



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**WOGA: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CUSTOMARY LAW AMONG
THE GAMO OF ETHIOPIA.**

BY

ZELALEM ZEWDIE

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
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**WOGA: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CUSTOMARY LAW AMONG
THE GAMO OF ETHIOPIA.**

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Declaration

I, Zelalem Zewdie, declare that this thesis is my original work and has even been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Glossary of Local terms

<i>Affala</i>	handy made cloth from hand-spun cotton.
<i>Awa</i>	father
<i>Amoo</i>	a man who lost his wife by death
<i>Asho dabo</i>	cloth relatives mostly to show blood relationships
<i>Ayle</i>	slaves
<i>Bale</i>	mourning place
<i>Baira</i>	senior
<i>Bazo</i>	lowland
<i>Bococha</i>	food eaten at mourning house
<i>Bolo</i>	wife giver or wife receiver
<i>Bora</i>	ox
<i>Bonqa</i>	abduction
<i>Casha</i>	ostracizing
<i>Chaqo</i>	oath
<i>Cimata</i>	elders
<i>Cumatetha</i>	reconciliation process in homicide
<i>Dabo</i>	kin
<i>Dere</i>	small autonomous political unit
<i>Dereta</i>	plural form of <i>dere</i>
<i>Deysha bayra</i>	senior of the clan
<i>Dhontha</i>	childless
<i>Dubusha</i>	assembly place
<i>Duho</i>	burial place
<i>Dulata</i>	public assembly

<i>Eka</i>	one who sacrifices
<i>Farso</i>	local beer made from barley
<i>Gaba</i>	second harvesting season which is collected in June to August
<i>Gassa</i>	common land which serves as an assembly place between <i>dereta</i>
<i>Geze</i>	highland
<i>Giata</i>	market places
<i>Gome</i>	misfortune caused due to transgression of social norms
<i>Gosho</i>	bridal wealth given to the female relatives of the bride
<i>Guche</i>	ostrich feather
<i>Guta</i>	neighborhood
<i>Guuzo</i>	traditional community police service
<i>Huduga</i>	title of a dignitary of <i>dache</i> clan
<i>Kalo</i>	junior
<i>Kawo</i>	first sacrificer of the <i>dere</i>
<i>ketha</i>	house
<i>komo</i>	clan
<i>lata</i>	inheritance
<i>layma</i>	adultery
<i>maga</i>	title of a dignitary of <i>gamo</i> clan
<i>mana</i>	potter, tanner and blacksmith
<i>mishire</i>	dignitary title of women
<i>pila</i>	avoidance
<i>phino</i>	puck
<i>phole</i>	hockey
<i>sayo</i>	divorced women

<i>sila</i>	main harvesting season mainly from December- January
<i>tassa'</i>	boundary
<i>tema</i>	mystical power of bringing fortune
<i>woga</i>	law or rule
<i>wordo</i>	false
<i>wozetetha</i>	purification of <i>ayle</i> and joining of <i>mala</i> group
<i>xalahe</i>	evil spirit
<i>xambaro</i>	spear like stick
<i>xilo</i>	truth
<i>yarsho</i>	sacrifice
<i>yeo</i>	orphan
<i>zito</i>	sheep skin that the <i>oge maga</i> wears

Abstract

The study of indigenous social institutions has become one of the key issues among social scientists during the past two centuries. This study is an empirical study aimed at exploring the role of *woga* (customary law) in upholding group solidarity and the changes it presently facing among the Gamo. The study began by reviewing the available related and relevant literatures, which latter helped the development of objectives of the study. To explore the customary law, data was collected from different key informants, interviews are conducted with individuals who came from different social background and focus group discussions are conducted to explore the meaning of *woga*, its role and the changes. The data is analyzed and interpreted in relation to the literature. Some cases were analyzed to show the significances of the customary law in the day lives of the study group. To this end, it begins with a discussion about the meaning of *woga* with different social groups. The study shows that, the customary law has sub-divided into four categories. The indigenous social institutions such as *kawo*, *woga maga*, *oge maga* and *eqa maga* play a significant role in enforcing the customary law. The study found that clan also has a pivotal role in the enforcement of the customary law. Qualitative data also shows the customary laws are playing a role in resolving interpersonal, family and inter-*dere* conflicts. It guides the marriage relationship among the different groups. The study identified that the customary law is discriminatory; that it does not treat women equally with a men and marginalized groups faces biases. The study also identified the institution has been facing various challenges and changes, which adversely affects the effectiveness and efficiency of its role. Government and Non-governmental Organizations should promote its continuity by providing the community conflict resilience through participating all social groups and enhancing local peoples potential and rediscovering elders wisdom and knowledge.

Key words: Change, Conflict, customary law, indigenous, Social Institutions, Woga.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Social Scientists argue that, culture is a complex and multi-faced concept, which is embodied in performed actions of society, thought, religious rituals and social institutions. Mason (2000:22) defines culture as a way of life (a set of rule-governed practices, which are at least loosely woven together) informed by a set of interconnected traditions of thought and inquiry.

Anthropology has a long tradition of studying certain cultural-groups and social institutions. As Lincoln and Didier (2005:109) explain, people are embodied in sets of institutions which will help to shape how they think and act but different institutions will have different and possibly conflicting sets of influences. Social institutions are used by the public as a reference to control deviant behavior, and the patterning of agents of control preferred in relationship to a number of different kinds of deviant behavior and maintains group solidarity. Hetcher (1987:18) defines group solidarity as the proportion of member resources employed to fulfill corporate obligations. Solidarity therefore depends on two factors, the rate of compliance with corporate obligations and the extensiveness of these obligations.

The social organization and institutions of the Gamo of southern Ethiopia is remarkable for its uniqueness. According to Freeman (2004:24) throughout the highlands people live in scattered settlement and are organized in different communities or *dere*. *Dere* refers to a political geographical administrative unit. Each *dere* has its own sacrificer (*ekka*), its own initiates (*huduga* and *maga*) and its own assemblies (*dulata*) and assembly places (*dubusha*). The composition of each *dere* is called as *dereta*.

The defining aspect of life in the Gamo *dereta* is a set of intricate and well-enforced traditional law, *woga*. Freeman explains the role of *woga* in governing the behavior of individuals as follows:

If one does not follow the rules, *woga*, or behave appropriately, it is as if either the gradient has been “flattened or there is a blockage in channel” (which fertility flows). The flow of fertility is

“hampered” and these downstream of the obstruction would be expected to experience agricultural failures, illness or other misfortune (2004:67).

Kaza (2012:70) states that the *woga* is used for different administrative and development purposes. *Woga* plays undeniable role in shaping the world view of the society. It also guides the relationships of individual with each other or inter-*dere* relationships, resource management, conflict resolution and plays pivotal role in maintaining group order.

The Gamo people live in the highlands of southwest Ethiopia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), in Gamo Gofa Zone. Arbaminch town is the capital of Gamo Gofa Zone. It is located at a distance of 454 kilo meters southwest from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s capital city. The Gamo highlands reach altitudes over 3000 meters and are approximately home of 1,044,589 people (Census Bureau 2007).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to describe the role of *woga* in maintaining group solidarity among the Gamo people. *Woga* is socially learned ways of living among the Gamo. It holds all aspects of social and political life of the people.

Many anthropological studies have been conducted among the Gamo of southern Ethiopia in the areas of political organization (Bureau 2012, Freeman 2001, Freeman 2004), social stratification (Freeman 2001) on settlement pattern (Jackson et al. 1969; Kaza 2012) on the enforcement of indigenous peoples right and (Weedman 2001) on occupational difference.

In the studies that deal with the Gamo, Bureau (2012) and Weedman (2001) indirectly explains that the *woga* has a significant role among the Gamo people to gain access to highest elective social status. Freeman (2004) also explains the role of *woga* in governing the behavior of individuals. Despite the introduction of new religious beliefs (Freeman 2001) and establishment of formal state institutions in the area (Bureau 2012) traditional values remain important among the Gamo. *Woga* serves as a guide for religious rituals, resource management and use, gender relations, assigning socio-political titles and defining the social structure.

But the above mentioned sources fail to give full picture about the customary law, *woga*, at the time of their study. Moreover, they do not give any detailed description on its role in the life of the society and the changes the customary law is facing due to different reasons. So far, no detailed ethnographic work has been done on the *woga* and a comprehensive research that follows a holistic approach is highly needed. Gamo culture and people can not be fully explained without understanding the different role the *woga* plays in their lives.

In this work, the multiple role of the *woga* and the changes the institution is currently facing due to the introduction of formal legal system (which undermines the role of *woga* as an indigenous law for maintaining group order), spreading of Christianity (both Orthodox and Protestantism that considers traditional beliefs and religious rituals as profane) and the modern education (the young generation who attend formal school system considers the *woga* as old tradition) and other factors will be explored.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

This study seeks to understand the meaning and role of the *woga* in maintaining group solidarity of the Gamo people of southern Ethiopia as well as the changes it is presently facing.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

- ✓ To understand the meaning of *woga* in the context of Gamo culture.
- ✓ To explore different categories of customary laws embraced by *woga*.
- ✓ To examine the implication of *woga* in maintaining group solidarity.
- ✓ To explore the social organizations and their role in the enforcement of *woga*.
- ✓ To assess the changes and continuities related to the significance of *woga* in regulating human behavior and social relations.

1.4. Methodology

This study focuses on assessing the role of *woga* in *Zigit dere*, one of the *dereta* in the Gamo highlands. The study follows a qualitative approach. As Creswell (2014:32) describes that, a qualitative research as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning ascribe to a social or human problems. This approach is preferable in studying a social group because of it passes different processes. The process involves emerging questions and processes, data

typically collected in to particular setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to genera themes.

From different qualitative research approaches, I employed ethnographic design. Creswell (2014:42-43) stated that, ethnography is a design of inquiry in which the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a period of time. I used this research design among other qualitative research methods because it allows me to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the *woga* in the context of the Gamo culture.

As ethnography allows researchers to use different methods of data gathering, I employed different data gathering methods including participant observation, in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

i) Participant Observation

I carried out participant observation in Zigit *dere*. The reason why I selected this *dere* is that the *woga* still functions, but faces challenges due to its exposure to new trends of change because of location. The Zigit *dere* is located 29 kilometers away from the Arbaminch town where different cultural groups co-exist and people from the *dere* frequently travel to the town for various reasons. Participant observation was conducted on the special occasions during the time of my field work. Through cautious participation and observation of their routine activities and behavior from July 18, 2015 to August 25, 2015, I studied the influence of *woga* in their social life. I took part in different community affairs such as conflict resolution, traditional rituals, burial and wedding ceremonies, community and kin assemblies. I also captured photos of different social events and audio records of what people say, to get some of the most important clues of the culture.

ii) In-depth Interview

In-depth interview were conducted about the *woga* with individuals from different social categories, sex, ages, work and religious groups. A total of 21 people were interviewed.

I conducted in-depth interview with 17 individuals (12 male and 5 female) from the *mala* social group whose age varies from early 20's to mid 70's. The number of male participant in the interview is more than women. It was done purposely because the Gamo are patriarchial and women are not much allowed to public arena and in the decision makings. To capture the voice

from all social groups, I conducted interview with 4 persons (3 male and 1 female) from the *mana* social group whose age varies from 30's to mid 50's. I interviewed only four individuals from this group due to two reasons. First, the majority is not interested to participate in the interviews with individual who is from the *mala* group. Second, their scattered settlement pattern was another challenge. They settled in different parts of the *dere*. The interviews with people from different categories of people were tape-recorded and latter translated from Gamo language to English. Key informants were identified by using maximum variation sampling strategy to see the changes the *woga* institution is facing. Snowball and opportunistic sampling strategies were employed to identify study participants to get data on different categories of customary laws and its implication for maintaining group order. I used maximum variation sampling strategy to identify key informants who provide information on the meaning of *woga* and the role of social organizations in enforcing the *woga*. Detailed discussions were conducted with these key informants concerning the *woga* institution in their frames of reference.

iii) Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is another method I employed to understand the *woga* and the changes the institution is facing. One focus group discussion was held with each men and women group separately. The men group consists of eight persons whose age varies from early 30's to mid 70's who have different social backgrounds. The participants in the men group are selected from among the men who came to *Kebele* assembly on the metting for awareness creation on the use of fertilizers to increase productions. I used both snowball and purposeful sampling strategies to select the study participants. Women group consists of six individuals from different social background and their age varies from early 30's to mid 50's. Similarly, the participants in the women group are selected by employing snowball and purposeful sampling strategies. The discussion by both groups was audio-recorded in Gamo language and translated into English.

1.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis process took place side by side. When; I conducted in-depth interview, participant observation and focus group discussion, I organized the data into file folder and the files were organized into appropriate text units. During this process codes are developed to sort texts in categories. Then I classified, described and interpret the meanings given by the people to the social situations to develop themes.

The categories divided to each theme were recognized and categorized under the specific objectives of the study. Theme that is identified for each objectives of the study was organized systematically. Based on the organized theme, I presented just the facts from *emic* point of view by focusing on critical events in the society and showing the different perspectives of the key informants on the function of the *woga* institution. Finally I made my own analysis and interpretation from the data. My study of Gamo *woga* follows more an interactive perspective (intermixing both diachronic and synchronic aspects). As Barnard (2000:8) puts it, using this approach is more accurate because its adherents reject the static nature of synchronic analysis, and reject also the simplistic historical assumptions of diachronic analysis.

Interactive approach allows me to uncover the historical background of the *woga*, the ways in which individuals define their social situations and to pose questions like; what is *woga*? How it came to being? How do *woga* work to maintain group order? How do *woga* change?

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the meaning of the *woga* and its role among the Zigit Gamo of Southern Ethiopia. My study is part of a discussion within and beyond Anthropology about the role of customary law in maintaining group order. The study is intended:

To contribute to the understanding of the Gamo people from the *emic* perspective and its potential as model for other social groups.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit the Gamo people and other indigenous society facing the challenge of maintaining their culture in a rapidly changing world.

To benefit both governmental and non-governmental organizations working on culture, peace building and development.

1.7. Limitation of the study

This research work has its limitation. The limitation has lies with geographical coverage of the study. Zigit *dere* consists of three kebeles (Zigit Merche, Zigit Bakole and Zigit Feraso) with wide variations in socio-cultural aspect. This study had to concentrate on a specific site around Orga, Merche, Woreto and Zera neighborhoods. So, the data and the findings of the study may not be representing the wider of Gamo culture.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature

This section deals with review of literature related to the role of culture in maintaining group solidarity. The review emphasized on theoretical framework pertaining to social solidarity. Anthropology has long tradition in study of group solidarity. The anthropologist has interest to understand how social order maintained. What makes people live together in peace and initiate mutual ties? As Cheung and Kan Ma (2011:46) states, the stronghold of theoretical and research traditions to study social solidarity originated to tackle the problem of social disharmony, or its manifestation as anomie and alienation.

2.1. Definition of Culture

Worsley (1999:4) takes the view that the term ‘culture’ covers too much and too vague a manner to be of use, and should usually be set aside as a category in social science.

Anthropology has provided numerous definition of culture. According to one commonly acknowledged definition “culture can be seen as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society” (Tylor 1871:1). According to Schaffer (2006:55), “culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior including the ideas, values, customs, and artifacts of groups of people”. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or social groups and that it encompasses in addition to art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO 2002:1).

Mason (2000:22) defines the concept as a “way of life which is informed by set of interconnected traditions of thought and enquiry”. According to Mason “a way of life” may refers to the culture of a community, or a nation, or tribe, or a religious group or even a continent. But it is confrontational to accept that continent has its own culture. For this study, I adopted Harris’s (1999:19) definition of culture as “the socially learned ways of living found in human societies and that it embraces all aspects of social life including both thought and behavior”.

There is a debate in several fields of study about human culture. The main point of the debate is whether culture is inherited or man made? There are two conflicting approaches, which of “nature” versus “nurture”. It is the shorthand expression of debates about the relative importance of an individual innate (nature) versus personal experiences (nurture) is determining or causing individual differences in physical and behavioral traits. Carrithers (2002:594) argue that it is impossible to understand the concept of culture clearly without reference to its opposing concept ‘nurture’.

From nature point of view human behavior is determined by genetics. As Harris (1999:19) pointed the idea that the genetic predispositions bio-psychological needs and derives influences the form and content of peoples thought as well as their behaviors. Carrithers (2002:597) stated that we can learn culture because we come richly equipped, even as the smallest infant, to enter in to conscious and responsive social relations with our fellows. He further argues humans have culture because we are first socially knowledgeable, able to grasp and react to moods and intentions of those around us in a way recognizably a kin too.

From the “nurture” point of view cultural traits are human creation. According to the proponents of this view human behavioral traits develop almost exclusively from environmental influence. Human cognition and action are mediated by learned and therefore cultural, rather than by instinctive or inborn, responses (Bernard 2002:593). Malinowski (1960:67-68) also sees culture as human creation. To him humans created culture to achieve his or her needs for basic necessities that of: power, safety, comfort and prosperity. Similarly Erikson (2001:40) states that what we think of our human character is not inborn it must be acquired through learning. He sees it is primarily created through our engagement with the social and cultural world. Kimmel (2006:627) states that, individuals born cultureless learn their culture by growing up and being socialized in it.

