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Gender and Conflict Resolution among the Oromo of Ethiopia: The Role of *Siiqqee* as Women Institution

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If there is any shortcoming in this thesis, however, I will take full responsibility.

Declaration

I, Jeo, Wake Gerbi, declare that this is the result of my research analysis and findings. Materials of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list is appended. This work has not been submitted to any other academic institution for any academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

CHARTER 1

Introduction

Critical feminist theory aims to investigate and document discrimination against women's spheres of influence (Steans, 1998). It is plausible to note that this theory is not simply to document women's experiences but also it examines why women power in decision making in IR is not well represented. The aim is to investigate gender as sexual differences and incorporates some of the insights of fundamental ideological and physical relationships between women and men; this is historically where the idea of equality and inequality is discussed. Sylvester (2002) alerts critical feminists advocate for avoiding essentialist elements of a feminine perspective by recognizing that gender does not refer to men and women per se, but it is an ideological and substantial or material relation between them, one which has been conventionally imbalanced. Critical feminists understand gender as a social construction, as postmodern feminists do. Be that as it may, as Sylvester points out, critical feminists emphasize the self-understanding of women or groups dedicated to transforming society (Sylvester, 2002). This means that critical feminists strive to go beyond the "simple adding" of women as a political subject or exposing gender inequalities by attempting to empower women as a subject of knowledge in IR. They argue that social forces and material conditions combine to reproduce social practice. Steans (1998: 45-47) further asserts that according to critical feminists' assumptions, the gender issue is shaped by the practices of actors who are, in turn, shaped by the social forces and material circumstances and institutions. Gender relations should be seen within the context of inequalities rooted in race, social status, and other social factors such as economic, rituals, and so forth.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 is the background of the study. It presents a brief history of Ethiopia and Oromo. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the findings. Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the study.

This introductory chapter presents the introduction and theoretical framework of the study. It presents the structure of the thesis. The theoretical framework of the study explored the main school of thought regarding the feminist movement mainly in Western and African or black women contexts. Although women all over the world have a collective interest to fight for their human rights in social, economic, and political lives, there are certain elements that confront their circumstances. As stated before, Black feminists argue that knowledge production in feminist

theory is still under the domain of western feminists. Therefore, knowledge production in the feminist movement must be de-colonized. African women play a vital role in peace-making using indigenous institutions/knowledge in which Igbo women in Nigeria and Oromo women in Ethiopia are an emblematic examples.

In this thesis, I will argue that western scholars exaggerated and misrepresented male-female relations among African cultures, where it has been claimed that men domineered over women's rights (Periera Amina Mama, 2007). In this thesis, I will use a case from Ethiopia, among the Oromo to present the contrary opinion. I will show how the Oromo women's institution called *siiqqee* provides women with the influence to setting conflicts within the Oromo society (Kuwe Kumsa, 1997).

The Oromo people developed indigenous mechanisms for resolving conflict, managing their human and material resources through varieties of institutions¹ (Tsega Etefa, 2012; Wake Jeo Gerbi, 2016; Asafa Jalata, 2002). The Oromo women using the *siiqqee* exercise their rights to access resources and to resolve conflict at family and community levels (Kumsa, 1997).

In this research, I asked the following questions: What is *siiqqee*? How is *siiqqee* institution used in conflict resolution among the Oromo and its wider applications for resolving conflicts in the wider society? What power does *siiqqee* symbolize? How is *siiqqee* used to enforce sanctions? How Oromo women practice *siiqqee*? When is the application of *siiqqee* most appropriate? Additionally, the thesis will explore the status of Oromo women in *siiqqee* practices and the broader relevance of the institution in the political, social, and economic facets of the Oromo people in Ethiopia. Before I address, these questions in the remaining parts of the thesis, I will put into context the *siiqqee* using a gender theoretical framework within the scholarly field of International Relations.

