus, he suggests that the association of culture and communication needs a thorough understanding. He discussed that “these concepts are extensively defined more than most other popular constructs in social studies in spite of the significant differences among scholars in conceptualizing the terms” (Anteneh, 2012, p. 84).

It is important to have a depth theoretical and practical context to understand the nature, practice and characteristics of a certain indigenous cultural communication practice. Anteneh discusses the approaches to understand culture and communication as “The dynamism in conceptualizing culture and communication and explaining the association between them resulted in a number of theories and models that vary along conceptual and methodological orientations” (Anteneh, 2016, p. 43). Thus, the researcher tries to review various theories of culture and communication to understand both.

2.2. Understanding Culture and Communication

The two concepts are complex; their content and the way they have been understood make them complex. But the two concepts are important in helping human beings understand the environment they live in and as well it helps to understand the society and how they interact. It is better to look at the nature, characteristics and role of the traditional communication practice of the community to understand it well. Despite the fact that, there are a number of definitions for these concepts and it is a broad and complex concept, the researcher reviewed the well-liked definitions of the two concepts by looking their element, content and theoretical backgrounds in the following sections. Let us see communication at first.

2.2.1. Conceptualizing Communication

Communication is a process; it is the process of understanding and sharing meaning to interact and understand the surrounding. Communication can be defined as a symbolic process, in which reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transferred (Martin & Nakayoma, 2007). As it is a complex concept, communication is defined from different dimensions by different scholars. Anteneh (2012) states that there is no universally accepted definition of communication yet; even if it is a complex concept, it can be defined in many ways. He suggests that the integrative approach is important to understand communication and culture. He further discusses the above point as “The dynamism in conceptualizing culture and communication and explaining the association between them resulted in a number of theories and models that vary along conceptual and methodological orientations” (p. 43). Thus, the researcher learned that it is better to conceptualize and understand communication from its element, characteristics and nature.

2.2.1.1. Elements of Communication

According to Phill and Scott (nd), there are eight common elements in every communication process. As communication is meaning, it occurs when one gives meaning to another person’s word or action. So to maintain this, Phil and Scott (nd) list the eight common elements: Sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context and interference. Of those elements sender and receiver are the most common one found in every communication.

Sender is the source of communication. He/she is the one who communicates the message verbally or non-verbally to the receiver or the audience. So, the receiver is the one who receives

the message. Tone of voice, body language and clothing can convey the message. In the case of *Ooto*, i.e. the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community, every member of the community is the sender and receiver at the same time. During *Ooto* the sender became the receiver and vice versa, i.e. both the sender and receiver have the same role to send and as well to receive the message.

The message is an important element that the sender and at the same time the receiver wants to share and shared. As quoted in Phill & Scott, message is a meaning produced by the sender to the audiences (Mc Lean, 2005). The way used to address the message has effect in communicating the message. And this refers to the channel. A channel refers to the means in which the message is addressed. Face to face conversation as in *Ooto* is the most common one in spoken channel. And as well speeches, telephone conversation, voice mails, radio and television are the others the most common spoken channel. In using spoken channels like face to face communication as in *Ooto*, environment plays an important role to attain the main goal of communication.

The environment influences communication, i.e. the setting where the practice takes place matters in communication. As stated in Phill & Scott, Mc Lean (2005) states that environment refers to the setting; the setting includes the time, place and the general setting like atmosphere. As *Ooto* takes place outside mostly, the environment (weather, seat) has an effect on the practice. The other element of communication is the context by which the participants of the practice know when to do what like in practicing *Woraafu* during *Ooto*. The *Shekacho* community who participates in *Ooto* know when to say *woraafu* and when no to say it to indicate the guilty person from the members of the community. According to Mc Lean (2005), the context of communication refers to the setting, scene and expectations of the participants. Expectations of participants are developed from the environment we live in.

At final, response to the source which can take place intentionally or unintentionally is the other element of communication. Feedback plays an important role to attain the goal of the communication. It helps the sender on checking how the message was received and understood and as well it gives opportunity to the audience/receiver ask for clarification on the issue.

The other concept in this study is culture. To also conceptualize and understand it, it is must to review theories and models that vary along the conceptual and methodological orientations (Anteneh, 2012).

2.2.2. Conceptualizing Culture

Like communication, culture is a broad concept and defined in many different ways by different scholars. The way it has been understood by the scholars in discussion and the content makes it complex. To support this, as quoted in Behailu (2016), Samovar & Porter (2003) state that, culture is omnipresent, multidimensional, complex and pervasive. Though it is difficult to define, it is defined in various ways referring its nature, pattern, component and characteristics. From the various definitions of culture, Samovar & Porter (2003) define culture as it is a cumulative knowledge, experience, belief, value and attitude that a certain society shared it. To support with this, Martin & Nakayama (2010), discusses the culture as it represents historically transmitted patterns of meaning embody in a symbol by which people can communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge, skill and attitude about life for the social livings.

As cited in Anteneh's (2012) dissertation, Hall (1992) sees and reviews culture based on three points interrelated strongly: Form of culture, function of culture and locus of culture from the three main theoretical perspectives: traditional, coordinated management of meaning and ethnography of communication. Anteneh illustrates this point as "form stands for what counts as culture and how culture is defined by researchers; function refers to what culture serves, and locus refers to where culture can be operationalized, and culture belongings reside" (Anteneh, 2016, p. 85).

On the subject of form, culture is defined as "community-rooted" based on the notion by the traditional view point while culture is seen as "conversation which is a shared set of social values and norms" by the coordinated management of meaning. On the other hand, culture is conceptualized as "code which is an inter-subjective resource for meaning making" by the ethnography of communication (Ibid).

Regarding the function of culture, the traditional perspectives see the function of culture in the community. The second perspectives, the coordinated management of meaning sees the function of culture and grammar and the third one sees the function of culture on the code (Ibid).

Concerning the third point, locus of culture, Anteneh (2012) goes over to the main points of the traditional perspectives and reviews culture as it is “reside in the expression of identity with group membership”. The viewpoints of the coordinated management of meaning researchers summarize the culture as something which is situated in the “individuals head and mind”. The third perspectives, the ethnography of communication argue that culture exists in communication, symbol and sign help communicators convey a social meaning (Ibid, p. 85).

Culture is a product of action and at the same time it governs further action, i.e. it is ways of thinking and acting. Macionis (2008) sees culture as an approach for people’s thought and action. In general, Macionis sees culture as an approach that forms a people’s way of life. According to him, culture “is both our link to the past and our guide to the future; it also refers to a shared way of life” (Macionis, 2008, p. 58).

A certain culture represents a certain group of society, i.e. it gives a chance of distinguishing one social group/community from another. In support with this, as quoted in Anteneh (2012), Spensor-Otey (2008) discusses the important features of culture as culture is about the mental and the physical representation of the world which the members of a certain community shared for a long period of time.

Culture is a way in which people share knowledge, cognition, perception and identity. It is used to express ourselves and our way of life using our material, tradition, folktales, beliefs and values. Culture is made up of thoughts, conceptions, worldview, opinions and beliefs of a cultural group, i.e. practice, behaviors and beliefs of a society made culture. To agree with this, Martin & Nakayama (2010) argue that culture is a collective experience shared with people living in the same social environment.

To understand the culture and conceptualize it to the study, it is better to look at the characteristics and contents of culture. As well, considering the physical and mental representation of culture is important to understand the concept. There is nonmaterial culture which refers to the ideas of the society and material culture which refers to the physical things. Regarding this, Schalar & Crandal (2004) discuss culture as it is “not a single observable thing, instead something of an abstraction inferred from the observation of many more specific things, beliefs, habits, actions, artifacts- that are more easily and directly observed.” (P. 8). Let discuss the contents of culture to understand it better and conceptualize it to the study.

2.2.2.1. Contents of Culture

Examining the elements of culture is also important to understand culture and see how it influences communication. Value, belief, norm, language and symbols are elements of culture; they play an important role in developing and conveying it. The elements are discussed as the following one by one.

A. Value

Value can be defined as a culturally defined standard or guidelines used by the community for a social living. Values let people make choices about how things should be. It plays an important role in supporting beliefs and specific thoughts. It also shapes a society by suggesting the good and bad; it suggests people how to behave. Arguing with this, Phil & Scott (nd) define value as it is a hidden standard of goodness and righteousness.

B. Belief

The other element, beliefs are conceptions of how things are; it is a particular matter of individuals' agreement or disagreement. It is the way people consider something as true or false.

C. Norm

In culture, rule is very important to guide the communities' action or behavior, and this is the norm. The norm is all about how to behave regarding to the community's decision on what is right, good, important and accepted.

D. Language and Symbols

It is obvious that gestures, signs, objects and signals help people communicate and understand the world. In addition to the expressions of words, symbols convey meaning which is shared and accepted by the community. The characteristics of culture are tied to the language. Language and symbols are very important elements to communicate i.e. they are the way to communicate.

2.3. The Relationship between Culture and Communication

Communication and culture are explained by different scholars of the field from different perspectives; they are defined in many ways. It is good to see the standpoints of culture to define communication and vice versa. According to Martin & Nakayoma (2010), communication and culture are explained from three different perspectives: the social science, interpretative and critical perspective. To support with this, Anteneh (2012) states the three perspectives (the social science (functionalists), the interpretive and the critical) as they are the dominant one in the literature based on the available philosophical positions and different research field. Culture, communication, power, context and identity are conceptualized from these perspectives. He also discusses the perspectives as they are “different in their assumptions about human behavior and their focus and conceptualization of culture and communication” (Anteneh, 2016, p.44). As quoted in Anteneh (2012), Martin & Nakayama (2007) consider the dialectical approach as the fourth perspectives. But Anteneh (2012) discusses the dialectical perspective as it is not different perspective of the three and having this, he discusses the dialectical approach as it is the combination of the three.

Defining culture and communication from the three different perspectives help to look deeper and understand the relationship between the two concepts. Thus, the following paragraphs discuss culture and communication from the three different perspectives and see how the two concepts relate to one another.

2.3.1. The Social Science Perspectives

The social science perspectives have brought several important ideas and at the same time their assumptions and the research methods have been criticized. According to Anteneh (2012), its simplicity in perspective, specificity in person and time, insensitivity in culture, and

disrespecting the creative nature of communication and active characteristic of culture have been seen as a limitation of the perspectives. In addition to this, Anteneh (2012) sees this perspective from the two phenomena: ontology and epistemology. The perspective relies on the realism and believes that there is an external reality which can be described. According to him, identifying and describing cultural variation in communication and predicting human behavior and future communication is the objective of the researchers using this perspective. The role of culture in communication and the role of communication in culture help to see and understand the relationship between culture and communication. Thus, the researchers from this perspective emphasize on making clear this, i.e. they (the researchers in this perspective) try to explore the role of culture in communication and the role of communication in culture). As Anteneh (2012), “communication is determined by the situation or the environment in which it occurs or by individual’s traits” (P. 44).

The social science perspectives believe communication occurs when there are a sender, message, channel, receiver and context, i.e. elements of communication play a key role in the existence of communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). On the other hand, they define culture as it is a set of shared or learned belief. Hofstede (1984) supports this idea in a way that every individual has patterns of thinking, feeling and acting that he/she learns throughout a lifetime. This indicates culture is shared experience with people from the same environment. For the social science perspectives, culture has an influence on communication. They believe that communication differences existed because of culture.

2.3.2. The Interpretive Perspectives

In contrast with the social science perspective, Anteneh (2012) sees this perspective ontologically as it is the perspective believes on “reality is socially constructed and there is no real world external to individuals in the first place” (Anteneh, 2012, p. 45). Thus, idea, notions and conceptions are used to construct reality. According to Martin & Nakayama, (2007) quoted in Anteneh (2012), the perspective assumes culture is created and maintained during communication. Epistemologically, Anteneh (2012) sees this perspective as it is a perspective believes that the perspectives of individuals communicating are very important to understand the

communication. From this point, one can understand that individuals' capacities to view things in their relationship are very important for understanding communication.

The researchers using this perspective have employed qualitative methods to have firsthand information from the participants with the use of interview, participant observation or observation, focus group discussion and field notes. Anteneh (2012) states "Unlike the previous approach that studies culture from an outsider's view (*etic*), interpretive researches understand phenomena subjectively from an insider's view (*emic*)" (p. 46). Than making cross-cultural comparison, researchers here are interested in exploring cultural performance, manners and activities of a specific community (Ibid).