While from other perspective anthropologists like Harris (1999:19) argue that, culture is a mix of both genetic and learned capacities which shape particular traits. But he did not refute that the great majority of cultural traits are overwhelmingly shaped by socially mediated learning. Now the “nature- nurture” debate has been finally resolved, that neither nature nor culture, but both shape human behavioral trait.

In relation with change culture both resists and embraces change. There are both conservative forces that resist change and dynamic influences that encourage change. Some groups argue that culture change is inevitable and for others culture is coherent and resistant to change. According to Malinowski (1945:1) ‘culture change is the process by which the existing orders of society that is; its social, spiritual and material civilization is transformed from one type to another’. So from this perspective cultural change is a permanent feature of human civilization. But some of classical functionalists emphasize the persistence of culture to change. For Worsley (1999:18) culture is something shaped in common, learned, acquired and transmitted from generation to generation, an image of continuity rather than change. In support of his claim he presents that homes and castles in England, Scotland and Wales which are depicted as evidence of common “heritage”. Similarly for Parsons values seemed to be eternal and unchangeable (Worsley 1999:17). If so how could change come about? Parsons emphasizes inadequate socialization is the cause for the change. As he stated ideas and values might be weakly held because people (the young especially) had been inadequately exposed to them badly trained or educated by their elders (Worsley 1999:17).

2.2. Definition of Solidarity

Anthropology has provided numerous definition of solidarity from various perspectives. Solidarity refers to “social interaction in society to bring people together for common interest” (Cheung and Kan Ma 2011:46). Nevertheless, De Beer and Koster (2009:15) do not restrict the definition of solidarity only to interaction of people for common interest. Rather they see it broadly as “the willingness to help others or to support the group one belongs to without immediately getting something in return”. To them the driving force behind making solidarity action is group interest rather than individual benefit. Bayertz (1999:3) comprehend solidarity as “a mutual attachment between individuals that is a composition of two levels. He describes the first level is a factual level of actual common ground between individuals. The second level as a normative level of mutual obligations to aid each others, as and when should be necessary.

As Hetcher defines (Thorn and Rosenstein 2002:41) ‘group solidarity as the proportion of members’ resources employed to fulfill corporate obligations’. Therefore solidarity depends on two factors, the state of compliance with cooperate obligations and the extensiveness of these obligations. Similarly for Mason (2000:7) solidarity consists in mutual concern. This means the

members must give each other's interests some non instrumental weight in their practical reasoning. Second, there must be no systematic exploration or injustice.

According to Bayertz (1999:4) social solidarity has its manifestations. First, it may be morally communicable, but it cannot be binding. Second, a solidarity relationship usually includes particular obligations. It means one does not make solidarity relationships with just anybody, but only with the other members of a particular community to which one believes oneself to belong. While for Durkheim social solidarity is characterized by cooperation which is automatically produced through the pursuit by each individual of his own interests (Bellah 1973:86). For him each individual consecrate himself to a special function in order, by the force of events to make solidarity relationships with others.

De Beer and Koster (2009:180) note that the defining characteristics of a solidarity act is that there is no equivalence between what one contributes to the others and to the group as whole and what one gets in return. In defining the role of solidarity Bayertz (1999:19) states it as the inner cement holding together a society. To him the central element of such cohesion include a common descent and history, a common culture and ways of life and a common ideas and goals.

As Thorn and Rosenstein (2002:41) elucidated in a solidarity group intra-group ties are denser than out group ties. Because of this relationships group members have enhanced abilities to mediate rewards and punishments thereby strengthening their sanctioning capacities.

2.3. Theories on Social Solidarity

2.3.1. The Classical Theory

This theory is developed by French sociologist Emilie Durkheim and later functionalism emerged from it. The notion of this theory is that social solidarity depends upon shared values. According to this theory solidarity motives were thought to be either inspired by affection and shared norms and values, or by instrumental considerations like self interest and rational choice (Komter 2005:199). Turner and Rojek (2001:28) noted that this approach gives greater emphasis to shared values, or cultures which sustain such institutions as the family and church as pivotal agencies of socialization of individuals in group life.

Furthermore Turner and Rojek (2001:68) claim this theory of social order would have to examine the non-contractual element of contract that is common values, collective sentiment which underpins everyday reciprocates and relations. They further assert, this approach suggests social order rests on a common interest of agreements or rules or conventions which bind people together in to a community.

Komter stated the underlying assumption of this theory of solidarity is about human nature which involves:

on the one hand, *homo sociologicus*, the individual as embedded in small scale social relationships, and whose solidary behavior is based on internalized moral obligations and, on the other hand, *homo economicus*, the rational, market oriented individuals, whose moral codes are abstract and universal (2005: 107).

Parsons viewed the problem of order is rooted in inescapable conflict between the interests and desires of individuals, *a material shortage* and requirements of society, *moral shortage*; the pacification of violent strife among men and the secure establishment of cooperative social relation making possible the pursuit of collective goals (Komter 2005:102). To Parson social order exists because the rewards of membership are sufficiently positive for the majority of a society to find the existing system beneficial and acceptable (Turner and Rojek 2001:79). To him the reward of individual conformity to social norms is psychological satisfaction. Hence there is a double contingency between social norms and individual rewards in the process to socialization and internalization

According to Durkheim (Komter 2005:104-105) solidarity can be divided into mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity signifies the analogy of the cohesion which unites the elements of an inanimate body, as opposed to that which makes a unity out of the elements of living body (Komter 2005:104-105). According to Durkheim in mechanical solidarity individual conscience is dependent on collective conscience, and individual identity is a part of group identity. In this kind of solidarity human behavior are regulated shared norms, sentiments and values that form together the conscience collective.

Viewed from mechanical solidarity point of view social order emerges as unintended consequences of the endless process of exchanges of goods, services and symbols (Turner and Rojek 2001: 72). These exchanges create a dense network of infinite obligations, duties, claims and expectations rather than an outcome of deliberate rational choice.

For Durkheim all social masses have been formed from homogeneous element (Bellah (1973:67). In this type of solidarity the collective type was very developed there and the individual type in a rudimentary state. It was inevitable that the whole social life of society should take on a religious character. Durkheim viewed (Bellah 1973:110) in this type of solidarity social life comes from the likeness of consciences and the individual is socialized, not having any real individuality, he becomes with those whom he resembles, part of the same collective type.

For Durkheim the similitude of conscience gives rise to juridical rules which, with threats of repressive measures, impose uniform beliefs and practices up on all (Bellah 1973:110). Furthermore Komter (2005:104) mentioned that this type of solidarity is reflected in the application of severe penal sanctions, 'repressive law' to deviant or the violation of norms. Religion is dominant factor in social life, and the codes of morality are concrete and specific.

According to Durkheim the second type of solidarity is called organic solidarity. To him it is a type of solidarity found in industrial societies. Just as in organized societies in industrial society social harmony comes essentially from division of labor (Bellah 1973:86). Furthermore he stated it is characterized by cooperation by which is automatically produced through the pursuit by each individual of his interest. Cheung and Kan Ma (2011: 148) also states organic solidarity relies on the division of labor. It is sufficient each individual consecrate himself to a special function in order, by the force of events to make himself solidarity relationship with others. Societies are integrated because of the interdependence that comes in to existence with the specialization of jobs.

Cheung and Kan Ma (2011:148) described collaboration instead of consensus on ideas and values are the glue to reach solidarity. For them this solidarity relies on the automatic adjustments of the parts even, without a common norm and regulation and the economy. Work sector or organizations are the major field that organic solidarity operates.

For Durkheim social life comes from having a physiognomy and personal activity which distinguishes him from others (Bellah 1973:110). As he explained individuals depend up on the group the same measures that he is distinguished from the group, and consequently up on the society which results from their union. To him the divisions of labor give rise to juridical rules which determine the nature and relations of divided functions, but whose violation calls forth only restrictive measures without any expiatory character.

Durkheim explicated his ideas that in organic solidarity that not only interests that govern the social relations. Rather he argued as follows:

We must not forget that, if the division of labor makes interests soldiery, it does not confound them; it keeps them distinct: it keeps them opposite. Even as in the internal working of individual organisms each organ is in conflict with others while cooperating with them, each of them contrasts, while needing the others, seeks to obtain what the needs at the least explains; that is to say, the acquire as many rights as possible in exchange for the smallest possible obligations (Bellah 1973:97-98)

Durkheim noted (Bellah 1973:111) that the members are united by ties which extend deeper and far beyond the short moments during which the exchange is made. There is, above all, an organ up on which we are tending to depend more and more, this is the state.

Durkheim's approach on social solidarity exercised an indelible impact on British social anthropologists, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski. They developed functionalist theory that state the sharing of norms would consistently contribute to the common function of the whole. According to functionalism theory a society is a whole of interconnected parts, where each part contributes to the maintenance of the whole.

Radcliffe-Brown (1952:195) states when we study the society, we have concerned with social structure and every kind of social structure and every kind of social phenomenon like morals, laws, etiquette, religion, government and education are all parts of the complex mechanisms by which a social structure exists and persists. This approach applies an analogy organism to the maintenance of social order. Komter (2005:104) described that the social molecules act together

only in the measure that they have no actions of their own, as the molecules in organic bodies. Furthermore Radcliff-Brown (1952:199) explained that a social relation exists between two or more individual organism, when there is some adjustment of their respective interests, by convergence of interests, or by limitation of conflicts that might arise from divergence of interests.

To Malinowski culture has a pivotal role in maintain such social order. As he stated its function as follows:

culture as the handwork of man and as the medium through which he achieve his ends a medium which allows him to live, to establish a standard safety, comfort and prosperity, a medium which gives him power and allows him to create goods and values beyond his animal, organic endowment, that culture, in all this and through all this, must be understood as means to an end, that is instrumentally or functionally (1960: 67-68).

This is what Radcliff-Brown (1952:205) called conscience is thus in the widest sense the reflex in the individual of the sanctions of the society. He argued a sanction as a reaction on the part of a society or a considerable number of its members to a mode of behavior which thereby approved (positive sanction) or disapproved (negative) sanctions. Furthermore he stated the functions of sanctions is to restore the social euphoria by giving definite collective expression to sentiment which have been affected by the deed or by removing a conflict within the community itself So social obligations may be defined as rules of behavior and the failure to observe it entails a negative sanction of some sort (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:211).

According to Radcliffe-Brown (1952:205), sanctions are effective in mechanical solidarity because of two reasons. First, through the desire of the individual to obtain the approbation and to avoid disapprobation of his fellows, he or she has to win such as the community offers or threats. Second, through the fact that the individual learns to react particular modes of behavior with judgment of approval in same was as do his fellows. There are measures his own behavior both in anticipation and in retrospect by standards which conform more or less closely to those prevalent: to the community to which he belongs.

The classical approach of solidarity is criticized by different scholars. One of the main criticisms of this theory is that it does not adequately deal with history. Kuklick (2002:378) pointed out that, the classical approach did not explain either the meaning of cultural practices for those who sustained them in the present or the roles of these practices played in maintaining the social organization.

Closely related with this they were criticized for their failure to deal with the contemporary process of social change. As Turner and Rojek (2001:25) criticized the organic analogy conservative, because it suggested that society could not be changed by political intervention and other factors. Similarly Scupin and Decorse (2005:308) accuses functionalists' inability to explain the social as well as cultural change very well and their assumption of culture as static. They said, functionalist could not explain why if all institutions perform a particular function, these institutions would need to change. Related with this Komter (2005:211) stated in twenty first century the larger segments of the society like family, neighborhood, and the church the 'organs' in Durkheim's terminology have come to function more independently from each other due to process of differentiation and increasing scale.

Another criticism is of classical theory is that it is unable to deal with conflict. The Marxist theory criticized the organic analogy. The Marxist school treats social order as the effort of constraints or supervision of opposition or dissent which results from the exercise of power by dominant class or elites (Cheung and Kan Ma 2011:148). To Marxist consumption or satisfaction of basic needs for livelihood is the crucial concern for maintaining solidarity.

Kuklick (2002:382) criticized that the habit of explaining all observed practices as indispensable for the maintenance of the whole could be identified as merely the product of conceptual confusion. She argues that routine practices were likely to be functional for some members of a society and no-functional for others, and same practices might have non-meaningful consequences for a society who practice it. That a given practice could have variable significance for social conflict might be inherent in a social order and that significant social change might derive from endogenous as well as exogenous dimensions (Kuklick 2002:382).

However, Barth argued (Kuklick 2002:383) that the coherent social order: 'a whole composed of parts' is suspect. He posited, lasting in congruities between actors, others, and third parts in their

construction of the meaning of events rather than, norms and shared ideas. So that what order obtains is an emergent property of individual actions and defiantly positioned person, like together in differently constructed world

2.3.2. Exchange Theory

Carrier (2002:332) defines 'exchange as the transfer of things between social actors. According to him the things can be human or animal, material or immaterial, words or things. The actors can be individuals, groups or beings such as gods or spirits. As he puts any exchange exhibit structure, patterns and regularities (Carrier 2002:333-334). As it has structure this is defined by thing that can be exchanged against each other or transacted only for certain other things. The regularities can have consequences whether or not the actors involved intend them or are even aware of them. By regularities he refers to any exchanges which follow rules.

As Turner and Rojek (2001:28) noted this theory conceptualizes solidarity as a consequence of endless exchanges or reciprocates between individuals seeking to their needs in a competitive environment. Similarly Komter (2005:190) conceived of solidarity as the consequence of patterns of reciprocity between individuals, arising from exchange of goods and service. She explains that a situation of reciprocity and sharing offers the best guarantee for peaceful being together. Viewed from exchange or reciprocity point of view, social order specifically social coherence of social group requires a general balance of exchange (Turner and Rojek 2001:73).

According to Mauss (1966: 65), the gift is not free and it is embedded in a system of rights and obligations which in any society make up part of social structure and in some society from a system of social services. In defining the features of the gift he stated the recipient may be free from expectations of direct return, there is always an element of repayment, either in the form of later gift or in the form of defense or some other recognition of social status between given and receipt. Gifts to men and to gods have the aim of buying peace or order.

Similarly Komter (2005:195) argues reciprocity contains the moral basis for the development of social ties and solidarity because its implicit assumption is the recognition of other person as a potential ally. To her without recognition of the person and his or her identity no reciprocal exchange is possible. Komter (2005:193) pointed that reciprocity is more promising as a cornerstone of solidarity theory because their assumption leaves no room for the aspect of moral obligation.

CHAPTER THREE

3. The Study Area and People

3.1. Historical and Geographical Overview

The Gamo highlands are located some 500 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa (Freeman 2004:22). Bureau (2012:7) states that total people of some forty lands *Dereta* (a group of different neighborhoods) live on the massif of around 2500 square kilometers. From the lake of Chamo and Abaya 1250 meters to the top Gughe Mountain which 4200 meters above the sea level and the vegetation varies extreme (Freeman 2004: 22). According to Bureau (2012:11) Gamo geographical space can be divided into two spaces. The highlanders inhabit *geze* (highland) and favorable for settlement. The lowlanders inhabit *bazo* (lowland) this is where the exiles would escape to and it was the favorite grounds of hunters who went there to prove their bravery by killing ferocious animals.

According to Guidi (Bureau 2012:13) in the history of Ethiopia the first written account about the Gamo was found in the chant of the glory of the king Yishak ruled from 1414-1434. It states the Gamo as a subordinate of Ethiopian crown. But the conquest of Christian highland kingdom by Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim in 1520's led to break of the Gamo relation with the north, with the empire and church until 1897, when recaptured by the army of Menelik II (Bureau 2012:14).

Before Menelik II's encroachment of the south in late 19th century, a large group of people living in the Gamo highlands were politically autonomous and divided in to a small *dere* (autonomous political units) (Kaba 1992:32). According to Bureau (2012:34), throughout the 19th century federation of *dereta* were expanding and fragment as a small *dere* were and then conquered by other *dere* and regained their independence. There was no overall Gamo polity that united all the people of the highland (Freeman 2004:22). But according to Freeman (2004:48), there are three essential features of typical *dere*. These are: (1) every *dere* should have *kawo* [hereditary ruler] who is a senior sacrifice of the *dere* and symbolizes the unity of the people. (2) every *dere* should also make its initiates such as *halaqa*, *huduga*, or *maga* (all are titles acquired through initiation) and; (3) every *dere* should have its own assembly place *dubusha*, where *dulata* (assembly) meets to discuss communal matters.

From the end of 19th century up to 1974 Gamo people had been administered in the then administrative districts called *awrajawoch* (a groups of *awraja*) (Kaza 2012:17). From 1974-1987 they were reorganized by central government and administered as Gamo Gofa Kifle Hager. But after 1987-2000 the administrative structure included the *Omotic* speaking people of Dawro, Gamo, Gofa, Gidicho, Wolayta and Zeyssie and named as Semien Omo Zone. Omotic language is one branch of Afro-Asiatic language and it is spoken around Omo river valley. From 2000 up to now the Gamo people are under Gamo Gofa Zone with other four *omotic* speaking ethnic groups namely: Gofa, Gidicho, Oyda and Zeyssie (Kaza 2012:18).