1.1 Feminism in International Relations: Theory and Indigenous Knowledge

Feminism in International Relations (IR) discloses vital analysis with plain insinuations related to security, authority, and power of individual society (Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith, 2016). It shows feminist approaches in IR introducing the issue of gender as an essential tool to

¹ These institutions include the Oromo gadaa system, ateetee, gumaa institution, ilaa fi ilaamee, jarsummaa, daboo, daadoo, harma-hodhaa, dubbisa, and siiqqee.

analyze the interactions between states within a global framework. Vast literature related to feminists focuses on criticism of the conventional theoretical fundamentals of global politics, policy, and academia. Feminists in IR argue that the socio-economic and international political system marginalized women. They are very concerned about the socio-cultural epistemological issues.

Conversely, according to feminist scholars such as Tickner (1992) and Slyvester (1994) male-based arguments lacked a feminine approach under the logic of feminist approaches. The authors argue that IR theory is constructed around male-female dichotomies that allocate females as “others” which would marginalize women from the public sphere suggesting that the philosophical approach is male-oriented.

Dunne et al. (2016) warn us that feminist contributions to IR are not just about “adding” women to the study of global politics. Rather, the conventional ideology of liberalism about women may be challenged by this new theoretical and epistemological question of the place of women in international politics. The literature on the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and women’s contributions in development during the 1980s, exclusively argues that the roles women played in policymaking and foreign policy have been challenged. In sum, feminist scholars demanded from IR scholars use holistic approaches that bring women to the center of the theoretical and political discussions.

As Tickner (1992) articulates further “Third World” feminists have attempted to de-contract IR theory claiming that Western feminists undermine the “Third World” women. The author argues that western feminists are putting their academia in danger of ‘essentializing²’ their understandings and meanings of women when they exclusively focus only on Western women’s experiences without fully answering ‘Third World’ women or feminists’ questions’.

Other scholars have argued that IR is a discipline from which women are invisible. Conventional IR concentrated on activities of the superpowers at the center of the international system (Stears, 1998), but after the ‘Third Debate’, IR ignited important inquiries about the activities conjecturing

² Essentialist feminists believe that there are intrinsic or innate attributes to men and women. There are certain biological and psychological based characters gender at the root of experiential alterations in the behavior and action of women and men. Anti-essentialists rejected this view on the ground that there is no universally shared attribute which unifies women as a group (Dunne et al., 2016).

awareness, and influences involved issues of feminism and gender in the framework of international politics (Dunne et al., 2016: 179-182). The feminist critique of the orthodox IR realism, according to Steans (1998), poses a question about the subject of understanding. Nonetheless, according to Tickner (1992) and Dunne et al. (2016) articulate, the central notions in IR such as security and power have been framed in terms of masculinity, maleness, or maleness and less about women.

Conversely, the growth of the feminist movements and the important contributions of feminism to the debate has increased the visibility of women in international politics (Dunne et al., 2016). That means that feminism is socially constructed to empower women for clear real-life struggles for equality between genders. It is essential to differentiate between feminist radical feminism, liberal feminism, and post-modernism feminism, all compared to African feminism. It is also important to discuss the concepts of the indigenous mechanism of conflict resolution, sources and conflict, and ritual in the peacemaking process. We will discuss them in turn.

1.1.1 Radical Feminism

According to Witworth (1997), radical feminists focus on the relations of subordination and domination between women and men that constitute powerful and fundamental forms of repression on women. From that perspectives, it is argued that the way IR scholars carry-out research and policy recommendations undermines the role played by women. Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists, emphasis different attitudes towards peace and conflict, signifying that women are more peace-loving and associated with life through childbearing things in comparison to men, who often are instigators of conflicts. Witworth further points out that radical feminists hold strong positions presenting a strong epistemological critique of conventional IR than liberal feminists. They claim a need for investigating explicitly masculine prejudices common IR scholarship. In other words, radical feminists made a kind of development over liberal feminist theory.