Thus, the interpretive researchers emphasize on how culture influences communication and define communication based on its symbolic nature and process. They argued about the symbolic nature of communication as they do not have inherent meaning rather, they are agreed meaning. They focus on the process of communication. Communication is an ongoing process; messages are not linear and discreet (Martin & Nakayoma, 2010). They summarize the relationship between culture and communication as "Culture influences communication and Communication reinforce culture". In other words, culture has the power to cause an effect on communication directly or indirectly and communication strengthens cultures.

2.3.3. The Critical Perspectives

On the topic of human nature, culture and communication, the critical perspective shares the ontological and epistemological assumption of interpretive perspectives. Like the interpretive perspectives, this perspective also uses qualitative research method with different tools using textual analysis or discourse analysis. Because of the method (textual analysis), it has been criticized as it limits the activities of the study. Unlike the interpretive perspectives, this perspective failed to have first hand information by means of observation, interview or focus group discussion (Anteneh, 2012).

The critical perspectives believe communication reshapes culture. This is to mean that communication gives a new form to the culture or it orients culture. They argued that culture is the way that the communities participate in and share experiences. Martin & Nakayoma (2010)

state, societal forces are important in the communication process as people are actively involved in the communication process. Having this, critical perspectives define culture as it is a heterogeneous and dynamic site of contested meanings.

2.3.4. The Dialectical Perspectives

The other recent perspective, the dialectical perspectives brought the three perspectives together. They argued on the relationship of culture and communication as it is reciprocal, not one-sided. The approach sees culture as it is both static and dynamic and homogeneous and heterogeneous. According to Anteneh (2012) the term ‘dialectical’ used to refer the co-existence of opposites to explain human behavior. There are two blocks of dialectical perspectives: Context (the physical or the social situation) in which communication occurs and power. “The dialectical perspective emphasizes on the deterministic role of context on communication” (Anteneh, 2012, p. 49). He also discusses the dialectical perspective as it is not different perspective of the three. He summarizes the dialectical perspective as it is the combination of the three.

The above perspectives (the social science (functionalists), the interpretive and the critical) help us to see the relationship between culture and communication, however, to better understand the relationship of the two, the researcher discusses the characteristics of culture and its relation to communication as the followings.

2.4. Characteristics of Culture and its Relation to Communication

Culture is considered as a core concept in communication and it is defined as learned patterns of perception, values and behaviors shared by a group of people (Anteneh, 2012). It has believed that culture and communication have a strong relationship in determining the two complex concepts. Hall (1959) says ‘culture is communication and communication is culture’. Adding to this, Anteneh (2012) sees culture and communication as the “two sides of a coin. But Martin & Nakayoma (2010) argues that the relationship between the two is complex. To support this, Kecskes (2015) argues there is no pure intra-cultural and intercultural communication; it is something in between intra-cultural and intercultural communication. In the case of *Ooto*, in the town i.e. *Masha* there are community members who came from different culture, i.e. there is intercultural communication and around the rural *kebeles* there are community members from the same culture, i.e. there is intra-cultural communication. Kecskes (2015) also discusses human

verbal communication as a process of intra-cultural and intercultural communication which is the two extreme ends of communication. Additionally, he states culture as something that is not unchanged. Thus, according to him, culture can be made, changed and manipulated throughout time. “In fact, it is not a culture that can be changed, manipulated and dropped in talk, but its manifestation” (Kecskes, 2015, p. 172).

Culture and Communication are important to create reality; both are used to express the self and interact with one another. To develop one’s own world view, culture and communication play an important role; both are dependent on one another. Martin & Nakayama (2010) argue the relationship between culture and communication as they have mutual or reciprocal relation. Both are inversely related; that is, culture moves communication and vice versa. They summarize the relationship between both as “communication helps to create the cultural reality of a community” (p. 96).

Culture and communication play an important role in identity formation, in solving different societal problems, in sharing experiences, and in letting the community members learn from their mistakes. Culture is an abstraction of beliefs, norms, habits, actions, performance and artifacts and this all shapes what people do, think and how they feel as a human (Macionis, 2008). Hortobagyi (2009) explains the importance of communication as “in communication and daily interactions people define who they are and negotiates their identities with people who are similar to them or different from them” (p. 259). This means, to confer with other people, to make deals with people, to transfer something to people, communication is very important. Thus, culture plays a great role in transferring meanings to develop knowledge and improve attitude in life using symbols or words of expressions, i.e. communication or interaction is a key to do all this.

2.4.1. Characteristics of Culture

Culture is universal and has effects on the daily life of people. Hall (1976) concludes ‘culture is everything and everywhere’. If this is true, culture has an influence on communication. Having this in mind, examining the characteristics of culture is important to understand it and see how it influences communication.

A. Culture is Learned

Culture is not inherent; it is shared and experienced. Bates & Plog (1980) argues that culture is learned; it is not inborn. People born with innate mind and then learn different things. To learn, imitation and interaction is important. Thus, interaction and imitation help people share and learn culture. After all, learning and sharing is the result of communication.

B. Culture is Transferable

Transferable is one of characteristic of culture. Spenser-Otey (2008) quoted in Behailu (2016) argues, culture should be shared with the people over a period of time. From this one can understand that culture is conveyed from one generation to another. For the existence of culture, it is must pass and share to the next generation and this takes place through communication. Thus, communication is important in transferring culture among the community. To support this, Keesing (1965) states that any break in the communication process would lead to a culture's fading. Culture could have weakened if communication process had broken.

C. Culture is Dependent on Language

To communicate, language (the verbal and non-verbal) is important. Language is another important element in culture. Culture is dependent on language; language enables people to communicate, learn and share. Thus, it plays an important role in passing culture from individual to individual, group to group and generation to generation. As quoted in Behailu (2016), Samovar (2010) states that culture can be characterized by its cultural representation and mental representation, i.e. culture of a certain community can be taken as a cultural representation of different themes. Bates and Plog (1980) explained the role of language in culture as it is a means to communicate different issues, share different experiences and express one's own feeling, view, opinion and judgments. Therefore, like in *Ooto*, culture can be developed and transferred to generation by way of language (the verbal or non-verbal).

D. Cultures are Subject to Change and Adaptive

Cultures are subject to change and adaptive; it is fluid. As Samovar & Porter (2003), cultures are dynamic systems. Through communication, one can learn culture from other persons' culture and modify or develop one's own culture. For example, a few subjects under the study came from a

different culture, but gradually, they adapt the *Shekachos'* culture and cultural practices. They practice the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* together with the *Shekachos*. In this sense, culture of communication possibly modified or changed because of globalization, modernization and urbanization.

E. Culture is Tangible and Intangible

Culture is both physical and mental, i.e. culture is tangible and intangible. Culture can deal with ideas and information from different sources, i.e. interactions bring a change on a certain culture. Spencor-Otey (2008) supports this and says culture is a characterization of physical and mental representations of different themes like beliefs, values, principles, perceptions, norms and conventions of communication. Before moving to the theoretical framework of the study the following paragraphs under different sections discuss the main concept of the study: definitions, forms and roles of indigenous communication.

2.5. Understanding Indigenous Communication

Indigenous communication is one type of communication which is specific to the people of a certain group. It is a communication practice which is carried out or practiced based on cultural values and norms of the specific community. Mund & Lin (1991) explain indigenous communication as it is the transmission of entertainment, news, persuasion, announcement and social exchange of every type.

Indigenous communication is one of human communication used by a certain society at different occasions. It is important in promoting peace, in solving different societal problems, in promoting cultural values and cultural identities, and in letting people learn from their past experiences. Mund & Lin (1991) recommend that it is better not to ignore such communication practice as it is important aspects of culture and a way in which culture is handed and developed. It offers chances of participation in the community; it has high credibility among the society too.

2.5.1. Forms of Indigenous Communication

Indigenous communication can take place in many different settings; it is not by newspaper, radio or television. It may occur at home, in the field, on the road, in teahouses or a coffee shop, at marketplaces and wherever people can meet and talk.

Most of the time, indigenous communication is informal, unorganized and interpersonal (involving relations between persons). It is spontaneous; it is not apparently contrived or manipulated. It uses oral expressions than the written one. It is controlled by the local people not by the outsiders; it uses no or little technology. Thus, the channels used in indigenous communication practices are different from the modern way of communication. Folk media, indigenous organization, social gathering and deliberate instructions can be used as a channel for indigenous communication. The channels for the indigenous communication are discussed one by one as the followings.

A. Folk Media

Folk media are the most used channels for indigenous communication. Mund & Lin (1991) state folk media as a channel which is comparable with the mass media. Folk media is not only for entertainment, it is also used to promote education, values and cultural continuity. It can be performed in the form of song, dance, poetry, plays, doll shows, storytelling, debates and carnivals. Related to this, proverbs and folklore are the channels for indigenous communication.

B. Indigenous Organization and Social Gatherings

Religious groups, village meetings, irrigation association, mother club and the like provide opportunity for informal communication. And this refers to the indigenous organization and social gathering which are used as a way for indigenous communication. For the people under this study, *Ooto* can take place during the marriage ceremony, coffee ceremony, at a different ceremony of holidays and moorings etc.....

C. Deliberate Instruction

Deliberate instruction in which parents teach their children and elders guide young people are another channel used in indigenous communication. Moreover, observation has a great role in indigenous communication as it lets the one learns and share experiences of the others.

2.5.2. Roles of Indigenous Communication

Communication in general plays a very important role in people's life. It helps people learn, construct and share culture and cultural elements. Through communication (the verbal and non-

verbal), culture is cultivated and developed. Communication is a way to develop, improve and document cultural elements of a certain society (Desalegn, 2019).

Cultural indigenous communication practices have role in promoting peace, in resolving conflict, in solving different societal problems, in promoting cultural values and in forming cultural identities. Generally speaking, indigenous communication practices regulate culture.

Hortobagyi (2009), discusses “in communication and daily interactions people define who they are and negotiates their identities with people who are similar to them or different from them” (p. 259). When people communicate, they produce and reproduce culture. Supporting this point, Griffin (2010) points out the way we view reality is shaped by the language, i.e. communication shapes the way we view the reality. The structure of a culture’s language shapes people’s thinking and action. It is obvious that language is an important element in communication. Having this, Griffin (2010) discusses the role of language in communication and the role of communication in cultivating a culture as: language help people structure their perceptions of reality. To add more, socio-cultural theorists claim that “reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed” through the process of communication. In other words, through conversation, people co-construct their own social worlds. “When these worlds collide, the socio-cultural tradition offers help in bridging the culture gap that exists between “us” and “them” (Griffin, 2010, p. 43).

Societal conflicts, inter-ethnic conflicts and interpersonal conflicts can be resolved through indigenous communication practices. Interpersonal conflict may perhaps happen between or among individuals; it is a kind of conflict which occurs within a society. When people live together and interact, opposing viewpoints possibly happened. According to Hocker & Wilmot (1995), interpersonal conflict is resulted from expressed differences between or among individuals.

It is believed that there are many ways of solving different problems through indigenous communication practices. The indigenous conflict resolution mechanism is a cultural indigenous communication practice by the people. Such practices emanate from the customs of the

community and accepted by the community as a governing principle. Indigenous communication plays a very important role in binding the communities together too.

2.6. Things Considered to Set Theoretical Framework of the Study

Understanding paradigms and models of culture and communication is important to set the framework of the study. The social science, the interpretive, the critical and the dialectical approach to cultural studies explain culture in many ways. The researcher of this study found it important to discuss those research paradigms in cultural studies.

2.6.1. Paradigms in Cultural Studies

A. The Social Science Paradigms

Communication scholars in social science paradigms are influenced by research in psychology and view culture as a set of learned, group-related perceptions (Hall, 1992). Hofstede (1984) defines culture as “the programming of the mind”. He further illustrates this point that every individual has patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned and experienced throughout a lifetime. As culture is shared and learned by people who live together in the same social environment, it can be defined as collective experience.

B. The Interpretive Paradigms

Another important paradigm in cultural studies is the interpretive paradigms. The interpretive paradigms are influenced by anthropological studies. They emphasize on the sharing and learning aspects to develop culture. They also give emphasis to the communication concept to share ideas among the community member as it is the means to cultivate the shared meaning. Moreover, they analyze culture as shared and learned contextualized pattern of communication behavior (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Thus, as this study focuses on the communication pattern of a certain community, i.e. *Ooto*, the cultural indigenous communication practice of *Shekacho* community, it favoring this approach.

C. The Critical Paradigms

The most recent approach to cultural studies is the critical paradigms. Communication scholars in this dimension are influenced by cultural studies which are devoted to understand the richness, complexity, and the role of the cultural phenomena of the community and the citizen in general.