3.2. Means of Subsistence and Economic Activity

Agriculture is one of the way of life and source of livelihood for rural dwellers in Ethiopia in general and Gamo areas in particular. Freeman (2004: 50) state that, agriculture is still the main stay of most people living in the highlands and the household remains the basic units of production and consumption. Working the land remains their primary activity and it is exceptional that some of them, for example the Dorze, give preference to the practice of weaving and trading over agriculture (Bureau 2012:8). As Freeman (2004:50), mentioned there are two harvests a year. The main harvest *sila* is around January and there is much smaller crop *gaba* sown in February that is harvested in August. The people plough the land using the two pronged hoe *tsoile*. They farm in a group and traditionally organized in two working groups known as *tsire* and *zurra* (Freeman 2004:57).

Freeman puts the organization and role of a *tsire* in the following explanation as follows:

There was *tsire* for men, who hoed the land and harvested the crop and *tsire* for women which carried manure to the field. A typical male *tsire* consists of thirty or forty men from one small *dere*, neighborhood and one artisan who would blow a horn while the men worked the land. Anyone could ask the *tsire* to work, on their land and would pay a set. Each *tsire* had the *tsire kawo* and *dana* [elected leaders of the work group] who were the only members of the *tsire* who did not work on other peoples land. But they are

responsible to collect payments and put on a big feast for the groups after the field had been harvested (2004:57).

The second working group is *zurra*, in which one man from each household must participate land must arrange it with the *zurra* organizers called *zurra kawo* and *dana*. Any household that fails to spend a man to work with the *zurrais* fined for each day that is missed and at the end of the season the money is divided among the men. Unlike the *tsire* the *zurra kawo* and *dana* do contribute their labor to the group and they work as equal as the other men (Freeman 2004:58).

The major crops cultivated in the highlands are barely, wheat, peas, beans and cabbage. The cultivation of *utha* (false banana) is central to the subsistence of Gamo (Freeman 2004: 52). Bureau (2012:8) puts the cultivation of *utha* is typical of Gamo economy and also it is common to highlanders in Southern Ethiopia. Maize, sweet potato and *teff* are staple food crops for the lowland area (Kaza 2012:74). As Freeman (2004:53) and Kaza (2012:74) described manure is essential for successful agriculture in the highland. Most farmers keep cattle and small stock for this purpose.

Craft making, pot making, tanning and metal working are other modes of substances system to marginalized social groups. As Bureau (2012:8) stated, from the lowland to the mountains there are a constant commercial exchanges between *dereta*. These commercial exchanges can take place around *giata* (markets) that takes place weekly as a rule in each *dere* and small provincial towns.

3.3. Social Structure and Organization

3.3.1. Kinship and Marriage

According to Freeman (2004:29), Gamo communities are made up of three categories of people. *Mala* are free citizens, *mana* consists of potters and tanners and *ayele* (slaves) mostly spend their time working for their *mala* masters. *Mala* are considered the highest strata followed by *ayele* and *mana* in terms of purity, power and prestige. The farmers are known as *mala* and their clans are not ranked. The *ayele* and *mana* are marginalized groups. They live throughout the Gamo highlands. They share certain common experiences, but the detail of their social organizations, their rituals and their relations with the *mala* varies considerably. *Mala* farmers do not intermarry with either the *ayele* or the *mana*. They also do not eat, do not work and share burial places with

the marginalized groups (mainly with the *mana* group). The *ayle* and *mana* groups have no voice in the political arena. They are marginalized in most aspect of their life as well (Freeman 2001:286).

In Gamo community, people who belong to the same clan develop a sense of kinship. In some cases the *ayle* and *mana* share similar clan name with the *mala*. In this regard, the *mala* do not develop the kinship relationship with the *ayle* or *mana* who shared the similar clan name. *Mana* and *ayele* are endogamous and they have their own separate identity. Freeman (2004:29) points that due to the small number of *ayele* and *mana* both tend to take wives from distant field than the *mala*. This pattern of migration and marriage results in the fewer local kinship ties among the *mana* group. In Gamo kinship is referred to as *dabo*. The term *dabo* is vague and can also be used to refer close friends, clan members and neighborhoods (Freeman 2004:49). People often refer *asho dabo* (flesh relation), in order to indicate actual biological relationship and *qomo dabo* for clan relationships. The potential choice of marriage partners is very wide, as there are few rules restricting marriage between particular clans or between particular categories of people. Most, people marry someone from the same *dere* and even from the same *guta* (neighborhood) (Freeman 2004:60). She argues that the movement of women from households at marriage sets up hierarchical relationship between the houses that such wife givers become *baria* (senior) to wife takers *kalo* (junior).

3.3.2. Gender Relations

Gamo are patriarchal like many societies in the world. According to Malhotra and Kishor (1995:28), patriarchy refers to a set of social institutions that deny women the opportunity to be self-supporting, whereby making them dependent on male relatives for survival and in allocation of resources and power. In patriarchal society men are considered as bread winner and head of household. In this sense providing the basic needs for the household is the responsibility of the male. Freeman (2004:49) stated that the male household head is the boss of the household and his status in the house is analogous to that of *kawo* is in the *dere*. Concerning this status of male and his duty, Kaza (2012:76) states that in Gamo community that getting married without having sufficient number and quality of *utha* (false banana) is considered as laughing on one self, the life of a woman a person is going to marry and the lives of the family.

There is indeed a status differential between men and women among the Gamo People. As Freeman (2004: 48-49) argued when a man is initiated to the title of *halaqa*, *maga* or *huduga* titles of dignitary whereas his wife assumes the title called *mishre* (dignitary title for women). So wife and husband assigned together but primarily the power was exercised by the husband. Both genders play a role in the household economy. Subsequent work in the fields, such as weeding and harvesting, can be done by either men or women. According to Kaza (2012:80) women are the main social actors in collecting and selling *gade dhale* (the local herbal medicine) in local markets. Only men can take part in the construction of traditional local home making.

As mentioned above there is a status difference between men and women. According to Freeman (2004:54-56) the cause for gender inequality is related with the ownership of land and houses by male household heads. Land is possessed and passed to only male lineage which denies women the right to own property. Bureau (2012:50) also stated that in the past women had no right to own land. Unmarried girls can be granted to use the land by her father or brothers, in condition that she will give back the plot at the time of her marriage. Women are denied access to the main resources and it made them dependent on male.

3.4. Political Structure and Organization

Among the Gamo of Southern Ethiopia, there are two ways to gain access to politico-ritual status (Bureau 2012, Freeman 2001 and Freeman 2004). The two ways work both in opposition with each other as well as complementarily. The first system is by principle of initiation or election. The title of *hahaqa*, *huduga* or *maga* is acquired through initiation. As Freeman (2004:23) points out, this institution varies from one *dere* to next. Specific terms referring to particular elective titles have different names. In some *dereta* it is called *halaqa*, in others it is called as *huduga* or *maga*. This title refers to the elected representatives. They have political authority and elected by that is *dulata* (assemble). The elective authorities are provisional.

In this system seniority is achieved by fulfilling a certain requirements. The office is open to all male citizens who get married. Bureau (2012:145) pointed out that the Gamo society is an egalitarian and essentially this equality consists of a concern to grant everyone a chance to be able to access to the highest elective social status, that the magistrates of the *dulata*. All men can become *halaqa*, *huduga* or *maga*. However, this does not mean all male adults acquire the titles.

According to Bureau (2012:145), there are some requirements that reduce access to the titles. First, one must be married. That marriage as a requirement determines the access to the titles between brothers. Based on the Gamo *woga*, the younger can only marry after their elder brothers. Second, a man cannot take initiatory title before his father and elder brothers have been initiated. Thirdly, *halaqa* or *huduga* on the other hand must give expensive feasts. This needs a years of preparation, which influences his chance of acquiring such titles.

The second system is the *baira* system that is a system of seniority. This system is ascribed and largely based on genealogical seniority according to primogeniture. As Bureau (2012) described, the Gamo are distributed in agnatic clans and with each clan has a system of individual genealogical hierarchy. The *baira* (senior) of the clan has a privilege over lineage members. *Baira* makes animal sacrifice on the behalf of their juniors at all levels of the community. The senior sacrificer of the *dere* is the *kawo*. The concept of *kawo* refers to the first rank status, with variable attributes and he is legitimized by birth and primogeniture. The *kawo* represents the unity of *dere* and plays an important role in relations with the outside world.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. *Woga* and Social Organizations of Gamo

4.1. Meaning of *Woga* in the Gamo Context

“*Miza ekanape wogay shideko tas gides*”. [It is better to accept what is given or said by *woga* instead of receiving a cow as compensation].

The above saying is quoted from old man from Zigit *dere*. It shows that the views and trusts the people have on *woga*. People compare it with compensation in means of *miza* (cow) and they value *woga* over it. The comparison they made is not just for the sake of comparison; they know the value of the cow. For Zigit Gamo the cow is a symbol of fertility, in addition it has a great economic value: source of *osha* (manure) which is a source of organic fertilizer for their agriculture. It also gives birth to *bora* (ox) which they use to plough their land and gives *matha* (milk) for their children.

Study participants define *woga* in a different ways. This shows that *woga* does not have a single grand definition among the members of the study group. They explain it in view of the role it plays for the society. The roles of *woga* outlined below were raised during my focus group discussion with men elders. According to one of the elderly man:

At earlier time among us there was a tradition of siding with the truth. The *dere cimata* [elders] are impartial in passing decisions and everyone respects and fears the *woga*. Because of *chaqo* [oath] no one can hold spear or any sharp materials to harm other individuals. If someone shows, disregard to the *woga*, the act is *gome* [taboo] and will result in misfortune in his or her entire life. Because the fear of *gome* and *hilo* [ostracizing], people respects the *dere woga*, decisions of *dulata* and *dere bairata* [those who are initiated to led the community]. According to the *woga* committing homicide, adultery, marriage or sexual intercourse with potters and tanners and having sex before marriage harms the *dere* and causes

misfortune to the *dere*. So individuals who breach these rules will be held liable and by this way *woga* works.

Elements of the above quotation, suggest that *woga* is a customary law that guides the relationship within a particular *dere*. It regulates the social, political, economic and spiritual life of the people. The *dere dulata* and *dere bairata* uses the customary law in resolving issues through discussion as well as the use of oath which has a spiritual feature. The initiated or elected officials are responsible body to pass spiritual decision mainly ostracizing and cursing the persons. Similarly, the *dere* assembly has the power to resolve the issues through discussions and compromise. Outcasting all individual from socio-economic life is political in its nature mostly used by the assembly. Disregarding and violating *woga* is believed to create misfortune in the life of the individual who committed it as well as on the *dere* as whole. According to *woga*, it is believed that deviant behavior can cause a negative impact in the socio-economic life of the society as a whole. Any behavior or action which is believed as violating *woga* needs immediate resolution. It needs the decision of the assembly or that of initiated individuals.

Still other elders in the men focus group discussion explain the role of *woga* as follows:

Woga regulates all forms of relationships among members within the *dere* and among different *dereta*. It defines *bale* [mourning place] and *duho* [burial places] from the farming land. It regulates when and where the public markets can take place. It guides the relationship between elders and the youth as well as the relationship of particular *dere* to other *dereta*. According to the *woga*, the young should listen to their elders' advice. The community as whole should listen and respect to the *maga* and *huduga* [initiated public officials] and the *kawo*. Because of this we live in harmony with each other at earlier time. Because of this, the cow gives milk, the land gives good harvest, and the community is free from misfortune.

From the above quotation it is clear that the *woga* plays a role in regulating the relationships among individuals and groups. *Woga* defines some dignitary titles for individuals when the

community believes that the individual is capable to lead the community. It outlines criteria for a person to acquire the elective or dignitary titles and puts a certain obligation on both ordinary citizens and initiated individuals in their relationship with the respective individuals. It is believed that the existence of the social order is vital role for the fertility of the *dere*. As mentioned in the men and women group discussions failure to live according to the order of *woga* may cause misfortune to the *dere* as whole.

Woga also defines and regulates lands which are used communally. The communal lands such as burial land, markets, communal grazing lands (*kaloo*) and the assembly places of *dereta* (*gassa*) are considered as a sacred. It is not allowed for individuals to use the communal resources (like fire woods or grass for animal) without the knowledge of the public. If the individual wants to use the resources from the communal lands, he or she is expected to inform and win the consent of the *dere* assembly. Mainly, the *dere* assembly allows those who are physically handicapped, older people and female headed households to use the resources from the sacred lands.

Regarding the role of *woga* another individual in the focus group discussion from the male group states as follows:

It also regulates the marriage relationship within the *dere*. *Woga* has a principle which guides to whom one should marry and do not marry. It does not allow the marriage between *mala* and *mana*. Marriage or having sexual intercourse between the *mala* and *mana* is *tuna* [polluting] and causes misfortune on the *dere* unless it is cleansed by series of rituals. Marriage is allowed between two equal social groups that of *mala-mala*, *ayle-ayle* or *mana-mana* marriage. These kind of marriage results in respect for each other between the *bolota* [in-law families] and that helps to maintain the harmony of the *dere*.

In this context, when a person married a woman from a particular clan, then the clan members of both the bride and groom considered as a kin. Relationships among the bride giver and bride receiver kin include the sharing of labor for demanding agricultural activities. In this way marriage alliance between the groups are created and it has a vital role in maintaining the group

order. Marriage also helps to keep the social strata of the society. If there is sexual relation or marriage between different social strata, study participants argued, it would bring misfortune for the *dere*. *Mala-mala*, *ayle-ayle* or *mana- mana* marriage is acceptable type of marriage according to the *woga* to assure the social distance of each social group.

All the three social groups (*mala*, *ayle* and *mana*) are expected to practice endogamy according to *woga*. If *mala-ayle* marriage is occurred it should be purified by passing a certain traditional rituals and accepted. But *mala-mana* or *ayle-mana* marriage is considered as polluting and it can cause misfortune to the whole *dere*. A *mala* or *ayle* who married *mana* has no way to access his or her previous social group.

But the study participants claimed that now there is a change in a marriage preference among the young people. Marriage relations are being observed among the three groups. In the interview one elder elaborated that in *Zera* (one of the neighborhood of the *Zigit dere*) three *mala* women married to *mana* men. But the older people in the study participants claimed that boys are marrying outside their family house without following the customary rituals. They argued that according to the *woga* it is *gome* to have sex or marriage before the father of the boy untie the boys belt and blessed him and the groom's mother untie the bride's *dancho* (like a belt used by female).

Protestant Christians from the study group argue that all the three social groups are equal and created by God. They stated that *woga* in creating and promoting endogamous marriages. One adult man who identified himself as a Christian states that “*Nuna uba medheday Xoseko. Hayse ben atteda wogako haysa otheza ase Xosara oyetes.*” Which literally means “We all are created by God equally? It is an old rule and discriminatory. If you discriminate among God's creation you might be in conflict with the Creator”. In an interview an old woman Protestant Christian said that “we all are created by God and equal”. But she reported that, she does not intermix with the *mana* group in her life time and she is not willing to do so. She is proud of not eating food from the *mana* home or not hugging the group in the social relation. From the above discussion it is possible to conclude Christians are struggling to live according to their religion. Though, the Christians are not completely detached from the *woga*.

The older generation is not comfortable with the changes. The elders consider that, these actions results in misfortune on the *dere* because it is serious *gome*. When the marriage takes place among the similar social group it is believed as one of the factor that keeps the group harmony. It can serve as a marriage alliance between different clans within the same social group. But the existing system is discriminatory. The *mala* as a dominant group numerically, politically and economically denies the other two groups to have voices in their daily lives.

In an interview the young Gamo in Zegit said:

To me the *woga* violates our right to marry whom we choose. If the individual marry with the *mana*, the father and mother of the person as well as the members of the community excommunicates him in a systematic way. The father denies or gives a small amount of land to individual who married to *mana* or *ayle* compared to his other sons who married to *mala* group. Also when the youth go to fulfill their social responsibilities, there is an annoying thing in the *woga*. All youth are not initiated to dignitary titles and mainly it is the responsibility of the youth group to dig burial places and carrying pillars to make house. The initiated adults are just observing what we are doing and commenting. It is really annoying.

From the above quotation it is clear that, some of the young people are not comfortable with *woga*. Their objection towards *woga* has some roots. There are different causes for their complaints on *woga*. They are not allowed to choose their wife or husband from a group that they considered as appropriate for their future. If someone (mainly from the *mala* group) marry from the member of other groups it lead to systematic segregation from the family or kin and neighborhood. The family does not want to eat food from the home *mala-mana* or *mana-ayle* marriage. Two, *woga* denies the young people to access socio-political titles and favors the older people. According to *woga*, those who are initiated to some socio-politico title are freed from fulfilling some social duties and the young people are obliged to fill the gap. Those individuals who are initiated for the title of *maga* or *huduga* are freed from digging burial places and carrying pillars for home making. Organizing big feasts is one criterion to acquire the titles that

needs accumulated wealth. So the young people are unable to be initiated because of wealth. The initiated adult or old men always sit and comment when the young people dig a burial place that discourages the young.

In interview, other young man similarly argued that *woga* lacks inclusiveness. But he appreciates the role of *woga* in conflict resolution. He reported that, in *woga* there is no detention when somebody shows a deviant behavior. Individuals are obliged to apologies or pay compensation for the wrong deed they committed. Sometimes it will be free from compensation to control the further escalation of the conflict.

From the study, it is possible define *woga* as a customary law that guides the social, political, economic and spiritual life of the people. According to *woga*, individuals cooperate in rotational task excursions in farming, house building and in keeping the security of their neighborhood. Members of the neighborhood or *dere* participate voluntarily in alternative dispute resolutions. Officials of the indigenous institutions are active in mobilizing and organizing the people accordingly to *woga*.

4.2. Categories of *Woga*

4.2.1. *Chaqo* or *Hathe Woga*

“*Wordora xilora qorizay hatheko*” [Truth and false could be identified by water].

Chaqo means oath and *hathe* means water in the Gamo language. *Chaqo* or *hathe woga* means a law of pact. Study participants frequently stated, there is a belief among the Gamo that *chaqo woga* is a type of *woga* which applies to a person or a group of people when cases lack evidences. If there is no evidence against a suspect, the assembly relies on the use of *chaqo*. With the oath both parties say they are *xilo* (hold true). The one who commits the perjury runs the risk of the *gome* which, according to the local belief, may result in death.

Similarly the participants argue that, if there is wrong doings between different individuals among different *dereta* and face denial *chaqo woga* is used. In this case, when there is lack of evidence, the *eqa maga* and *oge maga* of each *dere* enforce the process. *Oge maga* of the *dereta* bring the parties where *as eqa maga* let the patries make an oath. Then he let the two parties drink water from the river that serves as a boundary between the two *dereta* or jump the river

from one side to another. If a person admits that he deeds a wrong and then the case ends there. If the person fails to admit then the assembly and spiritual leaders let both parties to drink the water. After the two parties do that the public and the *maga* from two *dereta* go back.

At the time parties swearing at the same time the *eqa maga* of two *dereta* curse the individual who committed the wrong deed and fails to reveal it. They would say “you are provoking the neutral *dereta* into war. Disease, misfortune and death will happen in the home of the one who did this wrong”. As I learned from my key informants, it is believed that in an oath by jumping the river from one side to another, the one who is responsible for the wrong deed would fall into the water. Similarly, it is believed that, in an oath by drinking water from the river, the one who is responsible for the wrong deed faces sickness.

Falling in the river during *hathe chaqo* or sickness of one party is believed as a symptom for violation of *woga*. The party who face the above symptoms is considered as a wrong doer. After it is revealed the wrong doer is obliged to gather a *cimata* (elders) from his or her neighborhood and send them to the *oge maga* of the *dere*. Then *oge maga* of the *dere* that commit the wrong deed go to the *oge maga* of the other *dere*. He explains the consequence the oath on the individual or groups who denied the case. Then the *oga maga* of both *dereta* goes to the house of individual who is identified as right and tells all what happened to his counterpart who participated in an oath. Then the right one say *shatume* (means he hold true and the *woga* is always with the true one). He counts the name of his ancestors and thanks *Xosa* for revealing who is the wrong doer. Then elders advice him to take what is said by *woga*. Usually the *cimata* give advices to the *xilo* to accept the *woga* by saying “*Wogape adhizo? Assape adhezayssa ankoy meese bangappe adhizaysa kafoy meese*” it literally means “How can one refuse what is given by the *woga*? Those who did not accept the advice of the public will be eaten by eagle and the barley which is longer than the rest will be eaten by birds”. Then they set remedy either in form of cash or cattle on the wrong doer.

Study participants claimed that it is followed by offering sacrifice goat or sheep in the river where the oath can take placed and the case ends. Participants stated that the individual will be cured from the disease. This shows that a wrong deed by individual or by a particular group is not left to that individual or group. It is considered as the issue of whole *dere*. Because of this the

neighborhood elders, *the eqa maga* and the *oge maga* take part in the enforcement which aims to bring lasting solution to the problem and preventing the *dere* from a *gome*.

4.2.2. Gassa Woga

Gassa woga is a type of *woga* which can be applied when there is conflict between two *dereta*. The term *gassa* refers to the public place which serves two *dereta* that share border. *Gassa* is a common land for both *dereta* and can be used for multiple purposes by the two *dereta*. *Gassa woga* deals with all matters that concern the neighborhood *dereta*. Issues like claiming over land or border between different *dereta* are resolved by this type of customary law.

As identified by focus group discussions with male and female groups the *gassa* has five roles. These are:

1. It serves as a place where conflicts between two *dereta* are resolved. *Dubusha* is a place where the issue of single *dere* is discussed and resolved while inter-*dere* issues can be resolved at a *gassa*.
2. It serves as a place where initiation to socio-political titles can take place. When an individual is initiated, he is expected to pass the *gassa* with his wife.
3. It is a playing ground for children from the neighboring *dereta*. It is a place where fire woods are collected and serves as grazing land for both *dereta*.
4. It is a meeting place for groups from both *dereta* annually when they celebrate *masqalla* (*meskel* festivity) and which sacrificeis take place by the *kawo*.
5. It is also a place where sacrifice takes place when the *dere* faces misfortunes. Usually among the *dereta* this offers can take place on the *gassa* located at the left side of the *dere* that offers the sacrifice. This is because the community is believed that misfortunes always can come from the left side.

A place named Songola serves as a *gassa* for Zigi tand Gaxe *dereta*. Gelba serves as a *gassa* for Zigit and Ganta *dereta*. Key informants revealed that *kawo*, *woga maga*, *eqa maga*, *oge maga* and *dere dulata* can involve in the enforcement of *gassa woga*.

4.2.3. Guta Woga

Guta is composed of different households called *ketha*. The composition of the settlement may include households from the same clan or mostly from different clans settled in one neighborhood. For example, a *guta* in Zigit *dere* named Woreto has twenty seven households in

which *Ocha* clan is numerically dominant. Eleven households are from *Ocha* clan, five from *Shaira* clan, five *Gawo mala*, four *Oqena*, one *Boyra* and one *Gabula* clan.

People living in a *guta* share many things including the following:

- At the time of farming or harvesting one can ask his *guta* and one or more person, can spend a day working with others without any payment. But the owner of the farm land has a responsibility to provide food and drinks like *farso* (local beer made from barley). Mostly sharing of labor among the *guta* is based on rotation.
- They share ox to farm their lands without any payment.
- They share milk for child without any payment. If one *guta* has a cow which gives milk, he has a responsibility to provide for the children of his respective *guta*. If Mr. " Y" has children and he has no cow or his cow stopped milking, all other members of the *guta* are responsible to contribute milk. The participants stated that this culture is getting weak because with the expansion of the markets.
- Each *guta* has a *dubusha* which is an assembly place. At the *dubusha* the resident of the neighborhood discuss on the community affairs. They socialize and it is an assembly where mutual ties were strengthened among the members of the *guta*.
- The community members also have a traditional security system called *guuzo*. It is a defensive mechanism of the *guta* from any attacks either from enemy or theft. Each individual is responsible to check and control the security of the area. Based on an informal assignment which is rotational. All adult males except elders can be assigned and move in a group to check the security of the neighborhood.

Study participants claimed that, *guta woga* is a law used to resolve problems that arises between or among the members of a neighborhood. Some of the issues that are resolved by *guta woga* include: quarrel of children's of one neighborhood, if the crop is destroyed by cattle from the same neighborhood, conflicts between husband and wife and conflicts between the members of the *guta*.

Participants reported that, sometimes individual can go to formal government structure without presenting the case to the *guta*. Usually the government officials ask the accuser either he presented the case to his *guta*. If he or she did not present the government officials sent him back to the *guta*.

One elder from the Walo neighborhood reported on the resident's preference of *guta woga* in a

different way in relation to the above argument. He explained that only those who are rich and able to give bribe can prefer the formal court. Those who really need the truth prefer the *guta woga* because there is no room for corruption.

Participants argue that, in *guta woga* individual who damages the harvest is obliged to pay fair compensation. The wrong doer is expected to ask excuse and all male members of the *guta* also ask excuse with the wrong doer. A *guta woga* serves as a law that deals with the issues at a neighborhood level. In *guta woga* residents of the neighborhood are expected to participate actively in its enforcement. In a *guta woga* women plays active role when it is compared with their role in *gassa* or *chaqo woga*. Key informants revealed that if individual do not accept the resolution by *guta* and if women ask him (especially elder women) to accept he should do. It is believed that if women hold her breast and curse the individual, it will result in *gome*.

4.2.4. *Eko Woga*

Marriage is an alliance of two kin groups that begin with an arranged matrimonial relationship between men and women. Among the Gamo, marriage is not permitted between people who share common ancestor and among members of the same clan. It is believed that the clans who have the same name have similar ancestors and marriage between similar clan is prohibited by *woga*. Blood relatives can neither be married nor be romantically involved. It is believed that breaches of this *woga* ultimately results in *gome*. The *gome* in this case is believed to be more serious as may result in the death a child.

Monogamy marriage is preferable according to *woga*. The culture discourages polygyny by discouraging both the wife and husband. They discourage a man who practice polygyny and his second wife. The man who practices polygyny lacks his privilege to acquire the elective titles if he did this before he was initiation to the public office. Second a woman who married as the second wife after the initiation of the man also are not entitled with dignitary titles and names and she faces lack of respect from the society. That does not mean the Gamo did not practice polygyny. Key informants revealed that, in the past those who have many plots of land and *utha* (false banana) can practice polygyny. If the initiated individual for public office can marry another wife after his imitation the people call him “*layma kawo*” or “*layma maga*” (adulterous *kawo* or *maga*). In some cases, he is obliged to divorce his second wife or the second wife is excluded from any politico-social titles which were given to the wife of the *kawo*, *huduga* or *maga*.

The family of wife giver and receiver use the term *bolo* to explain their marriage alliance. They say; “*Ezete nu boloko or ta boloko*” which literally means “We have marriage alliance with that group”. The clans of bride giver and bride receiver recognize their relationship as a kin and owe respect for each other.

The study participants argue that, the people of *Zigit dere* have a negative attitude towards divorce and the divorce rate is low. The participant mentioned different factors for the low divorce rate in the *dere*. First, the marriage tie between husband and wife is not only considered as a relationship of two individuals. In addition to the tie of wife and husband, it is considered as a marriage alliance of the two clans that of bride giver and bride receiver. To keep the good name of their respective clan both wife and husband struggle to sustain their marriage.

Second, the community have bad image towards a divorced women and men. *Sayo* (a divorced woman) is not preferable for marriage. When women married for more than twice the people used a discouraging word *woruwoxa* (sexually unsatisfied). Similarly, divorced man is not preferable for marriage and the people considered him as adultery men. Finally, a formal law has also contributed in the rate of divorce in recent days. In the past, polygyny is a push factor for the increase in a divorce rate. Now formal law prohibits polygyny and it ensures the divorced women the right to share a portion of the the property that they accumulated with her husband. As a result of fear of formal law the rate of polygyny decreased and this has also contributed for the decrease of divorce.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. *Woga* in View of Gender and Marginalized Groups

5.1. Gender Dimension of *Woga*

Women participants explain that there is a male dominance in the economic or political decision making. They argued that there is a prevalence of patriarchy in the customary law. As used here, patriarchy refers to a set of social institutions that deny women the opportunity to be self-supporting, whereby making them dependent on male relatives for survival and in allocation of resources and power (Malhotra and Kishor 1995:28). It is a system of male domination and female subordination in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society that deny women the right to have equal right in the economy and decision making. As part of patriarchal manifestation it is the man who had and still mainly has the right to the inheritance of property. Socially, men are privileged, whereas women are unprivileged. Women are not allowed to take part in the *dere* assembly or *guta* assembly. For instance, women are not allowed to enter to the *dubusha* (assembly place) and not play active role in a decision making process. They can go to assembly place when they have a case to present or for as eye witnesses. Even in this case, women are obliged to sit in the edge of the *dubusha*.

Various discussions with women mirrored this general finding. They believe that the *woga* dispossesses women in the society to attend public assembly where they could have a chance to voice their concerns and needs. As a result, in most cases decisions made by the *woga* about the major issues and events of the community are andro-centric. The decisions reflect the concerns, ideas and priorities of men than women.

Women informants have positive attitudes towards the decline of the role of *woga* and they appreciate the interventions of the formal government in the area. They argued that in the earlier time they were submissive to their husbands and they had no voice, access to and control over property at the household level. This was due to the fact that *woga* donot recognize their economic as well as social right over key resources and social positions. When divorce happens, women had no right to claim even for the share of property that was accumulated by two spouses.

A question was asked how they perceive the changes in the *woga* institution. Women study participants in focus group discussion informed that in general they are happy by the role of formal government institution and the change happening against the features and roles of *woga*. They have positive view on the role of *Kebele* women's office for their role in creating awareness about of women's right and defending their rights when they are violated. According to the female informants, the *kebele* declares polygyny as illegal and practicing it will leads to immediate detention.

The Case of Zinabu

Zinabu (Age-29) is a married man who lives in Orga neighborhood. His wife suspects him that he has married a widow woman from the neighborhood who has her own house in a neighborhood market place. Zinabu denies this allegation. But his first wife proved his disloyalty to her in a *guta* assembly. Zinabu asks excuse to his wife and the assembly set fee on him as compensation and he swore to cease his relation with extra-marital relation. Then, a woman who has extra-marital relation with Zinabu accused him on the formal court that she faced a rape assault. Immediately Zinabu was detained by the order of the formal court. He was in jail for three weeks when I was there. Unfortunately, I do not know the final decision passed by the formal court because I left the research site.

The above case shows that when individuals perceive that *woga* does not work fairly they prefer the formal court. Polygyny is acceptable by *woga* if a man is economically able to support his wives. The man has also the right to abandon his wife when a *guta dulata* approves a divorce according to *woga*. With the involvement of formal government the right of women enshrined in the country constitution is better respected. The formal state machineries prohibited polygyny and that protected the violation of the women's right.

Data obtained from women's focus group discussion show that, there is a change in the social and economic life of women compared to the past. They reported that they are sending their

daughters to school and there is a decrease in the use of old negative and derogative sayings about the girl's education; such as "*Macca na timertera gawara harora issenoko*" which literally means "educating women and herding cat are the same". It was widely said that, educating women does not serve her family or clan rather she should serve her husband's clan.

5.2. Woga in relation to Ayle and Mana groups

5.2.1. Ayle Social Group

In Zigit the *ayle* (slaves) were *mala* in the remote past. They are enslaved due to reasons beyond their control. They are inferior to the *mala* according to *woga* but not distanced as much as *mana*. *Ayle* in a current situation is used to show the social status of the group in relation with the respective *mala* group. Currently, *Ayle* are not the property of another person, do not give free labor and are not subject to their past *mala* masters. *Mala* can leave their strata and join the strata of slave because of three reasons according to *woga*. One reason is that, they borrowed money or items in the form of ox or cow and unable to pay for long time. Second, lack of land for farming or to build their house and could voluntarily submit himself as a slave for someone who satisfies his need. Third, revoking the *mala* status of a fellow man by word usually by saying "you are slave; you and your children belong to me or to Mr. 'X'". If one accuses, in word a *mala* from another clan as *ayle*. If the deed of the individual is proven by the evidences, the individual can leave his upper strata and join the strata of the *ayle*.

Woga does not allow *mala* to eat *bochocha* (food eaten at mourning) at the *ayle* houses. *Ayle* can eat the food in the mourning place of the *mala*. According to the *woga* sexual intercourse or marriage between *mala* and *ayle* is not considered as polluting and it is believed that neither causes *gome* on the individual or *dere*. In the interview men and women participants from the *mala* strata pointed out that in a marriage between *ayle* and *mala*, their children became slave if either the father or mother of the child is a slave. To join the upper strata of the *mala*, the children of slaves needed *wozetetha* (purification process to join the *mala* group which includes paying of debt and passing different rituals in a public) either it is through their father or mother.

According to *woga* an individual could leave the strata of *ayle* and join the *mala* social group. But he is expected to pay his debt to a person who is considered as his master which must pass through continuous process of purification. The process of leaving the *ayle* strata and joining the

mala social group is called *wozetetha* (purification). Purification needs a continuous process of rituals which includes returning of land if the case is related with it, paying debt and asking excuse publicly for his false indictment.