The approach emphasizes on the heterogeneity of cultural groups and the conflict nature of cultural margins.

D. The Dialectical Paradigms

The fourth one, the dialectical approach enables communication researchers accept and see the relationships of different views. Communication researchers here, view culture as a shared and a learned pattern of beliefs and perceptions (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

2.7. Theoretical Framework for the Study

The basic essence of the theoretical framework in academic research is guiding and shaping the whole mark of a certain study. Accordingly, this research is guided by Ethnography of Communication Theory, which can be both theoretical framework and methodology for the study.

Theories can help us interpret and understand what happens in the surrounding world. Theory is a coherent set of ideas and concepts that helps see the worlds' nature of different subjects. It is a better way to understand, summarize and analyze the way the universe and human beings in the universe works. To support with this, Einstein in Phil & Scot (nd) states theory as it is very important in helping researchers decide on what can be observed, studied and explored.

Having this, the researcher of this study discusses the Ethnography of Communication Theory as the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework of the study is discussed as below:

2.7.1. Theoretical Framework of the Study: Ethnography of Communication

Dell Hymes, the linguistic anthropologist, introduced Ethnography of Communication in 1964. It was named as Ethnography of Speaking at first; then renamed as Ethnography of Communication. Ethnography of communication is discussed as a theory and methodology to clarify a particular culture of a certain group of people (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Ethnographic Communication Theory is a field of a study primarily deals with the idea that culture and communication are inseparably linked to one another. Culture, the shared belief and value systems, are constructed through communication and the social structures of the people in their everyday communal life are constructed within the communication. To illustrate this, Littlejohn & Foss, (2009) discusses the importance of the Ethnography of Communication Theory as:

Whenever community members communicate, they display the verbal and nonverbal elements particular to their society while simultaneously creating (and recreating) the value systems that structure that society. By attending, then, to people's routine communication, many of the core abstract elements that characterize their world views or cultural life can be observed, understood, compared, contrasted, and theorized (P. 355).

The above quoted idea indicates, in every communication aspect there is possibly the verbal or the nonverbal elements of communication. And through the Ethnography of Communication Theory, the hub nonrepresentational elements of a certain communication practice can be studied.

The main concern of the theory highly fits the current study. The way the relationship between culture and communication explained in the theory matches with the core points of the study. Thus, the Ethnography of Communication Theory is selected as a framework for this study. The current study attempts to understand and explore the role of the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community in their specific culture, i.e. *Ooto*.

To refer the non-vocal and non verbal elements of communication in the theory, the theory was renamed to the Ethnography of Communication from the Ethnography of Speaking by Dell Hymes in 1964. Gerry Philipsen explains the Ethnography of Communication Theory more by introducing speech code theory. It presents a communication-based methodological framework which helps the researchers describe, explain, and examine the indigenous cultural communication practices of a community (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

2.7.1.1. Speech Code Theory

Speech Code Theory is a part of Ethnography of Communication Theory that answers different questions about the existence of codes, their substances and the social effects of the codes on the community member. It is an interpretive tool. It reveals how people feel and talk about the different situations happening in their communal life. The Speech Code Theory is all about describing the set of guideline and rules by which societies carry out and understand their ways of life.

Speech Code Theory helps us understand the role of interpersonal relationships among community members. It explains how community members establish logical connection between the physical (natural) and metaphysical (spiritual) environment (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

There are different stated assumptions about Ethnography of Communication theory. The assumptions are derived from the interpretation and generalization completed on communication and communicators. The researcher (I) summarizes the assumptions as the following:

Rules can describe communication; to communicate, a certain community members make communication choices that are appropriate in their socio-cultural context than the grammar. As well, different symbols are used by the people, and a pattern of symbols show the structures of socio-cultural life. Communication is patterned; much of communication is structured even if its choices are influenced by individual's personality and habit. There are various communication styles (formal or informal) that are used by people in their daily lives. There are expectations in different communication processes (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Example, there is something (Social or political or economic issues) that the community member expects from *Ooto*.

2.8. Review of Local Related Studies

The first study in relation to this study is an M.A thesis by Moges (2010) titled '*Dagu as a cultural Regulator among the Afar people: The communication aspect*'. It is about *Dagu*, the traditional communication practice, of the Afar people. The primary focus of the study is exploring *Dagu* as a means of cultural regulator. The theme of the study is somehow similar to the current study as both deals with the role of indigenous cultural communication practices.

The previous study and as well the current one focuses on the role of indigenous cultural communication practices, but the variation is, the former one explores the traditional communication practice as a means to regulate culture in general and the current one explores the practice as a tool to promote peace and solve different societal problems, to promote cultural identities and values and as well to encourage intra-cultural communication.

According to the study finding the role of traditional communication practice is beyond the communication aspects. As *Dagu* is guided by principles of accuracy and truth through its cultural techniques, the role of the communication practice is more than communication. Through *Dagu*, people of *Afar* communicate and regulate their culture (Moges, 2010). This matches to the current study in a way that both tries to explore into some cultural groups through the analysis of their communication practices. But the scope of the current study is quite different; the economy, culture and the communities' way of life is different. The other difference goes with the role explored in the studies. The former study discusses the role from the point of regulating culture and the current study discusses the role from the point of promoting peace and resolving societal conflict and cultivating the cultural identities and values of that specified community, i.e. the *Shekacho*.

The second study in relation to this study also focuses on *Dagu* as a means to information flow comparing with the modern media practices. It is a study by Jemal (2016) titled '*Dagu: Its Nature, Attributes and Reporting Praxis*'. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the nature, characteristics and reporting praxis of *Dagu* of *Afar* people. The study attempts to understand the indigenous traditional communication practice of the *Afar* community. In this concept, it matches with the current study. But the focus of the current study is not comparing the indigenous communication practice with the modern one. The former study compares the traditional communication practice of the *Afar* community to the modern and mediated communication. Whereas the current study emphasizes on the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community in their cultural context to promote peace, resolve conflict, promote cultural values and cultural identity and encourage intra-cultural communication.

The third study in relation to this study is a ‘*Socio-political discourse & communication in sidaama folk media*’ by Nigussie & Yri (2016). The content scope of *Ooto*, i.e. the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community relates to this study. In other words, understanding and exploring *Ooto* as a means for solving different societal problems and promote their cultural identities and values relates to the study of folk media as a means to understand the societal knowledge and expression of their way of life. The main element of the previous study is discourse and communication. The discourse and communication of *Sidaama* folk media in portraying socio-political realities is analyzed in this study. According to the study, folk media can be the best referred to as indigenous equivalents of exogenous mass media.

Folk media have the power to shape the political and social activities of the community. Kumar (2006) cited in Nigussie (2016) states that “traditional media are close to the hearts and minds of the people, so their appeal is at personal, intimate level” (P.95). In support with this, Mund & Lin (1991) state folk media as a channel which is comparable with the mass media. Folk media is not only for entertainment, it is also used to promote education, values and cultural continuity. It can be performed in the form of song, dance, poetry, plays, doll shows, storytelling, debates and carnivals (Nigussie, 2016). But the focus of the current study is different from the previous study. The previous study focuses on the analysis of *Sidaamas*’ political communication trend and explores the power relation in the society using discourse analysis. Whereas, the current study attempts to explore the roles of *Ooto*, the cultural indigenous communication practices of the *Shekacho* community.

The study of co-cultural communication between Manjo and Donjo in *Sheka* by Behailu is another study which relates to this study. The study is titled with ‘*Exploration into Co-Cultural Communication between Manjo and Donjo in Sheka*’ (Behailu, 2016). The study explores the lived experience of the Manjo to communicate with the Donjo, i.e. the co-cultural relation and communication Manjo has with Donjo People. The study area of the current study is similar to this study. But the theme point of the study is quite different. The previous study focuses on the co-cultural communication between *Manjo* and *Donjo* whereas the current study focuses on the indigenous cultural communication practices.

The fifth study in relation to this study is the M.A thesis paper by Anwar (2019). The title of the study is *'Exploration into Wukiyer Intra-cultural Communication Practice in Promoting Cultural Values and Cultural Identity: The Case of Cheha Guraghe'*. The content scope of this most recent study is related to the content scope of *Ooto*, the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community. But the study area of the current study is quite different and varies in the role of the Practice focused. The previous study explores the *Wukiyer* as a means to promote cultural values and identities whereas the current study explores *Ooto* as a means to promote peace and resolve societal conflict and encourage intra-cultural communication in addition to promoting cultural identities and values. The current study adds some important functions of the practice, i.e. *Ooto*.

The study finding discusses *Wukiyer* as it is “a communication practice of Cheha guraghe society in a way they develop, cultivate and maintain their cultural identities through interaction”. He also discusses the role of the practice as “ ‘wukiyer’s role is such huge that every activity, cultural values, norms and standards were set on that discussion or else through the discussion and interaction of individuals especially elders in the ‘wukiyer’ practice” (Anwar, 2019, P.86). In addition to such roles of the practice, the current study sees the practice of the indigenous communication of the *Shekacho* community as a means to promote peace and resolve societal conflicts.

The studies by Desalegn Bekele & Aster Dagnachew (2019) are another most recent M.A thesis papers that relate to the current study. The study by Desalegn titled *'The Role and Utilization of Indigenous Communication in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Gedeo People South Ethiopia'* is about the indigenous communication practice of *Gedeo* people to resolve conflict. The primary purpose of the study was analyzing and exploring the “role and utilization of indigenous communication in conflict resolution of the *Gedeo* people living in southern Ethiopia”.

The focus point in this study is the conflict resolution mechanisms of the *Gedeo* community. Whereas the focus point of the current study is exploring the indigenous cultural communication practice in promoting cultural identities and values in addition to its role in promoting peace and

resolve societal conflicts. In case of the current study conflict does not refer to the political conflict among leaders; it refers to the social conflict (refers to the societal one). The previous study also discusses the causes of the conflicts among the Gedio people. The variation is, in the current study the role of *Ooto* in solving different problems, i.e. the way societal conflicts solved is discussed. Whereas in the previous study the role of the indigenous communication practice in resolving conflict of the hidden political interest of local leaders is discussed. To conclude, the scope of the study and the way the role of the practice discussed is different.

The study by Aster (2019) titled '*The Role of Indigenous Communication Mechanism in Resolving Inter-Ethnic Conflicts: Gedeo and West Guji*' is also the other related study to the current one. The primary purpose of this study is investigating the indigenous communication mechanism to resolve inter-ethnic conflict between the *Gedio* and *West Guji* people. The study finding discusses *Gondoro*, the indigenous communication practice, as a major and common means to solve the inter-ethnic conflict among the communities under study (Aster, 2019). She also discusses the weakness and challenges of indigenous way of conflict resolution method, i.e. the *Gondoro*. The focus area of the study is different from the current study. The current study emphasizes on the role of indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community as a tool to promote peace and solve societal conflicts, promote cultural identities and values and encourage intra-cultural communication. In the other words, the focus of the current study is not inter-ethnic conflict; it focuses on societal conflicts existed because of some problems happened among community member. It focuses on how to identify the person guilty of some appalling action through the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto*. And also the study area of the previous study is much different than the current study.

Though the local studies explore the indigenous communication practices of the different communities of Ethiopia, nothing has been said about the *Shekachos*' traditional communication practice, *Ooto*. Thus, this study tries to fill the gap of documentation and also tries to cultivate the community's indigenous knowledge and skill to benefit more from such practice by exploring the role of *Ooto*.

Chapter Three

Methodology of the Study

3. Introduction

The main objective of this study is exploring the nature, content and roles of *Ooto*, an indigenous communication practice of *Shekacho* community, as a means to promote peace, cultural identities and values and as well to encourage intra-cultural communication. Using the Ethnography of Communication Theory, this thesis looks deep into the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community.

This part of the research discusses the research method employed to study the subject matter, i.e. the methodological approach: research design, study area, sample and sampling techniques, data gathering techniques, method of data analysis and interpretation and ethical considerations taken in the course of the study work are presented under this chapter.

3.1. Research Design

The study is aimed to explore an indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community, i.e. *Ooto* through a deep understanding of the nature, content and the role of the practice. The social science approach, the interpretive approach, and the critical approach to understand culture & communication are the three contemporary approaches dealing with intercultural communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). From these approaches, this study designed in a way that favors an interpretive approach, i.e. a way of making meaning through qualitative analysis. Through the qualitative interpretive approach, the study aims to observe and describe the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community, *Ooto*.