The case of Charko (Age- 39)

Charko is born from *mala* clan. His father received a plot of land from Densie from *mala* group based on a three years contract in 1997. But Densie died in 1999 after two years of the contract and his four children could not claim their deceased father's land because they were minors. In 2015 the eldest son of Densie, Damota (31) asked Charko to return his fathers' land. Charko claimed that, the land as well as all the sons of Densie belongs to him and they are his slaves. He argued that when the father of Damota died his wife Yukare borrowed 300 ETB from him and bought *affala* [handy made cloth] to bury her husband and did not return it back. Then Damota took the case to the *woga maga* who is a responsible person to solve such matters. Then both parties' present evidences for their claim. Charko was unable to present acceptable evidence. According to the *woga*, Charko becomes the slave of Dmota because he used a term *ayle* referring to people who are not. Charko is obliged to pay 6000 Birr for his action and pass through a purification process. Charko paid the 6000 Birr and the assembly shared the Birr among themselves. Then the *woga maga* blessed Charko and declared him as *mala*. Then he agreed to give the land to Damota and the issue was solved.

The case shows that birth to a *mala* does not absolutely determine the persons' identity in his entire life. It depends on the individuals' behavior and action that determines his or her to remain as a member of *mala*. Individuals' economic achievement is also important to leave the *ayle* group and join the *mala* group. This is because the purification process needs a huge amount of money in accordance to *woga*. The case shows, there is changes in the *woga* institution. In the

past, it was mandatory for any individual from *mala* group to join the *ayle* group when a person violates a *woga* in respect to the above discussed three factors. But now paying 6000 Ethiopian is enough to stay on the *mala* social group.

5.2.2. The *Mana* Social Group

The *mana* social group in Zigit consists of *medho mana* (potters), *qacha mana* (tanners) and *qoxe mana* (black smiths). They can intermarry with each other accordingly to *woga* it is considered as polluting to marry with *mala*. Very few *mala-mana* marriage has been reported so far in the Zera neighborhood (which is protestant dominant compared with others). Even occasional sex between the *mala* and *mana* is considered as polluting according to *woga* and ultimately cause *gome*. Ascribed identities are so rigid that social mobility is rare from *mana* to the other social groups. Descendants of *mana* retain *mana* whether or not they actually engage in pot making, smithing or tanning and regardless of individual political and economic achievements.

The case of Shaita (*Qoxe mana*, Age: 64)

Ato Shaita's (*mana*) house is located amidst the settlement of *mala*. He is from *bosha* clan (a clan from which *kawo* is initiated). It is believed that in a distant past the grandfather of Shaita married to a *mana* woman and his descendants became *mana*. Shaita produces knives, axes and other sharp materials and engaged in agricultural activities. He is one of the "rich men" in the neighborhood and initiated as *huduga* according to the *mana* tradition. But his two male sons are married to fellow *mana* women from the neighborhood *dere*. Nobody from *mala* groups eat food from his house except few protestant Christians.

As identified in the interview with the *mana* groups, the traditional concept of pollution and purity is the main reason for limited interaction between *mana* and *mala*. The traditional belief system holds that the *mana* is ritual polluted mainly because of their "bad" food preferences. Both groups of *mala* and *ayle* do not share the same burial place with the *mana*. While both *mala* and *ayle* do not carry the dead body of *mana* to bring it to burial place, they can dig the burial place.

As a result of conditioning effect of dealing with the discrimination, the *mana* considered them as a low status in relation to the *mala*. Historically during the Haileselesie I regime the *mana* group in Zigit were not allowed to own a land. The members of the group moved from one *dere* to another *dere* when the *dere* needs their service. For instance, when the *dere* of Zigit need black smithers from the neighborhood *dere* they exchange it with the other *mana* group which is needed by the neighborhood *dere*. The *mana* was considered as the property of the people. The group gives different services like hoing at the group work or mourning, smithing the work materials, tanning and makes a pot to the other social groups. The reward for their service is that the groups provide some foods for their daily consumption and they are allowed to erect house in the communal land. But the communal land is given to the *mana* temporally. When the public believed that the *mana* is not giving the needed service they took the land and evict him or her from the public land.

In the interview with the study group, it is reported that the status of *mana* in the *dere* was changed during the Dergue regime. They were allowed to participate in the work groups, in the formal government administration and allowed to farm the land that was given to them by the *Kebele* farmers association. The Dergue government officially abolished the discrimination against the *mana* group. Similarly the FDRE government constitutionally guarantees the right to equality of all social groups. Under this government they farm their land that was given during the Dergue regime, they involve in trade and actively take part in the formal state machinaries. But the attitudes of the other groups toward the *mana* are not changed. They are subject to marginalization. The customary institutions do not allow them to discuss the public agendas, not eat food from the *mana* house and not want to intermarry with the group. Due to these and other factors the status and the living condition of the *mana* group is not changed in the community. In regard of changes, Protestant teaching that “We all are created by God” brought some positive changes in their own followers. They shake hands or give hug to the *mana*. Few Protestants eat together with the *mana* and take part in social activities.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Implications of *Woga* in Maintaining Group Solidarity

6.1. *Woga* in Conflict Resolution

The key informants indicated that the word *osha*, which means dispute, violence, quarrel, or absence of peace is widely used to define conflict among the Gamo. *Zare* refers to fight or violence. Generally key informants defined conflict as disagreements, fights and quarrels. Study participants argue that, the Gamo believes that fertility is the life force that rejuvenates human, animal and plant. It is believed that, when social relations are not harmonious and there is conflict among individuals or groups, it blocks the channel and the fertility cannot flow through. Participants stated that, accordingly to *woga* this results in poor harvest, infant mortality or other forms of misfortune. According to *woga*, *Saro* (peace) and fertility has positive correlation. If there is a harmonious relation among individuals or groups, it is believed that it brings better production and reproduction. It is believed that conflict and dispute blocks the channel of fertility and reproduction through which it flows, it is acceptable to resolve conflicts as soon. Because of this there is much communal pressure to bring parties swiftly to terms.

6.1.1. Settlement of Interpersonal Disputies

The informants reported that, according to *woga* the individual who commits a wrong deed regrets for his action and ask pardon from the individual who is right. Then the right one is expected to show his mercy. If the individual who is considered as right fails to show mercy, it is considered as a deviant behavior against the *dere*. So it is believed that it causes *gome* (misfortune) and this misfortune is seen from the good of the society according to the *woga*.

The participants stated that, at earlier time all crimes including the serious crimes like homicide can be resolved by the *dere dulata*. Now the *dere dulata* cannot take part in resolving homicide cases which are resolved by the formal court. But the purification process can be taken care of by the public assembly. If individual committed homicide and the case is resolved by the formal court, it does not mean it will make the *dere* free from the *gome*.

The study participants stated that, if a person commits homicide he must pass through a process

of *cumatetha* (purification from sin) according to *woga*. If both parties agree to reconcile then the killer presents a goat or sheep for sacrifice. The killer's two hands are chained by rope and taken to the place where the ritual is planned to take place accordingly to *woga*. The family of the dead and elders are waiting at the place where the reconciliation is planned to take place. When the elders bring the individual who committed a homicide, he is not allowed to walk in a normal way. The killer is obliged to look down to the ground to represent that he is ashamed of his own action. Then at the ritual place the family members of the dead hold spear and show an act of throwing the spear on him to signify that they are able to kill him but they do not do it because of *woga*. After that a man from a *maka* clan (a clan which has the power to purify cases like homicide and adultery) cut the sheep or the goat through its stomach when the goat or sheep is alive. This action symbolizes abnormality of committing homicide. After that the two families in the conflict can walk over the blood and it ends the enmity of the two parties and prevents the *dere* from any misfortune.

The case of Sirko (Age 74)

Sirko is a man who is a resident of Zigit *dere*. In 2003 his son was killed by an individual named Kayro who is from Mele *dere*. Kayro was sentenced by the formal court for thirteen years, his prison sentence was reduced to eight years with a right to parole and he was released in 2011. According to the *woga*, Kayro is not allowed to enter his own *dere* or the *dere* of the deceased man until the reconciliation take place between the two families. Kayro stayed at the *dere* of Koira (neutral *dere*) after his release and he approached the *woga maga* of Koira to resolve the problem. The Koira *woga maga* sent elders to the *woga maga* of Mele *maga* and the *woga maga* of the both *dereta* and wise elders came to the house of Zigit *woga maga*. Both public officials from the three *dereta* went to the house of Sirko and plead him to excuse and reconcile. But Sirko did not want to reconcile. According to the tradition, the *woga maga* of Zigit blessed those officials who came from both Mele and Koira for their commitment to resolve the

problem. By using his mystical power he said “now you are free from any *gome*” and ostracized and cursed Sirko for his refusal of the reconciliation. In the meantime, informants reported the stomach of Sirko was filled with water. He went to hospital but not cured. Then Sirko gathers elders from his neighborhood and sent them to *woga maga* of Zigit stating his willingness to reconcile. The *woga maga* sent elders to Mele *dere* and then they came to Zigit *dere* and did the appropriate purification process. Sirko was healed within a week from the disease that he suffered from it for two years.

The above case shows *cumatetha* is a method of purification for homicide cases according to the *woga*. In this process the killer stay in exile in neutral *dere* where neither his relatives nor the relatives of deceased may see him until the problem is resolved. It is mandatory for a killer to pass a process of *cumatetha* even the case is resolved by the formal court. Participating in a reconciliation process for the killer relatives and deceased relatives is mandatory. According to *woga* refusal for reconciliation causes a *gome* on those who refused. There is no compensation paid to deceased family. In a *woga* receiving compensation does not show genuine reconciliation and leads to another wrong doings. In the reconciliation process relatives of both sides should pass through ritual processes and make an oath not to take revenge. From this time onwards, everything is resolved and the offender rejoins the community to lead his usual life.

6.1.2. The Neighborhood *Dulata*

The *Gamo* habitat is always virilocal. Neighborhood *woga* institutions used to resolve conflict between or among neighborhoods. *Guta dulata* is responsible to resolve conflicts at a neighborhood level accordingly to *guta woga*. Participants pointed out shifting the position of a *tassa* (boundary stone) which separate one's land from the fellow member is a major cause of interpersonal conflict. Participants stated that, as agrarian society they always try to expand their farming land. The other source of conflict is that as a highly stratified society, using some words that glorify one group and degrading another group could lead to serious conflicts. Destruction of one's crop by the cattle of the other persons can be also another source of conflict. Theft, adultery and homicide are other causes for interpersonal conflicts.

Participants explained that, family dispute may arise between husband and wife, between co-wives, siblings or brothers or between extended families. The cause of conflict varies from simple household issues like property management, adultery, alcoholism, inheritance of property and failing to fulfill ones obligations.

The conflicts between siblings or brothers may arise due to inheritance of property up on the death of their father. Among the Gamo only sons have the right to inheritance and the conflict will arise related with the question of equity in distribution of land and other resources. Failing to execute ones duty as *baira* or *kalo* is the other factor that leads brothers to conflict. As mentioned in chapter three, with *baira* system, the senior individual have certain duties to fulfill in their relation to their junior persons, usually offering sacrifice.

Study participants explained that according to *woga*, each individual relies on one or more seniors for the sacrifices distained to cleanse his fault, *gome* or to guard against danger. If the elder son fails to do this the junior considered it as, the senior let him to danger and this led in to conflict. Also related with this senior- junior relation in Gamo culture, the senior is first to be initiated to the title of *huduga* or *maga* and get marry. If the junior, initiated for political titles and marry, before the senior it leads to conflict.

For the question, were there inter-clan conflicts occurred in your neighborhood? All study participants responded yes and one of the types of conflict experienced is intra- clan conflict. Clan related conflict is caused due to several reasons. Abduction of girl that is member of one clan by boy who is member of another clan is one of the causes for inter- clan conflicts.

Murder of individual from ones clan group may also lead in to inter-clan conflict. For instance, if Mr. 'X' is member of clan 'XX' and he kills Mr. 'Y' from 'YY' clan. The case is not considered as an individual matter rather it is the clan's. Until the issue is reconciled the social relations between the clans are stopped, *pilla* (avoidance) not greeting each other, eat together, and work together and the like according to *woga*.

6.1.3. Inter Dere Conflict Resolution

From the interview with informants, it has been identified bad quarrels, systematic provocation or claiming of land and digging *tassa* are the basic causes of conflicts between *dereta*. Depending

on the might of the adversaries, several solutions were available at the end of the conflict *gassa woga* governs. The *gassa woga* governs the relations between *dereta* that were too large or of equal strength, so that they could become sole entity. This *gassa woga* is administered by *oga maga* whose role is like Ambassadors. The *oga maga* negotiates the *dereta* in the conflict to take part in the pact. Beyond the declaration of peace, the main reasons for a pact were aimed at creating inter *dere* rights. The parties could commit themselves jointly in their relations with the neighboring lands. At last *woga maga* spiritual leaders who sacrifice in the case of *dere* from both *dereta* pays sacrifice on the boundaries that separate the two *dereta* and the conflict resolved.

Study participants mentioned that, claims over border or boundary between two localities, *dereta* are the major cause of conflict. According to *woga* there is a land bordering system, placing stone (*tassa*). This *tassa* is not to be touched and pushed by any one. So pushing this *tassa* is considered as *gome* which is considered as fault equivalent to sin. But currently with the expansion of Christianity mainly from Protestant denomination, the youth do not care of it and can be pushed.

The case of Conflict Resolution among the *Dereta* of Zigit and Ganta

The conflict resolution process took places in Zera *dubusha* in Zigit *dere* in July 20, 2015. In 2014 in the neighborhood of Zera (Zigit) tap water was built by government which was funded by the Catholic mission. The residents of Zera spent their time and energy on the project. After the project was completed, the government planned to distribute the water to the neighbor *dere* of Ganta. The officials began digging the *tassa* by the assistance of youth who came from the Ganta *dere* for the pipeline. The people from the Zera stopped the government officials who are digging for the pipe line. The project was halted for one year because the Zigit *dere* refused to give the water. After one year the *Woreda* administration gathered the *dulata* of the two respective *dereta* to give solution for the problem. At the gathering the Zigit *dulata* revealed that, they refuse to give the water because of two reasons.

One is digging of *tassa* and another reason is the individuals and officials from Ganta *dere* set fee when the cattles cross the border and received remedy from individuals of Zigit *dere*. The Zigit argued that the *woga* was violated by Ganta *dere* and that is why they are not allowing the spring water to give to the Ganta *dere*. The Ganta *dulata* claimed they did not hear the case. They accused the formal government officials of their locality for hiding the problem and “commercializing” the formal state machinaries. They also accused the young people for digging *tassa* without the consent of Zigit *dulata*. They argued that the intention of Zigit was to have respect for *woga* and it is not aimed to prevent the Ganta from using the water that flow to the river. On 22/07/15 in Ganta *dubusha* the compensation received by individuals from the Ganta *dere* was refunded to the Zigit in the presence of the *Woreda* officials and elders from both *dereta*. Then the formal government administration of the Ganta asks the excuse and the conflict resolved in such way. Then the Zigit allowed the continuation of the water project to the Ganta *dere*.

The above case shows that, a *gassa woga* is still used in inter-*dereta* relations. It is employed when the relations between or among the *dereta* deteriorate. From the case the cumulative of two factors contributed for the deterioration of the relations between the Zigit and Ganta *dereta*. One is lack of willingness from the formal government officials to work with the existing social systems. Most of time development projects are conducted without consulting the the traditional administration. Second, the educated young people undermine do not abide by *woga*. As indicated in the case, the young people pushed the *tassa* stone. This kind of deeds is believed as *gome* according to *woga*. The above factors result in halting the development project.

From the above case, it is possible to assume that the development projects will not succeed without the engagement of the local people and their customary organizations. When we see the conflict resolution process according to the *dere woga*, it intends to restore peace and harmony among the *dereta*. For instance, when the *dere* of Zigit presented its grievances, the elders ask “Hayse *woga woga? Enten wogako giko nune nuso gele agana.*” Which literally means “Is this

action is acceptable by our *woga*? If you say it is acceptable, we will drop out our complaint and go to our home”. Similarly, the response of elders from the ganta aims to restore a peace. Generally, the processes main aim is finding truth and siding with it. But women do not represented in the *dere dulata* in the two sides. In this regard, the enforcement of *gassa woga* is discriminatory and the voices of women are muted. It is necessary to change the situation and it needs the involvement of women and other marginalized social groups in the enforcement of the customary laws.

The case of Zigit over Songola

In Zigit *dere* there is a common land named Songola which has forest and land serves only for the grazing of cattle of the *dere*. With the current development in the *dere* like construction of school and health centers the government officials took land from individuals for the construction of the above mentioned social services and they gave a plot of land to the individuals from Songola. They also sold lands without the knowledge of the *dere* for their own use. On July 24/2015 the *Woreda* administration gathered the public to discuss on the issue of good governance and the public exposed the issue. While the kebele officials admitted that they sold the land but it was spent for the celebration of the road which was constructed from Arbaminch town to Zigit Merche. Officials from the *Woreda* office gave the issue to the public and the people elect seven elders to see the issue. The seven elders pass a decision on both the kebele officials and on the individuals who bought the land. They ordered the officials to return the money and fined them for their mischief. Similarly, the individuals who bought the land wage ordered to leave the land and also pay fines for their action of buying the public land from individual government officials.

The above case shows that, the Zigit *dere* has a communal land that is commonly used by the community members. The power to administer the communal land is given to the *Kebele*

administration. The communal land, Songola serves for two main purposes according to *woga*. One serves as a grazing land and a field to collect a fire woods. Second, a part of it can be also given as an exchange for the land for individuals. This can take place when the private land is needed to construct school or health centers. In the above case, the *Kebele* officials abuse their political power. They sold a part of the communal land to benefit themselves. The *dere dulata* hear the case and intervened in the issue. The *dere dulata* fined both the officials and individuals who bought the communal land. In fear of ostracizing from the *dere dulata* both parties accepted the decision. This shows that the *dere dulata* still in work and ostracizing, one of its enforcement mechanism controls the deviant behavior and helps to maintain the order of the *dere*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. Social Institutions and *Casha* as a means of Enforcing *Woga*

To get good grasp of the Zigit *dere* and their institutions of *woga*, it is necessary to understand the community's socio-political institutions that form the foundation for the enforcement of *woga*.

7.1. *Komo*

Any Zigit is born to a patri clan called *komo*. According to *woga*, clan is exogamous and embraces the unity of the *dere*. Zigit Gamo tradition requires people to have a high sense of obligation to their *komo* in particular and to their community at large. *Dabo* (family) plays an important role by providing a plat form on which members offer and receive assistance and advice. According to the primogeniture, the *deysha baira* (senior of the clan) is a particular sacrificer of his clan. A clan membership plays a certain role in defining individual status especially in transferring the land, in getting one's spouse and in accessing the dignitary titles such as *kawo*, *maga* and *huduga*. From the interviews with participants, it is identified that in the transfer of land and house only the male have the right to inherit from his father that is believed to be an ancestral land belonging to the clan. Women have no right to inherit land, though women get access to land or houses through her husband.

Woga puts an obligation on the individual who wants to sell the inherited land. The seller is obliged to sell it to a person with blood relation or a person who is related to the clan. This can be done for two reasons as revealed in interviews. First, as Gamo is highly stratified society, keeping the reputation and dignity of a clan is very important. Land plays an important role in this regard as a clan owning a large area of plot of land is more respected. Second, land belongs to the clan not to the individual, which is considered as inheritance from the deceased ancestor. But in a certain case a man can sell land if the *asho dabo* and *komo dabo* do not want to buy and allow him to sell.

The study participants reported that according to *woga*, *komo* plays also a pivotal role to access the initiatory titles of *maga*, *huduga* and the hereditary title of *kawo*. In Zigit Gamo all clans have the privilege to be initiated as *maga* or *huduga*. In the case of initiation, not only the *mala* can be initiated. But a *mana* also has the privilege to the dignitary titles of *maga*, but not *huduga*.

But according to *woga*, *mana* is not allowed to participate in the public assembly, to work with the *mala* and to share burial places with the *mala*. In their relation with the *mala*, the *mana* group is not allowed to take the upper part of the seat when they meet in the same place. *Mana* are not allowed to eat with the *mala* and the *mala* do not take part in the initiation of *mana*

The study participants also mentioned that, seniority is one of the criteria to access the public titles. A person cannot be initiated as *maga* or *huduga* unless his father or elder brother accessed the title accordingly to *woga*. Similarly the elder son succeeds his fathers' privilege status. For instance, the eldest son is the appropriate individual to inherit his deceased fathers' status of *kawo*. In a family relation or at the clan level the younger brother or brothers are expected to owe respect for their elder one and they remain his ritual dependent. At the family level the *baira* of the house is sacrificer of his brothers. The eldest of the lineage has a privilege position over all lineage members and is sacrificer of the clan. At the *dere* level *kawo*, who represents the unity of the *dere*, is the appropriate sacrificer for the *dere*.

As mentioned by both the men and women participants in focus group discussions individuals are expected to give feasts to acquire titles. They must pass different processes. One old man in the male focus group discussion states:

If the *dere* needs money for certain purpose like fees for social services like school, road and health centers, it sends *lazantha* [mediator] to the individual who is appropriate. The mediator will be send to the individual when it is believed that the person can fulfill the criteria for initiation according to the *woga*. Sometimes individuals also ask the public to initiate oneself. If he agrees to be initiated as *maga* or *huduga*, then he prepared food and things that are needed and he tells it to the mediator. On the appointment day, a whole member of the *guta* [neighborhood] gathers and brings him and his wife to *gassa* [which is common land in relation with other *dere*]. If he is going to be initiated as *maga*, butter is put on his head and on his wife's head and he put grass on his head. While if he is going to be initiated as *huduga*, he put *guche* [ostrich feather] and local plant grow in the area in his head. Then the

public sings song which appreciates the initiated individual. Women sings for the *mishire* [a title given for a wife of individual who is initiated as *maga* or *huduga*] while the male for the *huduga* or *maga*. If the initiated individual has two or more wives, the senior wife is bestowed with the title *mishire*.

The above statement shows that when all clans have the privilege to access initiatory title. But that does not mean that all can access the socio-political status. Rather it is necessary to fulfill certain requirements like accumulating wealth for feasts and provide a large amount of money, assure the initiation of his father and elder brother before his initiation and good personal behavior to please the community.

According to *woga*, the initiation process and giving feasts for the community has three purposes. First, it is one of the mechanisms of pulling the individual's wealth to the public. Second, it can be use as the way through which resources can be mobilized to fulfill societal needs. For instance, if the government needs some financial contribution from the resident to build an infrastructure in the area, initiating individuals is one of the mechanisms used to mobilize the needed resources. Finally, it serves as checking personal character of the initiated individual. If the initiated individual gives a big feast it is considered as a generous person and is believed that he is able to herd the community.

When a man is initiated as *maga* or *huduga*, his wife is initiated as *mishire* and rewarded with some dignitary names like '*Kosento*', '*Bonkento*', '*Shoshenento*' and she is called by this dignitary name in public.

In the interview the male elderly respondent mentioned some of the benefits of acquiring different initiatory titles. Some of the benefits that individuals can acquire because of his initiation with his wife are:

- Rewarded dignitary title with name. If individual name is '*Anko*' and initiated as *huduga* or *maga* he is rewarded dignitary names like '*Aba*', '*Kalsa*', and '*Woga*'. So after the individual initiation he is called in a public '*huduga* *Aba*' or *maga* *Aba*. Similarly his wife is called by a dignitary name.

- He is not obliged to dig burial place for dead body. Digging burial place is one of the obligations of the male members of the entire neighborhood. But if an individual is initiated as *maga* or *hudaga*, he is free from such societal duties. He can go to the burial place to sit and watch when the individuals who are not initiated digging the burial place.
- He or she is also freed from some public duties in a communal work like carrying anything.
- Priority is given to him or her during crossing the road and in the provision of drinks at the public gatherings.

From the interviews, the study participants identified the clans referred to as *mala* in terms of occupation are subdivided into two equally ranked social groups in the context of the *Zigit dere*. They are subdivided as *gamo* and *dache* groups. Each group and clan maintains myth and legend about its place of origin, from where the primary ancestor is believed to come. *Gamo* clans can be initiated as *maga* while *dache* as *huduga*. There is no defining feature that differentiates the *gamo* clan from the *dache*. But it is believed that in the distant past the *dache* clans were descended from the north eastern parts of the Gamo Highlands and *gamo* clans are indigenous to the study *dere*. They live in one neighborhood together, they intermarry and work together, they have common burial and mourning places and they are included in the same network of ritual dependence.

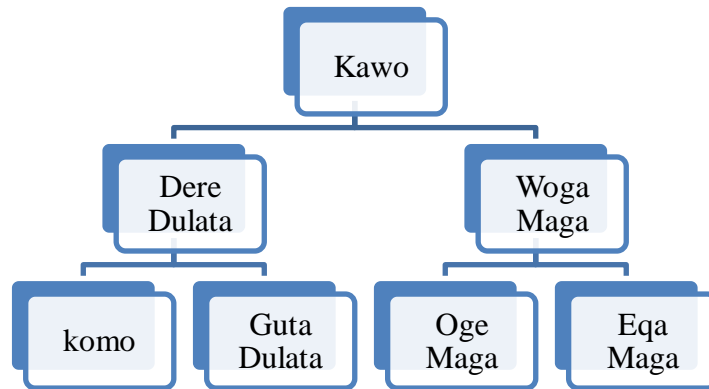
In the three social groups, the *mala gamo* clans are initiated as *maga* and *mala dache* can be initiated as *huduga*. It is believed that, *maga* have a mystical power and offers sacrifice when it is needed. *Huduga* are considered as knowledgeable on the *woga*. Because of this *huduga* are given a priority to speak in the public assembly. *Woga* allows the *mana* group to be initiated as *maga* for their own social group. While *ayle* are not allowed according to *woga* to be initiated either *maga* or *huduga* unless they give *wozho* (pay their debt to their *mala* masters) and to join the social strata of the *mala*. The individual who gives *wozho* and pass certain purification process has the right to become *mala* and the privilege to be initiated as *huduga*, if his clan is *dache* and *maga*, if he is from *gamo* clan accordingly to *woga*.

Table 1. Clans and Their Elective Titles

Mala groups	Clans	Titles
Dache	Bosha Gawo mala Gezo mala Kogo mala Buzante Zulese	Kawo Huduga Huduga Huduga Huduga Huduga
Gamo	Boyra Shayra Kala Shashe kala Enee' Gobate Ochu Gabule	Maga Maga Maga Maga Maga Maga Maga

SOURCE: Fieldwork data collected from key informants.

Figure 1. Administrative and Socio-Political Structure of the Dere.



SOURCE: Fieldwork data collected from key informants

7.2. Kawo

This type of leadership is based on *baira* system. It is ascribed and based on genealogical seniority according to the *woga*. The *baira* (senior) is a remote figure of the *dere*. *Baira* make animal sacrifices on behalf of their juniors at all levels of society. The first sacrifice of the *dere*

is *kawo*. The *dere kawo* is the sacrificer of the *dere* and he is its representative. The concept of *kawo* refers to the first rank, with variable attributes.

Key informants in interview explained that, *kawo* represents the unity of the *dere*. *Kawo* is the last decision maker on his *dere* according to *woga*. He has the power to quash any decisions which was passed by the lower offices. Assume if individual ‘A’ has a case and it was seen by either *dere dulata* or *dere maga* (initiated individual who led the assembly) and if the individual is not satisfied with the decisions given by the two offices, he has the right to appeal for *kawo*. Then the *kawo* has the power either to approve or disapprove the decisions which were passed by the lower offices. The decision of the *kawo* is binding. So refusal to accept the decision of the *kawo* may result in ostracizing. If the *kawo* ostracized the individual who fail to accept his decisions the *dere* is expected to excommunicate him or her.

Woga maga of Zigit revealed that the *kawo* Damisse Xara from Bosha clan is still active and take part in the *dere* affairs. In a present day, the role of *kawo* is limited when it is compared with his past status. This is mainly due to the active role of the formal state machineries and because the *kawo* institution is seen as a backward institution by some members of the community. The study participants argue that there is a change in the *kawo* institution. For instance, in the past when there is a conflict between two individuals and one of them says “*kawo amate maga amate kwoso haya*” literally it means “in the name of *kawo* I call you to *kawo* house”. The accused has no option but follow the accuser and go to *kawo*. If the the accused person ignores and fails to go to *kawo* house the punishment was harsh in the past. But now the *kawo* call is limited to representing the *dere* in outside relation with other *dereta*, offering sacrifice and performing some rituals.

According to *woga*, another role of *kawo* is related to present the sacrifice for *dere* as a senior of all the *baira*. Male focus group participants mentioned that the *kawo* usually presents the sacrifice on the New Year. According to the elders, the *kawo* in Zigit comes from *Bosha komo*. So any individual who belongs to *bosha* clan in Zigit are considered as the son of *kawo*. The individuals’ real name can be used interchangeably with “son of *kawo*” either male or female. For instance, if Mr. ‘X’ belongs to *Bosha* clan and his name is ‘Bola’, you can call him either ‘Bola’ or the *kawo na*. This helps the people to easily identify the identity of the person. But the actual son of *kawo* is the only appropriate individual to succeed his father. It is based on

primogeniture and the eldest son of *kawo* could be inheriting the title and succeeds the position of his father accordingly to *woga*.

One of my key informants explained the process of the succession in the *kawo* office as follows:

After the death of *kawo* the *tora maga* serves as [*eqa maga*] and at war time the spear of the *dere* was gathered in his house before they go to war. He is one of the *eqa maga* of Baqole neighborhood. The *eqa maga* takes the ring from the finger of the dead *kawo*. The ring is unique and it symbolizes the position of the *kawo*. After that *tora maga* gives it to *daraa' maga* another *eqa maga* in Zigit from a clan named as *daraa'*. Then *daraa maga* [is also neighborhood sacrificer who is from *daraa'*clan] keeps the ring. Those after the burial of dead the *daraa' maga* gives the ring to the *tora maga* and the *tora maga* puts the ring on the finger of the eldest son. Then the eldest son of the *kawo* becomes the legal heir and begins acting in the *kawo* office. Then the new *kawo* gives either ox or cow so that the public will celebrate his succession as a *kawo*. The new *kawo* has an obligation to give a cow or an ox for *tora maga* and *daraa maga* because of their role in his succession to the office.

The above statement shows unlike the *maga* or *huduga* institution being first born to the *kawo* is enough to acquire the title of the *kawo*. In this *baira* system of *kawo* institution, election to the office will not be made or allowed, because it is a hereditary. *Kawo* serves the *dere* until his death. But if a *kawo* fails to do his public duties and wronged against the *dere*, the assembly have the right to replace the *kawo* by another person from the same clan. There is also some similarity with the *maga* or *huduga* institution. In both cases a person who acquire the public titles are obliged to give feasts to the public and be a married. The giving of feasts to the public is one mechanism through which the resource is redistributed to the public and it helps the *kawo* to make alliance with the entire society.

7.3. Woga Maga

In different *dereta* of the Gamo highlands the office of *woga maga* can be held by different

methods. In some *dereta* it is elective while in others it is acquired by birth. *Woga maga* of Zigit explained that he inherited the title from his deceased father. But he mentioned that in distant past there were some criteria and that individuals are expected to fulfill to acquire the title of *woga maga*. First of all, the person must be elected by the *dere* assembly. The assembly elects an individual as *woga maga* based on certain criteria. First, the nominee individual must be impartial. Second, he must always be *xilo* (proved experience of siding with truth). Third, he must be married only to one woman and not drunker and able to manage his home properly according to custom. Finally, his age should be equal or above thirty five. According to the *woga maga*, the justification behind the above criteria is that the way he manages his house tells us his quality and whether he deserves the office or not. According to *woga* there is only one *woga maga* in Zigit.

The *woga maga* serves as the main actor in conflict resolution in the case of a particular *dere*. If any conflict in the neighborhoods of *dere* is not resolved by *eqa maga* (*maga* of the neighborhood who is responsible to resolve the neighborhood matters), he can present the case to the *woga maga*. If the parties in conflict fail to reach an agreement or refuse the decisions passed by the *eqa mag*, he is obliged to present the case to *woga maga*.

According to *woga*, some of the roles of *woga maga* are outlined below.

Firstly, *woga maga* has mystical power of *hadeqa* (cursing). If there is denial in one *dere* he curses an individual who did a wrong and hide it from the public. There is a swearing stone and both parties are obliged to hold the swearing stone and claim they are *xilo* (right). After that the matter becomes spiritual affair and it is believed that it causes *gome* on the side of the wrong doer. After the process of cursing *woga maga* is expected to abstain from any relation with both parties until the wrong doer revealed by symptom example, sickness, death of his child, stolen of his belongings and the likes. If *woga maga* make any relation with either one party or both parties before the case is revealed by signs mentioned above, it will result in the death of the *maga*.

Second, *woga maga* has the power on the process of the change in social strata between *mala* and *ayle*. After the two parties agreed on the issue, *woga maga* uses his spiritual power to cleanse the slave by putting grass on his back assuring him he and his children were not a slave.

Thirdly, *woga maga* has also the authority to offer sacrifices for the *dere* annually, if it is needed. This kind of sacrifice can be offered when the *dere* faces misfortunes like epidemic diseases on human or animal, infertility and death. Finally, he has pivotal role in a conflict resolution within a particular *dere* or with outside *dere*.

The case of Merche Magas' death

In one evening of January 2005 individual from Gaxe *dere* were robbed in Zigit *dere*. At the morning of that day the individual who lost his goods came to the neighborhood of Orga a neighborhood where he was robbed saying “*gene gene*”, to show his grievance against the actions of the individuals who robbed him. Then *Merche maga* the *eqa maga* of the neighborhood gathered the residents of the Orga neighborhood. He ordered the people to reveal if they saw who robbed him. If they did not it would lead to *gome* on Zigit. But the resident denied. Then he gathered the people to *chaqo* shore a river where oath can take place and they all swore and drunk water according to the *chaqo woga* [the law of pact]. But at the same night a woman from the same neighborhood went to the house of *eqa maga*. She confessed that her son did it and gave a certain amount of money to the *eqa maga* to hide the issue from the public and to protect her son from *gome*. After one week the *eqa maga* died by natural death. Participants believed the death of the *eqa maga* as a consequence of *gome* because he acted against the *woga*.