Interpretive approach through the ethnography of communication is used as a theoretical framework for the study and ethnography is used as the method of the study. According to Hymes (1974), the ethnography of communication is the one in interpretive approach and rooted in sociolinguistics. The interpretive approaches through the ethnography of communication theory are aimed to understand and describe communication patterns of a certain cultural group. According to the interpretive researchers, reality is not only external to humans, but humans also construct reality. For them, communication is subjective.

To understand and describe the indigenous cultural communication practice of the specific cultural group, i.e. the *Shekacho* community, the qualitative inquiry with ethnographic design is applied. Patton (2001) quoted in Nahid (2003) support this point as “Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2001, p. 39). In addition to this, Martin & Nakayama (2010) state the qualitative research with ethnographic design as studies which use qualitative methods like field studies, observations, and participant observations.

3.1.1. Reason for Choosing Qualitative Approach to this Study

Qualitative approach to the study enables the researcher to understand the social phenomena. It is the best way to find and analyze depth important information which cannot be easily measured quantitatively. As the study aimed at describing the *Shekacho* communities’ indigenous cultural communications practice which might not be measured numerically, the qualitative research approach is selected as the principal method to conduct the study. I (the researcher) found qualitative research very effective in this study as it helps the researcher obtain culturally specific information on core abstract elements of communication practices of the community under the study. Additionally, to collect in-depth information from the participants and to explore behavior and experiences of a certain community using interviews or focus groups or observation, the researcher preferred a qualitative approach to achieve the objective of the study. Supporting this point, Natasha Mack et al (2005) explains the advantages of qualitative research as “qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations” (P.1).

The study is an exploratory research which is aimed to explore the role of the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community, *Ooto*. Thus, meaning making through the interpretative qualitative approach, in which a depth of information and deep understanding of the practice is attained, is the best method in such study. The qualitative ways of data collection, i.e. in-depth interview, focused group discussion and ethnographic observations are better ways to achieve the goal of the study. According to Christine & Immy (2011), a qualitative research

has an ability of going to explore into constructing social meanings. For the need to have a detailed understanding of the practice and explore it, the researcher of this study conducted qualitative approach. Creswell (2007) states why qualitative method is used in such study as “We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored... we also conduct a qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of issue” (P. 40). From the various qualitative research methods, the study applied the ethnographic research as it is the best way to observe and understand the practice.

3.1.2. Why Ethnography?

The study applied ethnography as a research process to understand the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community, i.e. *Ooto* using participant observation, focus group discussion and in-depth interview. This helps the researcher get in-depth data on the role of *Ooto*, indigenous cultural communication practice, of the community under study in regard to resolving societal conflicts and promoting peace as well in promoting cultural identities and cultural values regarding with encouraging intra-cultural communication.

Ethnographic research is known by its nature of recording every detail and every pattern of a certain cultural practices to better understand the content and nature of the practice. Creswell (2007) discusses ethnographic research “As a process, ethnography involves extended observations of the group most often through Participant Observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day to day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 68). Therefore, to do this, the researcher of this study chose ethnography as a research process.

3.2. Study Area

Sheka zone is located in the southern nation, nationality and people regional state. Based on the 2008 census conducted by the Central Statistics Agency, *Sheka Zone* has a total population of 200,000. The zone is home for many ethnic groups, but mainly the *Shekacho* ethnic group dominates. It has three *woredas*, namely, *Masha*, *Anderacha* and *Yeki*. In the three *woredas*, there are 56 rural and 7 urban *kebeles*. Of this, *Masha* town has 2 *kebeles* and *Masha woreda* has 19 *kebeles*. The latitudinal range of the area in the Zone falls between 900–2700 m above sea

level, and it receives a high amount of rainfall, with an average of 1800–2200 mm annually (Behailu, 2016).

The *Zone* is bordered by Oromia Region from the North, *Kafa Zone* from the East, *Bench Maji Zone* from the South and Gambela Region from the west. The dominant language in the zone is the *Shekinoono or Shekigna*, but other languages like Amharic, Oromifa, Tigre, and Kafinoono are commonly used by the community living in. *Shekigna* is an omotic minority language spoken in Southwestern Ethiopia. *Shekigna* represents the three main language families: Semetic, Cushitic and omotic respectively (Fufa, 2009).

The people of *Sheka* have an old-aged culture of conserving species, ecosystems and pristine natural habitats. Forest and other natural landscapes have special cultural values among the people. According to Zewdie (2007), in *Shekacho* culture, steep slopes, water bodies and wetlands should be covered by forest or buffer areas of forest. Such areas also used for worship by the community. The *Sheka* forest has local and international significances. It is registered in UNESCO as biosphere reserves. It covers a total area of 238,750 (Tadesse & Fite, 2011).

The forest in *Sheka* is a part of the southwest highland forest of Ethiopia, which is important for conservation of the Afromontane forest vegetation type; the area is rich in plant and animal species: there are over 300 higher plants, 50 mammals, 200 birds, and 20 amphibian species and there are also 65 endemic species of plants and birds (Tadesse & Fite, 2011). Tadesse & Fite argues that the forest of the area has economic, ecological and cultural functions to the *Shekacho* people. With its diverse natural and cultural landscape, tropical forest, crater lakes, waterfalls and cultural festivals, the area also has a good potential of Eco-tourism.

The *Shekacho* people earn most of their cash income from honey production and species like mace, cardamom, turmeric, chili pepper, long black pepper which is produced in dense forest. The traditional agricultural practices also fulfill the social and economic needs of the local population. *Inset* is a perennial crop produced as the main source of staple food in extended homogarden systems. The *Shekacho* people produce cereals on a small farm. There is a growing trend of coffee (Arabica coffee) and vegetable production like cabbage, onions and potatoes for a

local consumption and markets in neighboring. Fruits like Avocado, banana and Mango are also produced (Tadesse & Fite, 2011).

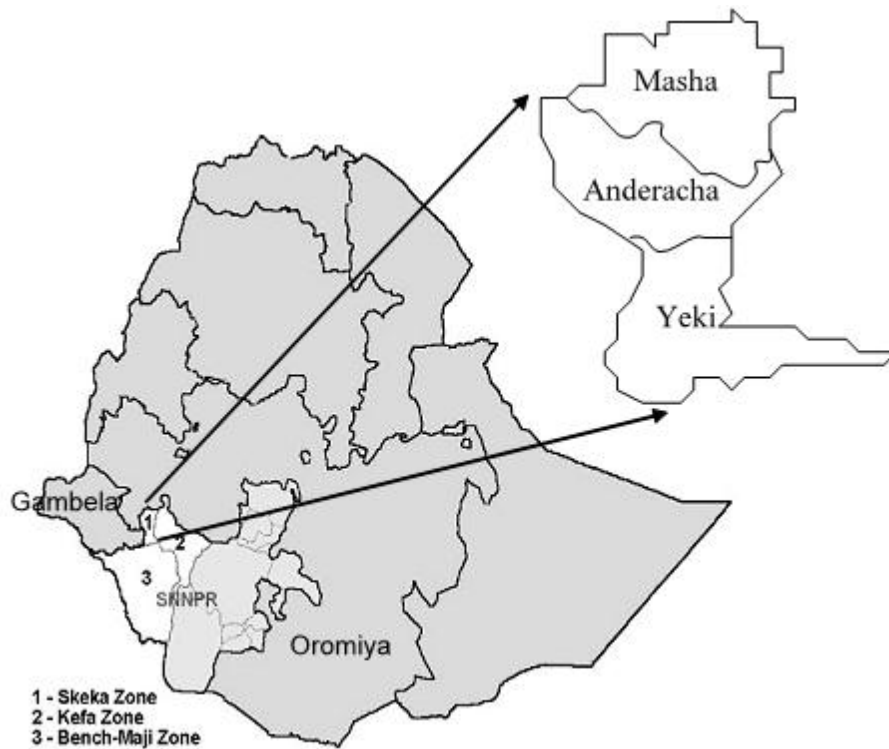


Figure 1. Sheka Zone Map. Courtesy of MELCA MAHIBER

Masha is the specific area of the study. This is because *Masha* is the administrative capital of the zone where the researcher has full access to the bureaucracy and documented materials. The other reason to delimit in this area is that *Masha* is a place where people from the same culture are living together. This helps the researcher see the *Ooto* from the context of intra-cultural communication practice. For why not others, in lowland areas around *Teppi*, there is a mixed culture of the native people *Sheko*, *Shekacho* and *Mejengir*, and that of recent settlers from northern and central Ethiopia. Thirdly, the researcher experience and attachment to that society are pushing factor to study the communication practice (*Ooto*) of *Shekacho* community living in *Masha*, *Sheka*.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

As it is not possible to study all members of the population at once, the researcher of this study applied purposive sampling to achieve the objectives of the study. Sampling is the other most important component in the research process. It is very important because, in almost all cases, it is not possible to study all the members of a population. The sample is the possible unit of analysis and it has to be drawn to represent the whole set of the population. Thus, drawing some strategy to have sample population that represent the relevant attributes of the whole set of the population is a must. For the purpose of the study, the researcher used purposive sampling to sample the participants and as well to sample the *kebles* from the total populations.

3.3.1. Purposive Sampling

To find rich information and achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher (I) applied purposive sampling to select the ten *Keblles* from the Twenty-one. The ten *Keblles* are selected based on different criteria: *Keblles* where the practice is well performed, *Keblles* where the members of the community actively participate in it and as the time *Keblles* where the practice is weakening are selected to answer the different research question, i.e. 10 *kebles* are selected based on the criteria that where best performed, medium performed and least performed. In addition to this, the characteristics of the population living in those selected *Keblles* are the reason to choose the 10 *Keblles*.

To study a cultural domain of the specific society under the study, the researcher found best this sampling technique. Here, the researcher knowledge and judgments are used to select them, i.e. depending on the goal of the study various techniques are used during this sampling technique. The researcher chose the *Keblles* who she thinks appropriate for the study based on different criteria listed above. Not to randomly select sample *Keblles* from the total *Keblles*, the researcher focused on particular characteristics of the population under the study.

Having the above points in mind, from the different types of purposive sampling techniques, the researcher applied maximum variation sampling (heterogeneous sampling) to have a wide range of perspectives from the sample under study. Heterogeneous in this study does not refer to the

cultural heterogeneity; it refers to heterogeneity in geographical location, economy and lifestyle. And this helped the researcher gain greater insights about the phenomenon from different angles.

After identifying the *Kebles*, 10 people are selected from each *kebele* based on different criteria. The researcher (I) considers the knowledge and status of the interviewees towards the culture and practice of *Ooto*. Their role in *Ooto* is additional criteria, which enable the researcher chose the participants. In doing this, purposive sampling is used. To look for relevant, rich and reliable data, 10 informants on the basis of their knowledge about the society, *Ooto* (indigenous cultural communication practice), cultural identities and values of the society are selected to represent the people in their respective village. Commonly, in qualitative research, purposive sampling is a used to allow the researcher to carefully select participants. To support this, Singh (2007) discusses purposive sampling as it is very important for situations where one need to meet a target sample in a short period of time.

The informants are selected based on preliminary assessment from observation and information the researcher got from the local community about the informant's knowledge and skill in the practice of *Ooto*. Considering them as they are informed people about the cultural values, issues of culture, and the norms and generally about *Ooto*, 10 seniors are selected as informants for the interview.

3.4. Data Gathering Tools

There are various data gathering techniques used in qualitative research strategy. Among those data gathering techniques, the study makes use of primary data sources which are collected through interview, focus group discussion and observation. This helped the researcher get direct experiences from members of the society. As primary data are first-hand information, it helps the researcher achieve the intended objective of the study. Supporting this, Kothari (2004) states that primary data is a data collected for the first time by the researcher and original in character. He also states, "in the case of a direct personal investigation the interviewer has to collect the information personally from the sources concerned" (Kothari, 2004, p.97). Similarly, Creswell (2007) discusses how data are collected in qualitative studies. He states, the qualitative researchers collect data by themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and

interviewing participants (Cresswell, 2007). According to him, in such researches, the researcher gathers information using different techniques. Using multiple methods to collect data, help to achieve the primary purpose of the study and crosscheck the data. Therefore, to explore the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community as a means to promote peace, promote cultural identities and values and encourage intra-cultural communication, the following data gathering tools are used:

3.4.1. In-depth Interview

Accordingly, in-depth interview was conducted with the selected 10 senior people from the 10 selected *kebeles*. The primary purpose of conducting such an interview is to get direct information about their knowledge, perspectives, experience and opinion regarding the practice of *Ooto*. As in-depth interview is a data collection tool used to achieve the research objectives, the researcher applied it. It is the most used data collection technique in qualitative research. To argue with this, Bryman (1984) discusses the uses of in-depth interview as “In-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant’s perspective on the research issue” (Bryman, 1984, p. 78).

The tones of the interviews were conversational and neutral in evoking responses. Kothari (2004) discusses the way the interview should be done as: to learn everything from the informants’ experiences, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, the researcher’s interviewing techniques plays an important role, i.e. the interview should motivate the respondents to explain what they know about the research topic in their own words. Thus, the researcher of this study listened conscientiously to participants’ responses and asked follow-up questions to probe *Ooto*.

The interview took place in the informants’ local area and village based on their consent, i.e. the interviews were held where the interviewees are okay and feel comfortable. The interviews were conducted by two languages, i.e. *Shekinono* or *Shekigna* and Amharic. Informants who can speak Amharic fluently and understand the language were interviewed in Amharic by the researcher. As the researcher speaks and understands Amharic language very well, interviewing in Amharic was very easy. The others who cannot speak and understand Amharic well were interviewed in *Shekinono*. The interviews in *Shekinono* were conducted also by the researcher, but when there is

a need to elaborate the question, translator who can fluently speak and understand both languages, i.e. *Shekinono* and Amharic were used. But fortunately, some of the respondents speak and understand Amharic well. Thus, most of the interviews are conducted in Amharic. Then, the researcher translated it to English. English language is not used during the interview session, but for the readers, the researcher prepared the interview questions in English version.

For the interview, open-ended questions that can evoke responses, were designed based on the objectives of the study. And then, views, opinions and ideas from the informants were collected accordingly. After collecting the data from the informants, the consistent and relevant responses are presented and analyzed.

3.4.2. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is another data gathering tool that was employed in this study. It helps to have an open individuals' discussion on issue to clarify it. It also helps to have a deep understanding of cultural practices by way of a qualitative research. A focus group discussion is advantageous to understand participants' knowledge, attitudes, experiences, feelings, perceptions and opinions within a short period of time. It is effective to access a broad range of views, opinions and ideas on specific topics. It is a data gathering tool which helps see and understand the issue under study from the participants' point of view. In a focus group discussion, people from the same culture are participating (Geoffrey Marczyk et.al 2005). Hence, this study utilized 2 (two) focus group discussion of 6 (six) participants. It was conducted with a total of 12 (twelve) individuals. As Morgan (1997), a focus group discussion can have 6 to 10 participants per group. The focus group discussion of this study was conducted with communication experts of the zone and selected members of the community who have knowledge about the culture, society and practice.

The focus group discussion with communication experts help the researcher get information on how they communicate with the community to address government policies, decisions and new information in general. In this case, the roles of *Ooto* in doing these are explored. The second focus group discussion, i.e. discussion with selected community members was conducted at selected elder's house where all informants agree with and feel comfortable. This is also conducted to get ideal information about the roles of *Ooto*, i.e. to understand how it is

functioning in developing shared values, identity, in promoting peace and transferring knowledge. Amharic language was used with the consent of the participants. The role of the researcher here was, giving compliments for the participants, leading the discussion by raising different questions, giving chance for participants to participate and taking notes, pictures and recording the discussion.

3.4.3. Participant Observation

Observation with field notes is another very important data gathering tool for such study. It is used to understand a phenomenon by participating with them. It provides chances to participate and have insight about the practice. It allows the researcher to get enhanced experience and see the real practice as it is while the communities are interacting and performing *Ooto* in the natural setting. Through the participant observation, the researcher crosscheck the data collected using interview and focus group discussion, i.e. it is a better way to fill the gap of interview and focused group discussion. It gives opportunity for the researcher to interact with the participants. As Nightingale (2008), observation is the exchange between the research and research participants. Also, Yin (2011) argues that something that one sees and feels cannot be filtered by what others say or write.

Accordingly, this study applied participant observation at different time since the researcher has motivated to explore *Ooto* and understand the details of the practice so as to get a full picture. The researcher has a chance to be in *Masha, Sheka* at different time and observed the practice for long period. But, purposively for this study, the researcher has been there for 7 months: June 3rd, July, August and September 1st, 2019 and February, March April, 2020. As a communication practice is something that can be observed, recorded, documented, analyzed and written, participant observation is very important tool. The researcher selected five observation sites, where the practice was performed during the data collection period from the selected ten *Kebles*. They are: *Ateso, Keja, Atele, Abelo and Yelobay kebeles* from different geographical location, i.e. one each from the Center, East, West, North and South. The roles of the researcher here were observing the practice, i.e. *Ooto* by participating together with members of participants and documenting what she witnessed in the note field.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures and Techniques

After collecting appropriate and as much as necessary data, managing data in the way it should be is important to manage the language, bulkiness and complexity of the collected data. The bulkiness and repetition of information will be resulted from the data gathered by means of three different techniques, i.e. interview, focused group discussion and participant observation. To manage this, transcribing data are the first procedure which is used by the researcher of this study. The collected data in audio format (the interview and the focus group discussion) is transcribed into written format. To do this, the researcher (I) listened to the entire recorded voices of the informants several times and took notes. Then translating the collected data, i.e. translating the data from *Shekinono* and Amharic is the next step in managing the data. The data collected by *Shekinono* language were translated by the selected person who can fluently speak and understand the two languages, i.e. Amharic and *Shekinono* since the researcher is not a native speaker of the language. Then the researcher translated it to the target language, i.e. English.

Interpretation and thematic analysis to achieve the goals of the study are the final step in managing the data. Thematic analysis helps the researcher manage, organize and summarize the collected data. It assists the researcher make meaning from the collected data by identifying, analyzing and discussing the themes (SAGE reference, 2010). The collected, transcribed and translated data needs an interpretation and thematic analysis. According to Lindseth and Norberg (2004) thematic analysis is the best method to interpret the lived experience of a certain community; it helps the researcher in identifying and formulating themes which is a thread of meaning that penetrates text parts, either all or just a few.

Accordingly, the collected data are interpreted, categorized, arranged and analyzed under different themes of the study: the nature or characteristics of the practice, roles of *Ooto* as an indigenous communication practice, *Ooto* in promoting peace and resolving societal conflicts, *Ooto* in promoting cultural values and identities, *Ooto* in encouraging intra-cultural communication and the test of *Ooto*. Thus, on the basis of the collected data and the theoretical frameworks of the study, six (6) themes are identified as the main points of discussion and analysis with different subtitles, i.e. the researcher categorized the transcribed data under related

themes of the study. By reviewing the thematically categorized data, the researcher also reduced the repeated responses and tries to find shared themes for the responses. Then, the researcher summarized the main themes, themes and sub-themes of the study and reflected on it in relation to the research questions and the context of the study.

3.6. Ethical Consideration

A research follows scientific procedures as it is an academic activity. Thus, ethical consideration is one procedure that the researcher should consider and keep throughout the research activity (Berg, 2001).

Consent of the participants, confidentiality, anonymity and securing the data are things that should be considered by the researcher (Berg, 2001). Accordingly, the researcher of this study gave due attention to the ethics of the research. In doing this, the researcher (I) asked the participants for their consent to participate in the study as co-researcher. And the interview and focus group discussions were made based on the participants consent. Their voluntariness to participate in, the language which is used to collect data, place of interview and focus group discussion, and the likes were done based on their consent. In addition to this, respecting the social-cultural norms of the community are a must.

Confidentiality and anonymity are another point in ethical consideration. As Berg (2001), it is a way of removing any records that possibly indicate the subjects' identity. As a result of this, the researcher in this study asked the participants, whether they are volunteers or not to mention their names in the report.

Moreover, the research should benefit the participants, i.e. the participants and the citizens in general should get some positive benefits from the research. Murphy & Dingwall's ethical theory (2001) points out "research on human participants should produce some identifiable, positive benefit" (P.339). Thus, the researcher did her best to cultivate and develop the indigenous cultural communication practice of the community by letting the people know its role and uses.

3.7. Trustworthiness of the Study

As the study is ethnographic study, there is a high probability of throwing oneself into the culture and the practice for an extended period so as to explore the unseen or hidden nature, function and the elements of that cultural practice. In doing this, the researcher considered her subjectivity not to be biased. To be objective as much as possible, the researcher (I) keeps realizing on the concepts and theme of the study.

To keep the trustworthiness of the study and not to be subjective, the researcher (I) interpreted and described what was observed and studied. In doing this, the researcher tried to understand the thoughts, emotions and viewpoints of the participants (What they reveal). Moreover, to secure its validity and reliability, the researcher tried to consider things must considered in qualitative research while designing the research design.

Concepts like reliability and validity are typically associated with quantitative research, however, to improve the credibility of qualitative research some consideration towards its reliability and validity are important. The test and measures used to establish the validity and reliability of quantitative research cannot be used in this study. But Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest criteria for securing validity and reliability of qualitative research with a truth value, consistency and neutrality and applicability. Accordingly, the researcher (I) crosschecked whether the finding reflected the data or not. In doing this, the uprightness and application of the methods carried out with the finding is accurately checked. And the consistency of the applied procedures is checked to see the study how it is reliable.

According to Sandelowski (2006) & Long (2000), qualitative research uses methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. From the strategies suggested by those scholars, the researcher of this study accounts for personal biases not to influence the findings, critically reflected the methods to ensure adequate depth and relevance data, kept recording data and make certain about the consistency and transparency of the interpretation of the data, let other participants comment on interview questions and points for focus group discussion and checked the themes and concepts whether they effectively reveal and describe the phenomenon under the study.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation, Discussion and Analysis

4. Introduction

In This chapter, the presentation, categorization, thematic analysis and interpretation of the gathered data are discussed. The presentation and analysis of the study are developed from the data gathered through interview, Focused Group Discussion and observation. The qualitative research approach was employed for the deeper understanding of events and contexts to give meaning for the practice. To meet the goal of the study, the collected data are presented and discussed using the thematic analysis.

The main objective of the study was to explore the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* in *Shekacho* community in relation to the research questions. To answer the research questions, a qualitative inquiry which better helps the researcher understand and give deep looking at the indigenous cultural communication practice of the community was applied using various data gathering tools. The following sections interpreted and discussed the findings under the different themes.

4.1. Nature/Characteristics of *Ooto*

Ooto is an old-aged indigenous cultural communication practice which has its own characteristics and nature. Through observation of habits, beliefs and actions of a certain society, culture can be observed and understood. Such indigenous cultural practices have their own characteristics that help in identifying them. And the nature of the practice helps see what the practice incorporates and made from. Accordingly, *Ooto* is characterized in a way that is a kind of meeting where the community members come together and have discussions on different issues: social, political, cultural and economic. Having this in mind, different definitions are given to *Ooto* by the participants.

Mr. Belachew defines *Ooto* as it is a cultural practice where the community members come together and discuss different issues whenever there is a need for discussion. It is a cultural practice for different purpose; it is a stage for a discussion. Another informant Mr. Kitamo

explained *Ooto* in a various way: *Ooto* for cultural practices, *Ooto* for social activities, *Ooto* for solving different problems, *Ooto* for maintaining peace, *Ooto* to promote culture. Generally, he defines *Ooto* as a stage for discussion on different issues to bring something better to the community, environment and country (Interview).

From the participant observation, interview and FGD, it has been understood that *Ooto* is a discussion stage where the community member come together and discuss on different issues, share information, opinions, knowledge and skill. It is also observed that the cultural practices performed during *Ooto* play an important role in solving different societal problems and maintaining peace and in promoting culture, cultural value and identities.

Ooto is characterized by the way it is practiced, and when and where it is practiced. Wolasha Mamo responded that commonly, *Ooto* is practiced on Sunday in the afternoon when people came back from religious practices. Mr. Kitamo added to this that *Ooto* can take place on other days when there is a need for discussion. But he argued that Sunday is the selected day for the practice. To call people for *Ooto*, clan leaders inform the representatives and every representative informs the community members of their *kebele* and in addition to this, horn is used to inform all. Materials such as horn and drum are used to practice *Ooto*. The horn is used to call people for urgent *Ooto* on urgent issue as well. The way the horn is pumped let the community member know what the message is as horn is also used for other purposes. Also, during *Ooto*, drum is used to confirm arguments. But, nowadays using such materials to practice *Ooto* is weakened or stopped.