The above case shows that *dere* leaders as well as regular members of the *dere* violate others' expectations by deviating the *woga*. *Eqa maga* and other officials have always been portrayed as a one who respects the customary law and enforce it. The corruption in the enforcing institution is one of the factors for the low acceptance of the *woga* by the young people. There is a range of reactions to *woga* violation by the officials from dethroning office to as it is believed by participants facing death as a result of *gome*.

Second, when an issue lacks evidence does not mean it will be end there. There is a spiritual

practice of taking part in the oath and cursing. The case also shows that, making oath is one way of passing the *gome* on the individual who committed the wrong and protecting the community from the *gome*. It is believed that, when all residents participate in the oath the group will be free from misfortune and the misfortune will be occur to the one who commit or hide the wrong deeds. The individual behavior is evaluated with regard to its fit to the *woga*. Officials who do not follow this norm are generally perceived as reflecting negatively the *dere* as a whole.

As identified from the both male and female focus group discussions *maga* and *huduga*, who lost his wife because of death will not be allowed to come to public assembly until he remarries. The public considered him as *amoo* (single). It implies that the *woga* encourages marriage and it is believed that those who have family responsibility can also play a great role in executing of his official duties.

7.4. Oge Maga

Oge maga serves as an ambassador for a particular *dere*. He serves as envoy in the external relations with the other *dereta* accordingly to *gassa woga*. Each *dere* are represented by one *oge maga* in its relation with other *dereta*. In Zigit, the *oga maga* is from *Shaira* clan and the position is acquired through inheritance.

In the time of conflict between two or multiple *dereta*, *oge maga* is a responsible person to go to another *dere* as an envoy. He has his dressing style called *zito* that helps individuals to identify him from other individuals. This helps him to be easily identified and not attacked during the time of conflict. He meets the *oge maga* of the other *dere* and makes the issue public. People of the *dereta* have a responsibility to tell the issue to *woga maga* of their respective *dere*. If the issue was resolved by *woga maga* of two *dereta* then the issue will be ended.

If the two parties fail to reach an agreement, according to *woga* they can call *dere dulata* of their own respective *dere*. Then *oge maga*, *woga maga*, and the *dere dulata* of the two *dereta* go to the river which serves as the boundary for the two *dereta* and a place where the oath can take place.

7.5. Eqa Maga

Eqa maga refers to individual who is elected by the community of the particular neighborhood. In Zigit the title is acquired through election and the individual functions in his office until his

death. The public can dismiss *eqa maga* from his office because of two reasons. The first is related with lack of *tema* (mystical power to bring good things to the community). If it is believed that the individual fails to appease the neighborhood then they can dismiss him. The second is related to the individual personal behavior. If *eqa maga* practices polygyny, become a drunker or shows partiality in executing the *woga*, it may lead the public to fire him from his public office.

In the interview the study participants pointed out that, in *Zigit dere* there are eight *eqa magas* and all of them have two main duties for their neighborhood accordingly to *guta woga*. The first duty is associated with making a decision in a day to day life of their respective neighborhood. In this sense, when there is conflict or any issue in the neighborhood, he is responsible person to gather the neighborhood assembly and lead them in a decision making process. The second role is offering sacrifice for the neighborhood. As revealed by the study participants, *eqa maga* present sacrifice in two cases. One is during the season of sowing for fertility and productivity of his neighborhood. According to *woga* they present this sacrifice in March, a month in which *gaba* the second season of sowing can take place. Secondly, they present offer when the neighborhood faces misfortune that is related with the disease, death of cattle and the increase in human mortality and if the crop is affected by the pests.

Regarding to this type of sacrifice and ritual process an adult man stated as follows:

When the neighborhood faces death, both the people and the cattle or the crop is affected by the pests, the *eqa maga* gathers the public and ordered to prepare little food to present as offer. Usually the food is potage. The *mala*, mainly the male adults and the *eqa maga* hold the sacrifice in the *gassa*. They drop the sacrifice in the border with another neighborhood *dere* which found in the left side. The *eqa maga* say “*hebo hebo*” as a word of appeasing and orders the misfortune to leave his neighborhood.

The above quotation shows that the *eqa maga* has undeniable role in the day to day life of the neighborhood. Participants claimed that the *eqa maga* has mystical power to prevent the community from misfortune.

Study participants state that, when the *eqa maga* presents offer and he prays to *Xosa* (God) to bless the cows to give milk, bees to give honey, and child to grow, cows to breed, the diseases to get back from crossing his *dere*. Then he takes *dhile* (grinded barley) and orders any spirit that creates misfortune to his *dere* to eat the grinded barley and get back by accepting the offer. *Eqa maga* hold three leafs of grass and order the bad spirit not to cross his land. If these crops were harvested in a good manner and the disease gets back they present the blood of goat as offering.

In the interview the participants stated that, some *eaqa maga* plays a role in offering sacrifice to the whole Zigit *dere* besides their neighborhood. For instance, *gade maga* (*maga* of earth) and *tora maga* (*maga* of spear) can sacrifice for productivity of the land, praying for the *dere* to be free from disease, death and homicide.

7.6. *Casha*

Casha (ostracizing) is one of controlling the behavior of individual or groups. Among Zigit, *casha* is a common act through which *woga* can be enforced to control the deviant behavior. If one fails to behave according to the *woga*, it is believed that it will result in *gome* (misfortune). The participants stated that, *gome* is the concept that if someone who did wrongs against humans, *Xosa* or nature which will result in misfortune like sick, death, unproductive and loss of wealth. They fear *gome* more than the formal law. They believe that *gome* may cause death of the wronged person and his family members, migration and infertility (cows do not give milk and lands not be productive). *Gome* can be caused by act against *woga*. Examples are theft, adultery, denying the truth, partiality, incest and homicide. *Gome* could be revealed by *maro* (individual who identifies either it is *gome* or not). *Maro* in Zigit are male and they identify the *gome* either by *shucaha qoro* (by counting a small stones) or *marache xelo* (reading the intestine of sheep or goat). If the *gome* is identified and believed as caused by evil or ancestral spirit, the eldest son can present the sacrifice at a family level and eldest of the clan at the clan level.

Actions which are believed to be *gome* and committed by an individual are not only a matter of that person. Rather the public take it as a matter of the society as whole and if it is not revealed and passed through a serious of rituals it is believed that it may cause misfortune to the *dere*. To protect the society from any infertility the individual who commits the wrong is expected to expose the matter to the public or any individual who know the case is expected to reveal the

issue to the public accordingly to *woga*.

Assume Mr. 'A' commits homicide and according to *woga*, he is expected to expose the issue to the public to perform different purification process. If Mr. 'A' does not expose the issue, 'B' who knows about the issue is obliged to make it the public. If Mr. 'B' does not expose it in the public, it is considered as the wrong deed against the community. In such case, if it is revealed either by *maro* or another individual according the *woga*, the action of 'A' and 'B' is considered as a crime against the *dere*. So, the *dere* can pass a measure which is considered as appropriate to their misbehavior which includes ostracizing.

In Zigit, different institutions have the power to pass *Casha* on individuals or group when it is believed that the behavior or action is against the *woga*. *Guta dulata*, *dere dulata*, *maga* or *kawo* in stitutions can ostracize any individual or group that act against the *dere woga*. Lack of willingness of the individual to accept a decisions passed by the institutions may result in serious sanctions.

Guta dulata has the power to ostracize the individual who is believed acting against *guta woga* or fails to accept the decisions passed by the neighborhood. While the *dere dulata*, *woga maga* and *dere kawo* can ostracize the individual who acts against the *dere* and fails to accept the decision of the institutions.

7.6.1. *Casha* by Family

Family members can pass *casha* when they believe the actions of the individual will harm the good name of the entire family or kin according to *woga*. For examples; marriage with marginalized social groups, alcoholism, selling land without the consent of the kin and theft may cause for *casha* from kin. If the *casha* had made by past ancestors and violated by the living generation, it results in *gome*. *Casha* by ancestor or grand father will be revealed by *Maro*. When it is revealed by *maro* the individual who violate the ancestral *casha* can go to the tomb of the ancestor and bow and ask the ancestral spirit excuse. After this it is believed that the individual is purified from the *gome*.

The Case of Oyeda Family

Oyeda (64) is a man from *bosha* clan living in Walo, one of the neighborhoods of Zigit *dere*. He claimed that it is *gome* if his children or grand children intermarry with *Shaira* clan because *casha* is made by his own father in 1979. The reason for the *casha*

is that his father was sick because he was beaten by *phino* [puck] when he was playing *phole* [hockey game usually played by male]. He felt cold and wanted fire and seated around the *choche* [where a fire is burn and a place food is prepared] in the house of Oyeda. While the wife of Oyeda from Shaira clan put the fire on his leg and ordered him to move from round the fire. At that time Omole (Oyedas' father) made *cash*a on Oyeda and his children not to intermarry with Shaira clan and play *phole*. Because of the *cash*a Oyeda divorced his wife soon. His widowed wife and her two sons died because of the *cash*a. But one of his sons before five years married woman from *sahira* clan by refusing the advice of him. The son claimed that he is a Protestant Christian and *cash*a has nothing to do with his marriage. According to the *woga* Echefa and other family members are expected to ostracize the son. But they did not ostracize him and they continued normal relation. While Echefa face sickness and he went to *maro*. The *maro* said it is “*cash*a *gome*” [the *gome* was caused by *cash*a] and he ordered Echefa to go to his father's tomb and bow and ask excuse for his wrong doings. He did and he healed from the disease.

The above case shows that, the impact of violating *cash*a made by the deceased ancestor. A person faces challenges in his life and it was revealed by *maro* and considered as *gome*. After the cause was revealed the *gome* is cleansed by passing through different rituals. As the case shows the *cash*a was made by ancestors to keep the good reputation of their clan. So *cash*a is one of the ways used to keep marriage distance with the clan or groups which are disliked by the deceased ancestors. The case shows also that, the kin or clan members have the power to pass *cash*a on the individual who is a member of the kin. The clan can pass a *cash*a on individual when it is believed that the actions of the individual do not conform to the kin rule. This kind of *cash*a has two results. One, it leads to excommunication from the family or kin members. Two, it also has believed that, it causes *gome* on the individual. Accepting the decisions of the kin is necessary to free one from the above consequences. If the family or kin members violate the *cash*a it causes a *gome* on those who passed the *cash*a.

7.6.2. *Casha* on Oneself

It is an oath that an individual makes with *Xosa* or his or her ancestral spirit to do or not to do a certain action that he or she believes as good or bad. It is believed that failure to fulfilling the *casha* with *Xosa* and ancestral spirit will make ancestral spirit angry and that could create misfortune and evil things to the individuals' life. According to the *woga* this kind of *casha* can be cleansed in the presence of his or her close relatives and his older brother. The individual is expected to reveal the *casha*. If he did it then the relatives say “*Xose nes atoo go*” (*Xosa* will put mercy up on you). Then the elder of the clan will sacrifice a goat or a sheep and it is believed that the individual is free from the *gome*.

The case of Gota (Age 42)

On July 18, 2015, Saturday afternoon when I was walking in the road a man named Gota with his three kids cross the road. The three kids whose age may vary from six to ten carry a grain of maize while their father did't. Another person greets him and asks the man why he let the little girls to carry and him become free. Then the man responded carrying is “*casha*” to him. He explains the reason is that once he carried certain things and come to his home. While one of his two wives fails to say *ashame* [welcome]. Since that day he made with his ancestral spirit *casha* not to carry anything in his entire life.

From the above case, it is possible to assume that, the male make *casha* on them. We can learn three things from the above case. First, even the rate of polygyny is decreased as reported by the study participant, but it still exists. Second, *woga* systematically favors the male domination. The male can make *casha* when they believe a certain action or behavior offended them. In this way they free themselves from routine household activities like fetching water or collecting fire woods. Third, a child labor exists in the economy. So, active government effort is needed to tackle the systematic subordination of women and to end the child labor in the economy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8. Changes and Continuities in the Use of *Woga*

Anthropology is a discipline which focuses about historical inquiry about societies concerns with diachronic change. When we look in to different research written about contemporary society change is inevitable. Mostly changes in the existing system were caused by internal factors as well as external factors. A Gamo group is not different from other society and it also experiences changes. According to Freeman (2004:28) the dynamics of cultural changes in Gamo Highlands is part of some of large scale historical changes that were going in Ethiopia in 19th and 20th century.

Study participants explained, beginning from the Dergue regime for the reason of effective administration the *dere* renamed and organized as *Kebele*. During this time a *dere* was organized into two or more than two *Kebeles*. The 1974 revolution of Ethiopia had great impact on the cultural change of Gamo people. According to Freeman (2004:34) the revolution introduced *zemecha* which refers to a cooperation campaign aimed at teaching the socialist values of the new government called Dergue. In the Gamo Highlands the *zemecha* taught that everybody was equal including the *kawo* the farmers and artisans were all brothers. This created a change in existing social structure and many indigenous practices were banned.

The Dergue officially banned both the *kawo*, *huduga* and *maga* institutions that had drastic effects on the *woga* institution. Freeman (2004:43) pointed out when Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power and revised the Dergue's policies about indigenous practices. Indigenous practices are actively encouraged as an expression of ethnic and cultural identity. The *dulata* came to work and began argued that treating the marginalized equal with *mala* as gome. The customary laws have strong linkage with the formal state machineries with limited overt support or recognition of each other. The elective institutions are being practiced among the Gamo society and the *kawo* institution is weakened.

As mentioned by focus group participants, different factors contributed to the changes in the *woga*. These include: some measures taken by the formal government, expansion of the formal education, the expansion of Christianity mainly the Protestant denomination and the intermixing of culture due to migration are some factors.

The study participants have no similar views on the change of *woga*. In the focus group discussions, most of the participants from men elder group argued that the changes have negative effects on their lives. One elderly man in the focus group discussion stated that:

The young generation is not willing to respect the *woga*. They did not fear *gome* that is why marriage and having child without the consent of their family is common among the young people. This is unacceptable according to our *woga* and they even intermarry with *mana* that is *tuna*. They considered themselves as educated and government also recognizes their act as their right. You know what the results are? We pay 1400 Ethiopian Birr for fertilizer which will cover half hectare, but it was not productive because of the *gome*. It is not the fertilizer that may increase the productivity of our land. The only solution is to be governed by the *woga*, fearing God, avoiding polluting acts and siding with the truth is the only solution.

From the above quotation, it is evident that some of the people believe that the formal education and the actions of the government (promoting individual right) are some of the factors for the change in *woga* institution. The young people are movable compared with their elder generation. The movement is caused by two reasons. The first one is related to the desire to follow their high school education or colleges for further education. They leave their home *dere* and went to Arbaminch town, where they meet multi-culture. The second factor is that the young people migrate to urban areas seeking for better jobs. The young people back home with some new cultural practices that are considered as deviant according to *woga*. They may marry without the consent of their family that is unacceptable according to *woga*. The young people also practice adultery, fail to respect their elders and prefer formal court over the *woga* institution.

These study participants also stated that, some actions of the formal government are another factor for the change in *woga*. The government banned the local institutions like *huduga* or *maga* institutions as a backward tradition. Formal government officials in the locality accuse the indigenous institutions for promoting inequality among the social groups. Key informant from Gamo Gofa Zone Culture Office argues that the indigenous institutions play a positive and

negative role in the life of the community. He stated that, the indigenous institutions provide help to the formal government in the area of conflict resolution and it mobilizes the public for a project. Similarly he argues that, the indigenous institutions are working against the concept of equality. They are promoting the creation of social distance and status difference among the social groups of *mala*, *ayle* and *mana*. But most the study participants argue that, the indigenous institutions are playing a pivotal role in maintaining the group order. They argue that, the local people more accept and respect the decisions passed by this institution. Government recognizes these institutions when it faces a challenge mainly related with conflict or to mobilize to build infrastructures such as road, health centers and schools. The participants stated that, violation of the *woga* by formal government institutions is another factor that results in failure of production.

Older man in the male focus discussion, further elaborated the factors that lead to failure in production are adultery, lack of respect for elders or for initiated individuals, corruption and having sex and children without marriage. The majority of the participants in the male focus group discussion argue that the dere of Zigit is facing failure in production and fertility.

In the focus group discussion with the adult male group different factors can be identified for the failure in the production. First, a frequent violation of *woga* by the young people is one factor. They reported that the young generation is violating their values. They accuse young people that they did not give respects to elders and families. Young people marry outside socially accepted clans and have children without the consent of their father and mother which is *gome*. Second, corruption is another factor that leads to decrease in the production of households. The formal court needs only three eye witnesses to decide on any controversies. They argue that it is easy to present eye witnesses who have no first hand evidence on the issue by bribing them in the formal court system. It lacks the element of spirituality when it is compared to the customary law.