The observation, interview and FGD assure that *Ooto* can take place on any days when there is a need for discussion on urgent issues, but most of the time it is practiced on Sunday as Sunday is a day most of the community members are free from the work/job. It has been observed that the setting and the materials characterized the practice.

Elements of communication: the sender, receiver, message, channel, environment, context and feedback are incorporated in *Ooto*. The setting, where the practice held and context (when to do what) are the key elements in performing *Ooto*. According to the collected data, there are various elements of communication in relation to *Ooto*.

Elders/seniors are the source during *Ooto*. In addition to this, any member of the community with new information, idea, exposure, experience, knowledge and skill is the source or sender in the case of *Ooto*. One with new information, idea, experience, knowledge and skill conveys the message. The message can be conveyed through tone of voice, body language and clothing in *Ooto*. In the case of *Ooto*, every member of the community is the sender as the role will also turn to the receiver. In *Ooto* receivers are the entire participants. They also have the same role with the sender as the sender became the receiver and vice versa, i.e. both the sender and the receiver have the same role to send as well to receive the message. The communication model here is transactional where the sender and receiver turn take their role and play both roles simultaneously. *Ooto* focuses on action of sending and receiving at the same time.

In case of *Ooto*, at least there must be one important issue to discuss, educate and inform. Issues of social, economic and/or political are transferred, discussed, and shared to the participants during *Ooto* using face to face communication. The feedback can be understood from the facial expression of the participants in case of *Ooto* as the face to face conversation allows this. In case of *Ooto*, the response is immediate. It takes place intentionally or unintentionally. Intentionally, the participants can express their feeling, opinion and idea by taking turn and unintentionally the facial expression, body movement, and tone can reveal their response on the issue discussed. In practicing *Ooto*, feedback is important element to check how the message was received and understood. It also gives opportunity to the audience to ask for clarification.

Mostly *Ooto* takes place at field under a big sycamore at mean area for the *Kebele* communities' or at clan leaders or elders' home. Nowadays, halls are built in different *kebeles* and sometimes of the weather condition *Ooto* can be held in the hall. Woltaa Bahiru responded that previously coffee with 'k'oc'c'o' (staple food of *Shekacho* community) and a drink called 'Dooc'o', meaning homemade beer was served to the participants of *Ooto*. But nowadays it is not served (interview).

One of the respondents, Seleshi explained that the community members know when to do what. There are different practices held at the beginning, while and at the end of *Ooto*. *Ooto* usually begins with a blessing and praying. Elders bless and lead the praying. During this, every participant of the *Ooto* stands for 'k'ollo', meaning pray and raises their hands saying 'ameena',

meaning amen. While *Ooto*, participants know what to say, what to not say, when to say and why to say like in practicing ‘woraafa’. The detail of the practice, i.e. ‘Woraafa’ is discussed in section 4.3.5. And at the end, the practice is closed by blessings and disclaimer (Interview).

Thus, the interview, FGD and observation give surety that in *Ooto* the elements of communication: sender, receiver, message, channel, environment/setting, context and feedback are incorporated.

Ooto is ruled by the rule that the community members agreed on. Rules for *Ooto* are established by the community members. The community members come together and establish rules for *Ooto* and decided on the punishment for breaking that rule.

Some of the respondents responded that the rule for *Ooto* plays an important role to practice it in a well manner. Punctuality, presence, respecting the opinions of others, respecting the culture, taking responsibility and talking by turn is from the rules that the community members give emphasis. If one fails to do this, he/she will be punished according to the rule. Before punishing, the elders/leaders’ advice and give the person warning (FGD).

For some practices in *Ooto* like in the ‘Teggo’ meaning litigation between or among the members, a person who is defeated will satisfy the claim according to the rule. Maybe the compensation is in cash or in kind. But according to the negotiated rule, the person must satisfy the claim. Again, if the person fails to do this, he/she will be neglected from the neighbors/community. Not to be neglected, every member of the community respects the rule (Demeke, interview). Another participant Mr. Kitamo added that there is a negotiated rule to accept the arguments of the majority, i.e. there is majority rule in practicing *Ooto*.

Informants, Mr. Birhanu and Mr. Ambaye responded that the community members value the practice and participated actively. If someone is absent from *Ooto*, it has been believed that the person is doing something wrong or forbidden action in the community. Thus, a person who is informed to participate attends the *Ooto*. Those assure that the rules for *Ooto* plays an important role in practicing it.

The interview, FGD and observation reassure that there is established rule for the practice, i.e. *Ooto* and this helped to value the practice and participate actively.

4.1.1. *Ooto* as an Indigenous Cultural Communication Practice

All the way through *Ooto*, discussion about several topics has made. Every single activity is discussed during *Ooto*. The discussion is started with the common points and then goes to the complex issues. The *Ooto* can begin with the issue of sharing experiences on farming, production, and then move towards to complex issues like betrayal, theft, murders and property damage. At the time of the meeting, the community members sit together and interact, transfer information, have some fun, and solve different societal problems (Interview).

The role of elders/seniors here is managing the *Ooto*. As the community members respect, love and follow the elders, they play an important role in managing and leading the practice. The members of the community give a great respect for the elders and listened to them. During *Ooto*, the elders open and end the practice by blessing the country and the people. They also advise and punish the person who made a mistake according with the culture. The role of the elders/seniors in *Ooto* varies according to the issue. Example: - the role of elders in maintaining peace among the community is different from the role of elders in combating hunger, drought and disease.

Specifically, during the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto*, elders share their exemplary experiences, share their opinions, give justice, reconcile, advise and lead the practice. There is a saying among the *Shekacho* community ‘geeno tiichitto tuppo tiichiyee’, which means that, the one who does not give respect for the elders breaks his/her shin bone. Thus, the community gives a big respect for elders/seniors (Birhanu, interview).

The communication style during *Ooto* is structured and patterned even though there are different individual choices. Individuals with different choices compromise and find the middle ground for a discussion during *Ooto*. The practice is structured in a way that is proper and suitable to the community and it is patterned. This point is illustrated in Littlejohn & Foss’s, (2009) work as one assumption of Ethnography of Communication. This assumption best fits the pattern and Structure of the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* as Littlejohn & Foss agreed on much of communication is structured even if its choices are influenced by individual’s personality and habit.

To achieve the goal of communication, it should be strategic and better to take place artfully using the verbal and non-verbal style as suggested by Littlejohn & Foss (2009). And in *Ooto* there are cultural plays in which warriors, clan leaders and heroes are praised and admired. During *Ooto*, there are things takes place using dram like in conforming arguments. The presentation style in case of *Ooto* uses folktales, proverbs, riddles, sayings and exemplary stories to convey message to the audience easily in a way to seize their attention.

4.2. The Roles of *Ooto*

From the informants' responses, focus group discussion and observation of the researcher, the study explores the roles of the practice, i.e. *Ooto* as the followings under different sections.

4.2.1. The Role of *Ooto* in Communicating Different Issues

In *Ooto* everything in the environment and as well different issues about the country (Ethiopia) are discussed. Points such as how to improve one's own living standard towards productivity and economy, family planning, combating diseases and new information, activities, incident are raised for discussion. Mr. Kitamo responded that on *Ooto* different issues such as the economy, health, and education, social: how to furtherance environment, how to preserve culture and transfer to the next generation, how to maintain peace and how to solve problems are discussed. And he also added, through *Ooto*, the communities are informed on different issues: how to keep their environment, how to participate in different activities to furtherance the environment they live in, how to pay government taxes on time and how to keep themselves from bad/forbidden actions (Interview). Another informant Birhanu added to this that the community members participating in *Ooto* seek for new information and thus, different agendas are raised for discussion. Even, points like how to hunt animals those who damage crop, how to farm, and such like are raised to let the community share experiences and help one another.

To communicate, realizing meanings of terms to the other person is very essential. As words, gestures and ideas carry multiple meanings, it is better to establish negotiated meaning to fully understand the message and provide a feedback. One of the participants in FGD, Mrs. Yemareshet raised this point while discussing the role of *Ooto*. She also discusses the role of the practice as it is helpful to them to interact and understand their surroundings and as well improve

their way of life. Thus, communication is the process of understanding and sharing meaning between or among the community and *Ooto* is doing this.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that *Ooto*, as an indigenous communication practice plays an important role in communicating different issues: simple to complex and the role of the elders/seniors in practicing *Ooto* are highly seen.

4.2.1.1. The Role of *Ooto* in Transferring knowledge

The role of *Ooto* in transferring knowledge and cultivating culture is eminent. *Ooto* is comparable to mass media in a way it is used to share, develop and transfer knowledge and information. The *Shekacho* community accepts *Ooto* as a means to cultivate and develop their culture so as to preserve it. Any type of information, new technology, decisions and experiences on how to be productive, maximize profit and improve one's own living standard are taken as points for discussion on the practice of *Ooto*.

Mr. Yohannes, Mr, Netsanet and Mr. Birhanu discuss the role of *Ooto* in the knowledge and information transmission as a very important thing. They state that they use *Ooto* to facilitate the development practices to agriculture technologies, education, and health and resource management (FGD).

Through the practice, knowledge about cultural values and moral standards are cultivated. Mr. Seleshi responded that in *Ooto* parents discuss how they transfer cultural knowledge to their children that they had it from their parents/community. Also, Woltaa Bahiru replied that “it is a means in which we discuss about how to teach and advise the youths” (Interview). Another informant Mr. Ambaye also agreed on this by naming the practice as a source of knowledge on different issues. “It is a way of sharing how we become productive and maximizes profit, how we pass problems and live thriving life. Generally, we can say, it is a practice where we learn and share experiences in a practical way” (Interview). This assures that *Ooto* is a platform where one learns from his/her mistake, share experiences, teach and advise youths and cultivate cultural values and identities.

The interview, FGD and observation confirm that the role of *Ooto* in transferring knowledge and cultivating culture is eminent and can be comparable to mass media.

4.2.2. The Role of *Ooto* in Promoting Cultural Values

Ooto plays an important role in transferring every cultural practices and values from generation to generation. Participants in FGD discussed the role of *Ooto* in shaping the community as the followings: elders/seniors tell the community about the cultural values to let them know how things should be. From the different practices performed in *Ooto*, one can learn the guidelines or standards for their social lives. Specific thoughts and beliefs of the community are shaped by the cultural values and thus, the elders/seniors choose *Ooto* as a one means to teach and share the cultural values of the community to the next generation. Using *Ooto* the elders/seniors let the people know what is good and bad.

Another informant Wolasha Mamo said that there are culturally developed practices of selecting clan leaders. Before selecting a clan leader, the community members come together for *Ooto* and discusses on the criteria/requirements that is needed to choose. Then, for some time, the community members look for the one who lead them according to different criteria of goodness and righteousness. The behavior of the person, farmland and his productivity and his representation of the community, his devotion, his strength and his painstaking are taken as a good quality to be selected. By doing this, the community members learn what is good and just in social living.

One of the participants in FGD, Shegito discussed that *Ooto* can take place at different ceremonies: coffee, marriage, funeral, holidays, etc. The next generation can learn their culture and the cultural values from the different ceremonies. There are different ceremonies which help the next generation learn the culture and as well the cultural values of the community:

'Gommo'/Condolence Song

There is a culture of singing traditional condolence song/music at the funeral ceremony of heroes, warriors and clan leaders. It is called 'Gommo'. It is an age-old practice; it is a poetic song which is sung by talented selected persons from males and females. Standing in the circle and holding spear and mace, the males sing the song by moving left and right and by hitting the

ground with their legs one by one. They dressed casual dress. But the females dressed traditional cloth which is made up of sisal fiber ‘dubbo’ and hold photo and the clothes of the late person during this practice. They stand in two rows, in front and back. And here, the youths at funeral ceremony learn why the song is performed and how it is performed during *Ooto* held at funeral ceremony (Immo, Interview). Mr. Shegito, another participant added to this that a characteristically anonymous timeless and placeless tale circulated orally among the people during *Ooto* also promotes culture and the cultural value as well.

Kebede, another participant in FGD discussed the role of *Ooto* in sharing the culture of respecting elders as a very important role. While practicing *Ooto* elders are respected and get the first place. And from this, the culture of respecting elders and respecting each other is developed within the next generation. As the practice incorporates histories, the community members accumulate the cultural values from the histories narrated by the elders. In practicing *Ooto*, people who did good are praised and who did bad are punished and thus, the community member can learn what is just and good in the community as a result of the appreciation and punishment. Therefore, the cultural values are cultivated in such way here.

‘Dafo’/Communal Labor

There is a culture of helping each other among the *Shekacho* community. It is called Dafo meaning communal labor. Awulo, participant in FGD discussed the role of *Ooto* in promoting the cultural values of helping each other as: person in need of help from neighbor call for ‘dafo’ at the time of *Ooto* and the neighbors come together and help the person. The person can be helped by material, money, labor and idea accordingly. This hand running is facilitated and thanked in *Ooto*. Thus, the culture of helping each other is developed among the community.

‘Diuro’/Blessing

Good practices are cultivated by the culture of blessing and appreciation in *Shekacho* community. Dachito discussed that blessing and appreciation is a reward for the one who did good things. To be blessed and not to be cursed by the elders, the community members do the just things. As *Ooto* is started with blessing and end with that, it lets the community learn what actions are appreciated and accepted in the community (FGD).

‘Cesso’/Curse

As good practices are cultivated by blessing and appreciation, bad/forbidden actions are prohibited through the practice of cursing. Alemu discussed that the practice of cursing is not for negative consequence; it is practiced for positive results. “Our community fears cursing” and as a result of this the community members keep doing the just things in the community. Before cursing, “We teach the youths what is forbidden actions, what is valued using special *Ooto* at ‘mashik’are baaro”.

‘Mashik’are baaro’/Meskel Holiday

Ooto can take place at different *kebeles* at different time, i.e. *Ooto* at the level of *Kebeles* and special *Ooto* can take place once a year at the selected place of the zone during Meskel Holiday, i.e. *Ooto* at the level of the country (Sheka). Mr. Kitamo responded that the *Shekas’* ‘miikkirekero’ meaning councils sit for *Ooto* once a year on Meskel holiday at the selected place and proclaim different proclamation. Forbidden actions are proclaimed in ‘mashik’are baaro’. The community members who were at ‘mashik’are baaro’ are informed with the proclamation and the informed ones also inform to those who were not there. To confirm the proclamation, drum is thumped. After all, to remind the people with the proclamation, leaders/elders discuss it during *Ooto* at *Kebeles*. Another informant Mr. Seleshi added to this that in addition to proclaiming, in *Ooto* at ‘mashik’are baaro’, improvements of rules are made, new rules are established accordingly (Interview).

In *Shekacho* community there are proscribed actions. Some of the respondents mentioned the proscribed actions in *Shekacho* community. They are: testifying by false, murder, telling lies, theft, unreasonable deforestation, marriage between families/same clans, disrespecting elders/seniors, taking boundaries of others, eating alone, striking animals and throwing rubbish things at bank of rivers are from the mentioned proscribed actions. Regarding to keeping forest, Mr. Belachew responded that there is a system of preserving forest among *Shekacho* community. By dividing the area of forest to every family member, forests are preserved and pass from generation to generation. As a result of this, it became a UNESCO designated biosphere reserve.

Regarding the proscribed action of murder, Atesta Dakito responded that “we clan leaders will not drink water if there is murder in the *Kebele* that we are leading before giving justice.” This is because “we believe if we drink water from that land, we shared the sin also.” Not to have such problems “we always discuss how to keep oneself from such action during *Ooto*.” And in doing this, *Ooto* plays a valuable role. (Interview)

One of the participants, Sileshi said that “when I say eating together, one thing comes to my mind and that is in *Shekacho* culture, eating alone was considered as taboo.” But of this globalization, around town, people can eat alone, however, in some rural *kebeles*, eating alone is taboo. Even, if someone is hungry and wants to eat and the other person at home had eaten before, someone from the family member must sit and eat with him/her (Interview).

The interview and the FGD assure that *Ooto* plays an important role in teaching the community members what is good and bad through different cultural practices held in *Ooto*. Through *Ooto*, the community learns what is good and just in the community for a social living and culture is shared, learned and cultivated too. As well, giving emphasis for the cultural values while practicing *Ooto*, help the community members live harmonized life together and cultivate a good personality.

4.2.3. The Role of *Ooto* in Promoting Cultural Identity

Every society creates one’s own identity and identified with it. In doing this, *Ooto* helps the community, i.e the *Shekacho* to create, cultivate and promote their identity. During *Ooto*, the participants are told about their history, culture, wisdom, identity, freedom, norms and values. Thus, through this, “we recognize, enhance and promote our cultural identity” (Kitamo, Interview). “For us it is the best way of developing our cultural identity, indigenous knowledge, beliefs, value, norm and shares it” (Kitamo, interview). Some scholars state about cultural identity as an individual self-concept developed from his/her social group with that of his/her knowledge (Tajfel, 1978, Jahoda, 1992).

Atesta Dakito responded that in *Ooto* through interaction, “we preserve our social ties and cultural identity”. *Ooto* plays an important role to the continuation of culture and cultural identity. Every important issue is discussed in *Ooto*; problems of the community are solved

through *Ooto* by the participants, experts or government (Interview). Another informant, Wolasha Mamo added that through *Ooto* “we teach our children to preserve the forest as it is our wealth.” It is forbidden to cut forests without any adequate reason to cut. For them, the forest is their life and life for all. In line with this, Angulo responded that “when you said Sheka, one thing comes to your mind and that is the forest, our green paradise” (Interview).

This indicates that, through *Ooto* the community members are told about themselves, about their identity and this promotes their identity.

4.2.4. The Role of *Ooto* in Promoting Peace and Solving Societal Conflicts

Some scholars suggested that the role of the indigenous cultural communication practice in maintaining peace is critical. According to Morton et.al (2006), communication is a very important means to solve the different societal problems happened among or between the communities. According to the individual interview and FGD with the selected community members, through *Ooto* societal conflicts are solved; when neighbors or families or husband and wife quarrel, it could be solved through *Ooto*.

One of the participants in FGD, Angulo explained that the *Shekacho* community practiced the practice, i.e. *Ooto* well and believed and accepted that the practice plays a critical role in the process of resolving societal conflicts. If a societal conflict occurs between or among individuals the person who feels he/she is a victim or abused wants to communicate the issue or the incident happened to the selected elders/seniors by the means called ‘*waajjiyo*’ meaning reproach blame according to the cultural rule of the community.

‘*Waajjiyo*’/Reproach blame

‘*Waajjiyo*’ takes place before taking a case/incident to *Ooto*. This helps the elders/seniors or leaders know about the issue by asking the person what the issue is about in brief. Then, the elders/leaders select some individuals from the *Kebele* and deal with the case by having *Ooto*. During the *Ooto*, the one who is accused and the accuser stands in front of the selected community members. As they are ordered to tell the case, by turn they start to explain. Then, the accuser and accused one started the ‘*Teggo*’ meaning litigation (Alemu, FGD).

‘Teggo’/Litigation

From the definitions given to ‘Teggo’ meaning litigation, it can be understood that ‘Teggo’ is a technique in which the accused and the accuser litigate about the incident happened. Alemu responded that while presenting their appeal, proper communication style is fundamental, and they present the case with respecting manner. Standing in the front, the accuser and the accused explained the case using proverbs. In doing this, they should respect the culture of presenting ‘Teggo’ and ask permission before taking turns. If the accuser or accused want to use proverbs to explain the case more, a person should say ‘shiino kisso’ in Afaan Oromo ‘Saffu Kassan’. This is to mean that except the others, i.e. except the senior/leaders and selected persons. After listening to their ‘Teggo’ means litigation, then finally, the elders/leaders judged the case and solved the problem. As they have been told the don’ts after the conflict has been resolved, there is no means for revenge among the conflicting individuals. To add to this, Astawusegn said, “‘Teggo’ is our traditional judging mechanism and the elders/leaders are our traditional judges in case of this practice.” (FGD).

‘Woraafo’/Blameless

There is a process of identifying the guilty person from the community member during *Ooto* and the techniques is called ‘woraafo’ meaning blameless. It is a *Shekacho’s* cultural, traditional practice of identifying a person who did a crime. If there are complicated problems within the community, by telling them to the elders or clan leaders, it can be solved through ‘woraafo’. It is an old aged traditional practice used at different time to find and solve different cases of crime which cannot be easily solved by the law court. For the crimes which do not have testimony or witness, ‘woraafo’ is a means to investigate it.

To perform ‘woraafo’ the community members of the *Kebele* come together and sit for *Ooto* at first. The sitting arrangement is half circle and the elder/leaders sit in front of the members so as to manage and lead the *Ooto*. Before starting, every member of the community stands and the elders/ leaders bless the country, the people and animals; they pray for a minute for the one whom they lost in death, for the one who is sick and for the one who is in problem. After discussing different issues, at the time of ‘woraafo’, every member of the community including the elders/leaders stands one by one in the front where they used as a stage. First of all, the stage

is named as it is a stage of Almighty God and every member of the community respected it. One person stands on the stage and the rest sit down and say ‘woraafu’ ‘woraafu’ ‘woraafu’ by raising their hand. This is to mean that the person is blameless. But if they keep silent, it is to mean that the person is guilty of a crime discussed. Then, the leaders let the person to explain what he/she did to the members and advise or warn or punish the person accordingly and solve the problem. But in case, if there is a person who refuses that he/she did not conduct the crime, the community member will curse the person. But because the stage is named as it is ‘The stage of God’, the community members are afraid of lying being there (Interview and observation).

One of the participants, Wolta Bahiru shared his experience of lying as “a long time ago, when I was leading this practice, I saw one person shivering and pissing on his trouser”. This is because, before starting, every member declares not to lie and said, “if we lie, let God humiliated and ignominy us”.

To describe the role of ‘woraafu’ in *Ooto*, one of the informants Mr. Belachew, high court’s vice president, responded that ‘woraafu’ helps the law court in many ways; it investigates the crime with no testimony or witness and in doing this it saves the time of the low court by solving it before coming to the court house. Woltaa Bahiru also responded that using the technique ‘woraafu’ in addition to solving different societal conflicts raised of boundary, trade and some disagreement, in 2004 E.C, more than fifty thousand Birr (in cash) are given back to the owners. And because of this practice, the number of compliance cases is decreased from time to time. Through this “we harmonize the community”. The participants in FGD argued on that conflict is ineludible, but such traditional practice plays an important role in resolving it.

From FGD, the researcher (I) understood that there is no known exact place and time for the beginning of this practice, i.e. there is no exact time of where and when the ‘woraafu’ started. But it has been told by the elders that the communities’ need for fighting crimes is the main reason for this practice. The *Shekacho* community gives a great value for the practice as it helps in identifying and finding the criminal person or group. Through this practice different societal problems are solved, and peace is maintained. It is the appreciable practice of maintaining peace among the *Shekacho* community.

The interview, FGD and observation assure that this indigenous cultural communication tradition is playing an important role in solving different societal conflicts. Through *Ooto*, different societal problems, different societal conflicts are solved, and the individuals are reconciled, lost and spoiled properties of individuals are determined and found back to the person. The value of the indigenous cultural communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* in societal conflict resolution among the *Shekacho* community is highly seen in a way that investigates different cases during societal conflict resolution.

4.2.5. The Role of *Ooto* in Encouraging Intra-cultural Communication

Race, ethnicity, tradition, values, religious faith, economic level, gender, age, or other traits may help to distinguish one group from another. The socio-cultural similarities play an important role in interpersonal or intra-personal and intra-group relationship. During *Ooto*, members of the same social group come together and discuss on different issues. An informant from FGD, Mrs. Yemareshet discussed that they feel more comfortable when they perform *Ooto* with people who are similar to them.

As discussed in chapter two, culture and communication are closely related. Mr. Seleshi argued that *Ooto* encourage intra-cultural communication in a way that creates a chance to use their own language. “We come together for *Ooto* and in doing this we use our own language, tradition, style and so on as we have socio-cultural similarities” (Seleshi, interview). He added that participants in *Ooto* can have a different religious background, economic level, and some others, but *Ooto* supports them in a way that they focus on their similarities than differences. In line with this, Mr. Belachew responded that *Ooto* plays an important role in bringing different ideas together and have that intra-cultural communication. This indicates that the role of *Ooto* in encouraging intra-cultural communication is vital.

4.3. The Current Challenges in Practicing *Ooto*

As discussed above, the role of *Ooto* in communicating different issues, transferring knowledge, promoting peace, cultural values and identities and encouraging intra-cultural communication is visible. But nowadays, it is weakening and challenged.

According to the informants' response and FGD, the practice of *Ooto* is facing challenges currently. Previously, in *Ooto* the community discusses different important issues and share experiences, but nowadays it is used for political purposes. Girma said, "I failed and afraid to compare the previous role of *Ooto* with the current one". People sit together for *Ooto*, but it is not like the previous one. The role, the value, the quality and the nature of the practice, i.e. *Ooto* is weakening.