While one of the participants in the male focus group discussions sees the changes in different way. He said:

At early time we are obliged to work for *kawo*, we spent our labor as well as our ox in farming the land of the *kawo*. The *kawo* treated us like a slaves, we bow for him and say ‘too’ [you are my master]. Thanks to the Dergue regime and current government there is no

master and slave relationships between us. Also in past it is common to see a frequent conflict among different *dereta* that was caused by silly reasons. For instance, the matter of individual is considered as the affair of the *dere* that drive them in to a war. But now our Children are enjoying the fruits of formal education, we are free and there are no frequent inter-dere conflicts over some silly reasons.

The above two perspectives represents two opposite views of the impacts of the changes in *woga* institution in Zigit *dere*. Both of the views have a weight of truth. To begin with the former, there are clear evidences that the changes in *woga* institution have negative effect in their life. In *woga*, there is no corruption and indigenious institutions can side with the truth. But the corruption is a chronic problem that the society is facing. From the later side, there is no labor exploitation. Some social groups like *ayle*, *mana* and women are considered as equal. They argue that, the Derg and EPRDF regimes brought positive changes in their social status. But the rampart of past injustice has its scare in their life. In general, in present day Zigit, one can observe socio-political changes in the *woga*. But the changes are not much satisfactory as it was planned by the formal government. *Mala* do not eat *bochocha* in the house of *ayle*, not intermarry with *mana* believed as polluting and there is still degrading women by sayings like “*Enda endoko*” (Woman are woman) to show the supremacy of male.

Concerning in the decrease of the land productivity, the young people in the male focus group discussions have similar view with their elders in the focus group discussion. But they claim that in addition to the above mentioned factors lack or having a small portion of land is another factor in the decrease of agricultural production. One individual in his mid thirties states that, his generation has no enough land for farming. He states that he inherited a small portion of land from his deceased father because it was shared among the four brothers. Lack of land made him and his fellow age group under employed. The population number has been increasing in the *dere* disproportionally with the size of the land. Decrease in the size of farming land leads to decrease in the production of household economy.

Religion is also another factor for the changes in *woga* institution. With the expansion of Christian religion (both Orthodox and Protestant) *woga* is facing massive changes. This is caused due to the difference in the world view. Christian groups do not accept any action as a *gome*, which is the backbone for the traditional belief system. Christians refuse to be initiated as *huduga* or *maga* and they fail to owe respect for individuals who execute the customary law. Christians also do not hesitate to cut trees from forbidden public places and to cross the forbidden ritual places by the tradition. As key informants stated that, a concept of *gome* has a pivotal role to maintain the group order and control a deviant behavior. But Christians are violating the elements of *gome*. This endangers and weakens the elements of *woga* that hold the Zigit dere as cement.

The case of Burial of Kantes' Son in Xoyna Neighborhood

Kante is a man from *Boyra* clan in Xoyna neighborhood of Zigit *dere*. He is a Protestant Christian. In 2012 one of his sons killed his elder son. That is deviant behavior, considered as a serious *gome*. According to the *woga*, the burial place should be at a neighborhood *dere* unless it will results in misfortune to the whole *dere*. But Kante claimed he is a Protestant Christian and it is unnecessary to bury his deceased son outside *dere*. He argued that there is no *gome* on Christians. Then the burial took place in Zigit *dere* and participants believed it was followed by devastating consequences on the *dere*. The *dere* faced massive land slide and unseasonal rain which caused the loss of their crops.

The above case show the conflict between the indigenous worlds views with the Christian view. From the perspective of indigenous belief system, the actions of Christian followers affect their lives negatively. From their point of view, the land slide was caused by the action of the Christians. They believe that, it is necessarily to behave accordingly to *woga* to free the community from the future dangers. The participants in the male and female focus group discussion see Christianity has positive role in keeping the group solidarity. They claimed that Christianity freed them from presenting routine sacrifices to resolve *gome* related problems. The

participants further stated that, the teaching of Christianity is better than what is offered by the *woga* institution.

The study participants reported that, the local community wants to have elective institutions. They are in favor of these institutions because the institutions are strong in solving community problems. The co- existence of the neighborhood and *dere to dere* relation is hold by this institution. But some participants are doubtful in the role of indigenous institutions in the area of spiritual practices, mainly which is associated with offering “sacrifice for bad spirits’.

It has been noted that, currently the formal government institution and the *woga* institution operate simultaneously with limited support or recognition of each other. Sometimes the formal system also needs the support of this institution when the problem seems to have lead to large scale conflict among the *dereta*. So it is possible to say there is co- existence between the indigenous social organizations and the formal government. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution also gives authority to indigenous institutions to entertain customary marriage, dispute resolution and peace building. There is an element of competition and cooperation between the indigenous social organizations practiced within the elastic boundary in which the formal governmental political system allowed them. As the key informants stated, for the case beyond the customary social organizations boundary and when the decision of the *woga* institutions is not enforced, they will go to formal political system. In the other hand, the formal political system uses the indigenous institutions for public mobilizations.

Conclusions

As my study has shown, *woga* (a customary law) plays a valuable role in socio-economic relations by maintaining stability, group order and harmonious inter *dere* and intra *dereta* relations. In my way of conclusion, I would like to argue that, the main role of *woga* is to restore peace and maintaining harmonious relations among the members of the study group. Group solidarity may emerge through individuals' actions to produce a collective good. First, there is a sharing of human and animal labor to perform social and economic tasks. Second, initiation to the socio-political titles such as *maga* and *huduga* is one of the mechanisms used to pull individual's resource for common good. The initiated individuals are obliged to distribute the wealth that they have at the time of the initiation in exchange for titles. Third, individuals participate voluntarily in alternative dispute resolution. The enforcement of *woga* in dispute resolution is less costly, less time consuming and less tendency of corruption. Moreover, the amount of punishment (there is no detention) or compensation is proportionate to the wrong done. Fourth, the community members also have a traditional security system *guuzo*. Each individual based on an informal assignment which is rotational is responsible to check and control the security of the area. Finally fulfilling the obligations related with offering sacrifice that emanates from seniority has also a role in maintaining a harmonious relation between family and clan members. The *woga* is based on collective responsibility for deviant behaviors or actions that believed as harms the community. In this regard, the main of *woga* is to restore peace and maintain harmonious relations among the members of the group. In my view, these customary laws should be supported.

Nevertheless, *woga* has weaknesses. It marginalizes and discriminates some groups of the community. Women, *ayle* and *mana* groups are discriminated by the *woga*. Reasons for marginalization range from economic factors that hinder participation to traditional ideas about the appropriateness of the group in question to take part in certain economic and social areas. Women and *mana* group are not allowed to be members of *dere cimata*. Marriage among the three social groups is not allowed to keep the social distance. The voices of marginalized groups are muted; they are denied access to common public places and not to intermarry with other groups. Women's right to inheritance, division of resources during divorces, and their reproductive rights may also be undermined and violence against women is common. In either

case, these practices contravene the fundamental human rights in the constitution. It needs working in collaboration with the formal government in the area to protect the human rights violations. This could be facilitated by creating awareness on the people and decision makers about the necessity and benefits of respecting the basic principles of human rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study and findings, this research makes the following recommendations to the policy makers and Non-Governmental organizations:

- A customary law is becoming an important element in the life of Gamo people and it is a principal mechanism through which group order can be maintained. To this end, the national government of Ethiopia and the regional state should encourage individuals and institutions to involve in studying the role of customary law to ensure harmonious development of all its members and promote the inclusiveness of all social groups in the decision making processes.
- The government of Ethiopia should give precedence for presenting the customary law as a part of culture that emphasizes the living and past aspect of Gamo culture.
- Government and the stakeholders must take measures to protect the culture from the impact of globalization purveyed by mass Medias and social Medias.
- The attention of people should be drawn to the importance of the customary law in conflict resolution and should support the dissemination and publications of materials, papers and other results.
- Government and Non-Governmental Organizations who works on peace building and conflict resolution should provide moral and material support for individuals and institutions who are participating in studying and reserving the culture.

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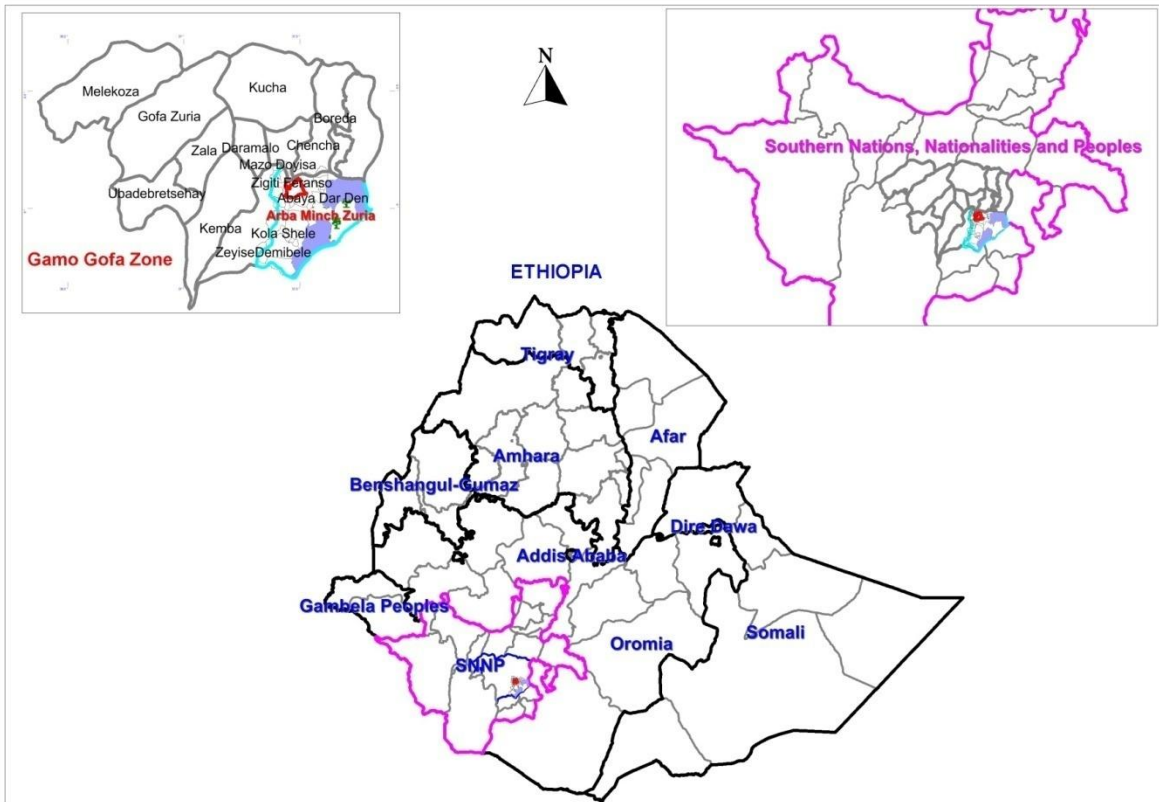
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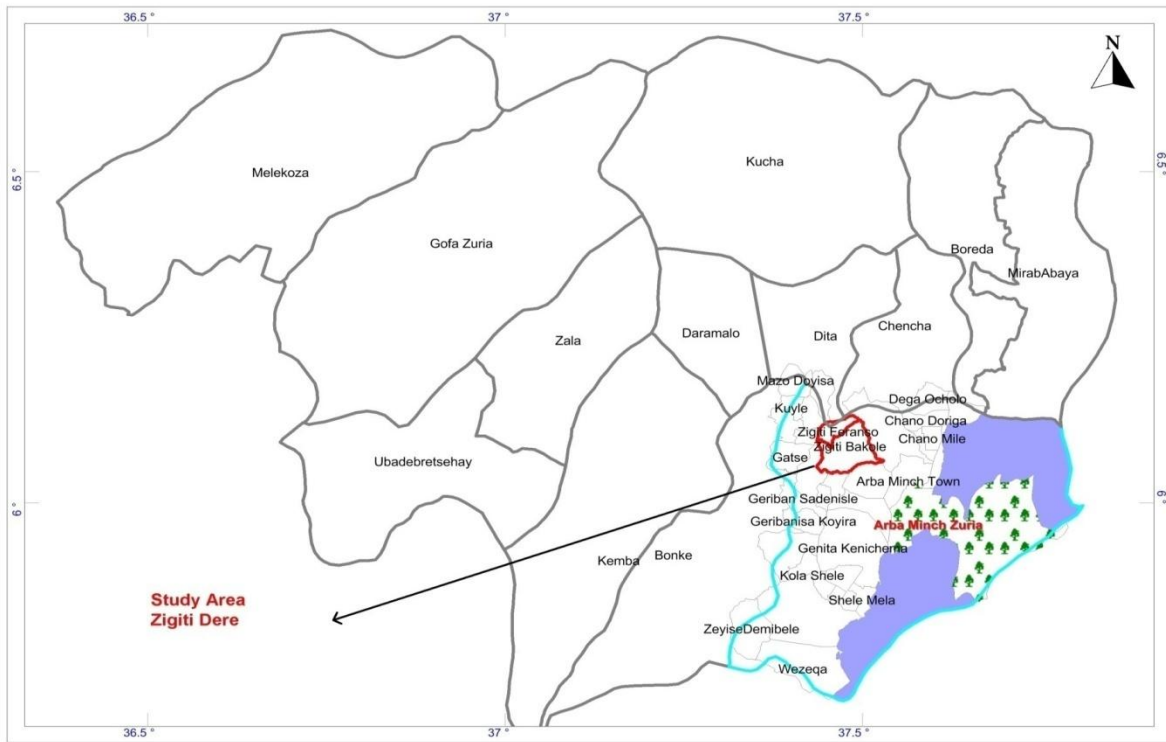
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Annex 1. Maps of the Study Area.



Map 1. Location map of study area, SNNR, Gamo Gofa Zone Arba Minch Zuria Woreda, Adapted From Ethiopian geological Community



Map 2. Study Area map, Gamo Gofa Zone Arba Minch Zuria woreda Zigiti Dere, adopted from the map by Arbaminch Zuria Woreda communication Office

Annex- 2. Photos from the Study Area



Photo 1. Focus Group Discussion with Elders. *Photo by Zelalem Zewdie*



Photo 2. *Woga Maga* of Zigit. *Photo by Zelalem Zewdie*



Photo 3. The Researcher interviewing one of the Elder in Zigit Dere. Photo by: Gusho Gucho



Photo 4. Water supplies project that cause conflict of interest between Zigit and Ganta Dereta, in Zera (Zigit) neighborhood. Photo by: Zelalem Zewdie



Photo 5. *Dere dulata* at Gelba dubusha, Partial pictures from inter-*dere* conflict resolution process between Zigit and Ganta dereta. Photo by: Zelalem Zewdie

Annex-3. The Study Participant

List of informants

No	Name of informants	social status	place	date of interview
1	Ato Berye	Mala	Gina	27/07/2015
2	Ato Giorgis	woga maga	Bakole	20/07/2015
3	Ato Osha	Mala	Zera	22/07/2015
4	W/ro Tazebech	Mala	Gina	21/08/2015
5	W/ro uffayse	Mala	Gina	21/08/2015
6	Ato Anko	Mala	Woreto	10/8/2015
7	Ato Zewdie	Mala	Gina	13/08/2015
8	Ato Dikaon	culture expert at Zone	Arbaminch	24/08/2015
9	Ato Shaita	black smith	Doma	28/07/2015
10	Ato Gusho	Mala	Gina	13/08/2015
11	Ato Kimba	Tanner	Gina	13/08/2015
12	Ato Ezhola	Tanner	Merce	16/08/2015
13	W/ro Shembure	pot maker	Doma	28/07/2015
14	Ato konso	black smith	Doma	28/07/2015
15	W/ro Marie	Mala	Gina	17/08/2015
16	W/ro Dancote	Mala	Zera	22/07/2015
17	W/ro Samente	Mala	Doma	28/07/2015
18	Ato Fera	Mala	Woreto	10/8/2015
19	Ato Kassaye	Mala	Orga	17/08/2015
20	Ato Manka	Mala	Gina	17/08/2015
21	Ato Shanko	Mala	Doma	28/07/2015

Participants of Male Focus Group Discussion

No	Name of Participants	Social status	Place	Date
1	Ato Cimate	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
2	Ato Yohannis	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
3	Ato Solomon	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
4	Ato Golo	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
5	Ato Achala	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
6	Ato Shara	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
7	Ato Gelaneh	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015
8	Ato Ayele	Mala	Gina	11/8/2015

Participants of Female Focus Group Discussion

<u>No</u>	Name of Participants	social status	place	Date
1	W/ro Amarech	Mala	Woreto	17/08/2015
2	W/ro Katushe	Mala	Woreto	17/08/2015
3	W/ro Oche	Mala	Woreto	17/08/2015
4	W/ro Tibale	Mala	Woreto	17/08/2015
5	W/ro Shilede	Mala	Woreto	17/08/2015
6	W/ro Tayech	Mala	Woreto	17/08/2015