Participants in FGD discussed that the transfer of such indigenous knowledge and skills to the younger generation is weakening. As a result of this, there is a chance to have a generation without its own indigenous values and culture. One of the informants responded that the youngster thinks they are civilized and no need of knowing such practice for them. "But for me, being civilized means knowing and preserving my culture"(Yohannis, FGD). Another participant in FGD discussed that previously "we use *Ooto* for our social living in many ways, but nowadays it is used for political purposes more." Thus, the community members are getting tired of participating in this practice. The number of participants in *Ooto* is decreasing from time to time and this is because today's *Ooto* losses its nature. Shegito responded that "when experts from agricultural sector call us for *Ooto*, we actively participated, but when those people who used to talk about politics the all time call us, we prefer to stay home" (FGD).

The other point raised by the participants is that the loose of the rule is challenging the practice nowadays (FGD).

The interview, FGD and observation assure that the indigenous communication practice, i.e. *Ooto* is facing challenges nowadays. The value given for the practice before and now is different as it is used for other purpose which has no significance for the mass.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher concluded what she has discussed with the respondents via interview, FGD and what she has observed about the indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekacho* community in promoting cultural values, identities, maintaining peace and encouraging intra-cultural communication.

5.1. Conclusion

The study focuses on exploring the indigenous cultural communication practice of *Shekacho* community as a means to promote peace, cultural values and identities. The study is carried out to achieve the objectives of the study. The study is aimed to attain the six specific objectives: the nature of *Ooto*, roles of *Ooto* as indigenous communication practice, roles of *Ooto* in promoting peace and resolving conflict, roles of *Ooto* in promoting cultural values and identities, roles of *Ooto* in encouraging intra-cultural communication and the current challenges in practicing *Ooto*. To answer the research questions, qualitative approach with ethnographic design is applied.

Ooto is a communication practice of *Shekacho* community for different purposes. It is the indigenous communication one by which the *Shekacho* communities develop, cultivate and maintain their culture. *Ooto* is experienced for a long period of time and is specific to the *Shekachs*'. *Ooto* served the people of *Sheka* in many ways in promoting cultural values, identities and maintaining peace. The role of *Ooto* is great as a communication system in the community. It plays an important role in maintaining peace among the people in different ways. Every activity, cultural identities, values and norms are discussed in *Ooto* for social life. The *Shekacho* communities preserve their cultural values, identities and maintain peace through old aged practice *Ooto*.

Ooto is a traditional practice where several cultural values and norms are shared. Through this interaction, how the community creates, keeps and develops their identity is discussed. Through *Ooto*, the elders/seniors produce, repair and transfer reality. For the *Shekacho* community *Ooto* is a way of knowing and constructing one's own cultural values and shared identities for social

living. Some old aged practices in the community like ‘diiro’, ‘dafo’, ‘waajjiyo’, ‘woraafu’ are kept and cultivated through *Ooto*. And those cultural practices hold the communities’ identification as they incorporate values, norms and thoughts of them.

There are old aged practices that are performed during *Ooto*. And ‘Woraafu’ is the one which plays a valuable role in maintaining peace among the community. It is traditional practice; it is a technique or strategy by which the community member identified the criminal person to create a peaceful environment. The indigenous communication for conflict resolution process is conveyed through the traditional system ‘Woraafu’.

The indigenous communication practice of the *Shekacho* Community is performed at different cultural ceremonies like in the ‘gommo’, the ‘Teggo’ and the ‘Mashik’are baaro’. There are established rules for practicing such traditional practices. The *Shekacho* community has exercised the indigenous communication practice according with the rule they establish for the practice.

There are also traditional practices which play a significant role during conflict resolution through indigenous communication practice *Ooto*. From the traditional practices, the ‘teggo’ has an important role. The selected persons to lead the ‘teggo’ are the traditional judges and the practice, ‘teggo’ is the traditional low court for them.

Societal conflicts are resolved at different levels according to its complexity and the conflicting parties through indigenous communication practices. In addition to this, when the community members come together for *Ooto*, they share different messages about culture, economy, social and as well political situation of themselves and their neighbors. *Ooto* is a platform where the youngsters learn about the different cultural values of their family. And in doing all these, *Ooto* encourage intra-cultural communication.

In day to day activity of human life, there is communication. And such kind of indigenous communication is a one type of communication that distinguishes one community from the other in a way it is performed. The *Shekacho* community has their own indigenous communication system used for different purposes as discussed above. The traditional practices have practiced

for a long period of time to promote peace, cultural values and identities. However, nowadays, this indigenous cultural communication practice of the *Shekachos*' has faced challenges. *Ooto* is missing its target and role. Even though the indigenous cultural communication is playing a great role in maintaining peace, promoting cultural values and identities in the *Shekacho* community, the transfer of such indigenous knowledge and skills to the younger generation is weakening. Thus, to avoid such dangers from the community's asset and not to have generation without indigenous knowledge, skill, cultural values and identities, it is better to work cooperatively to teach the new generation about the indigenous cultural communication practices and its role.

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Appendixes
Appendix-1

Form used to get personal information of the participants

Full Name _____

Sex _____

Age _____

Woreda _____

Kebele _____

Marital status _____

Level of Education _____

Occupation _____

Religion _____

Role in the community _____

Time and duration of interview _____

Appendix - 2

Interview Questions

1. What is *Ooto* and how do you define *Ooto*?
2. How do you practice *Ooto*?
3. What are the rules of *Ooto*?
4. What kinds of issues or information are discussed in *Ooto*?
5. Why you participate in *Ooto*?
6. What advantages *Ooto* has for you?
7. Is there wrong doings that are forbidden in the community and what are they?
8. How the wrong doings in the community are solved using *Ooto*?
9. How good and bad practices are judged in the community?
10. What are the advantages of *Ooto* in promoting peace?
11. What are the roles of *Ooto* in promoting cultural values?
12. What are the roles of *Ooto* in encouraging intra-cultural communication?
13. What cultural values are promoted by *Ooto*?
14. What is the role of elders in *Ooto*?

Appendix - 3

Interview Question in Shekinono/Shekigna

1. Ooto amone? Ootesse biisho amone?
2. Ooto abissenaniye bidaamiyeyo?
3. Ootesse Sheeronoshi abi aboonoshine?
4. Ame year mo'onoshine dittoyissi Ootossi shit'abeetonoshii/geddabetonoshii?
5. Amoyissiye Ootossi ne hamabeeto/negiyabeeto?
6. Ootesse gaac'o nessi amone?
7. Gaac'alli gooronoshi beetetta? Ami amonoshine?
8. Gaac'alli gooronoshi kaachoyissi mac'c'o Ootona abissi boono biichiyeyo?
9. Gaac'achona gaac'alli gooronoshini mac'c'e maac'ossi abissi bi biichiyeyo?
10. Digge deboyissi Ootesse gaac'o amone?
11. Gooroni k'ook'k'iyossi ootesse gaac'o amone?
12. Ootesse shuuno betti gore maac'ossi amone bi gaac'o?
13. Ame yeera gooronoshine ootona oogiyatonoshi?
14. Ootossi shaawe gennonoshisse gaac'o amone?

Appendix - 4

Invitation letter for FGD in Amharic

ለ አቶ/ወ/ሮ/ሪት -

ወይይት- FGD (Focused Group Discussion) ላይ እንዲሳተፉ ስለመጋበዝ

እኔ ማርች አየነዉ ወጋ በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ በጋዜጠኝነትና ኮሚዩኒኬሽን ዘርፍ የሁለተኛ ዲግሪ (MA) ተማሪ ስሆን፤ በሽክቻ ብሔረሰብ ዘንድ የሚዘወተረውን ኦቶ የተሰኘውን ቀደምት ባሕላዊ የመሥተጋብር ሂደት ከሥነ ተግባራት /Communication/፤ የተለያዩ ማህበራዊ ችግሮችን ከመቅረፍ አንጻር፤ የባሕላዊ ዕውቀት ሽግግርና ማገነት ከመቅረጽ/ማዳበር/ አንጻር ያለውን ፋይዳ በማጥናት ላይ እገኛለሁ። በዚህ ሂደትም አንዱ የመረጃ መሰብሰቢያ ዘዴ ያደረግኩት Focused Group Discussion /FGD/ ማለትም ወይይት ሲሆን እርሶም በቀን 14/06/2012 በ02 ቀበሌ በሚገኘዉ በወላሻ ማሞ ወላሻ ባህላዊ የሽክ ገበታ አዳራሽ ተገኝተዉ የቡድን ወይይት ላይ ተሳታፊ እንዲሆኑ ጥሪዬን አስተላልፋለሁ።

ማርች አየነዉ

ከታላቅ አክብሮት ጋር

Appendix - 5

Invitation letter for FGD in English to Communication Experts

To Mr./Mrs/Miss

Inviting you to participate in Focus Group Discussion

As stated above, I (March Ayenew Woga), MA student at Addis Ababa University in the department of journalism and communication, invite you to participate in focus group discussion for my MA thesis. The MA thesis which I am conducting is titled with ‘An Exploration of Indigenous Cultural Communication Practice of *Shekacho*’s Community ‘Ooto’ as a means to promote peace, cultural identities and cultural values and as well as a means to encourage intra-cultural communication’. In doing this, focus group discussion is one way of data gathering tool I have selected. Thus, on February 21, 2020, I am inviting you to come at Sheka Zone Public Relation Office to join me in the discussion on *Ooto*.

March Ayenew

With Best Regards,

Appendix - 6

Points for FGD in Amharic

1. በአጠቃላይ የኦቶ ምንነት
2. የኦቶ ጠቀሜታ የባሕል ዕቅዶችና ባሕልን ከማዳበር አንጻር
3. የኦቶ ፋይዳ መረጃ፣ አዳዲስ ዕውቀቶችና ቴክኖሎጂን ከማስተላለፍ አንጻር
4. የኦቶ ፋይዳ አዳዲስ ጉዳዮችን ለማሕበረሰቡ ተደራሽ ከማድረግ አንጻር
5. የኦቶ ፋይዳና ማንነት ከማነጻ አንጻር
6. የኦቶ አተገባበር ላይ ያጋጠሙ ፈተናዎች/ ተግዳሮቶች

Appendix - 7

Points for Focused Group Discussion in English

1. The meaning of *Ooto*
2. The roles of *Ooto* in promoting peace
3. The advantages of *Ooto* in promoting culture and cultural values and cultural identities
4. The roles of *Ooto* in transferring knowledge, information, education and news
5. The challenges faced or the barriers in practicing *Ooto*

Appendix-8

Observation Framework

Some of the Points to consider:

- Cultural entities: values, norms, beliefs involving in *Ooto*
- Traditional performances in *Ooto*
- Way of conversation in discussing different issues
- Way of the practice
- The tone of discussion
- Languages usage
- The Context
- The environment

Appendix-9

Profile of Interview Participants

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation
1.	Alemu Gelito	M	62	Pensioner
5	Ambaye Chorito	M	57	“
6.	Atesta Dakito	M	70	Clan Leader
3.	Belachew Jemere	M	42	Civil servant
4.	Birhanu Maro	M	59	“
2.	Demeke Ambo	M	58	“
7.	Kitamo Gawuserasha	M	62	Pensioner
8.	Sileshi Chalito	M	50	Civil servant
9.	Wolasha Mamo	M	80	War leader and Elder of Sheka
10.	Wolta Bahiru	M	60	Civil Servant and Clan leader

Appendix-10

Group1. Profile of FGD participants

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation
1.	Asemamaw Haile	M	38	Civil servant
2.	Asetawusegn Endeshaw	M	39	“
3.	Kebede Wodo	M	75	Pensioner
4.	Netsanet Haile	M	41	Civil servant
5.	Yemareshet Dinku	F	55	“
6.	Yohannes Dinku	M	54	“

Appendix-11

Group2. Profile of FGD participants

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation
1.	Shegito Adasho	M	60	Farmer
2.	Immo Wohacho	M	79	“
3.	Awulo Deyino	M	83	Pensioner
4.	Dachito Ego	M	50	“
5.	Angulo Adiraro	M	76	Farmer
6.	Alemu Matti	M	71	Elder of Kebele

Appendix-12

Pictures Taken During Observation



Figure 2. Organic honey for sale



Figure 3. Banana farm land



Figure 4. Coffee farm land



Figure 5. Elders/seniors of Sheka



Figure 6. Inset farm land