1.1.2 Liberal Feminism

According to Dunne et al. (2016), liberal feminists subordinate women in international politics. It would be interesting to examine the cause of this approach. Accordingly, the subordination denies women from practicing their potential: income inequality between women and men, human rights violations on women thereby explaining the inadequacy of women's influence in international

situations. By removing legal and other systematic hindrances, it is possible to bring women from the periphery to the center in international politics.

Steans (1998) further asserts that women are excluded from many of the most important public spheres of socio-economic and political life. After casting light on this, liberal feminists sought to draw focus on the legal barriers to women's involvement in the public world and combat these barricades. Concerning the studies of peace and conflicts, the attitudes and actions of women might have attracted scholars' attention (Steans, 1998) but the critics, nonetheless, claim that researchers often make empirical data about women at the expense of any valuation of operational or structural features of relations of disparity between women and men (Whitworth, 1997).

1.1.3 Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern feminism critiques of radical and liberal feminist philosophies would be inclined to treat women as a unified group. Most feminist theorists developed some notion of essentialism to promote "women" as a group and defended some form of independence to campaign for women's socio-economic, legal, and political rights (Squires, 1999). Conversely, Smith (2001) argues that this essentialist approach undermines the multiplicity of women's voices. For Smith, feminists who adhere to essentialism run the risk of reincarnation of dualist distinctions that feminists themselves fight against in patriarchal discourse. As Squires (1999) states that postmodern feminists, the so-called "Third World" feminists and Black feminists, 'essentializing' the meaning of women's rights runs a risk. According to this theory-the postmodern feminists, overstated arguments about the simplicity and consistency of personal and societal identities and their meanings. Steans (1998), points out that the essentialist approach of women may help in political mobilization and it denies the possibility of ambiguity and change of identity in context. Essentialism tags timeless and definite formations of distinctiveness or identity. Smith (2001: 44-46) uncovers that essentialism is a problem because it claims to define features of identities and freezes them. In reality, the possibility of the creation of peace out of conflict, or stability out of instability or equity and equality out of inequality, all relevant transformations in the case of women's participation, in peacemaking, and conflict resolution, with women as stakeholders. Steans (1998) further argues that postmodern feminism causes political predicament in the sense that it categorizes "women" as a group to attain any political demand for women which is difficult to put to practice.

Cassandra K. Shepherd (2015: 55) has argued that women need to be a part of the peace process because their participation in the conflict resolution can contribute “to building long-term, sustainable, and amicable relationships between the parties in the conflict” Feminists believe that increasing women’s participation in the peace process and in “politics and the public sphere is not only just, but also makes economic sense, and the plurality of women’s perspectives strengthens national security” (Shepherd, 2015: 56). In this regard, Shepherd emphasis an essentialist paradigm that assumes women as peaceful, caring, and maternal abilities to make peace out of conflict. Brahnam, et al. (2004: 200) stated that women resonate to “define their sense of self within the contexts of relationships” whereas men favor dominating and socialize “to be assertive and independent” Some studies indicate men are more accommodating in their conflict resolution style than women (Rahim, 2001). Women’s avoidance of conflict and accommodative character is not mere gender differences, nonetheless, it has to do with power differentials (Randel, 2002).

According to Jean Bethke Elshtain (1987), women’s participation in conflict resolution should surpass individuals, or groups, or domestic levels and should have an inter-state or international dimension. Women’s involvement in the peace process at the international level helps the international community “to achieve sustainable peace and more effectively build amicable relationships between the parties in [the] conflict” (Shepherd, 2015: 53). Because women possess the unique skill sets and experiences that can shape the quality of the peace process, the agreement reached and nurture its implementation. Shepherd further argued that feminists favor women’s participation in the international conflict peace process is vital to adopt a collaborative strategy rather than a competitive one.

According to Christopher Isike and Ufo Okeke Uzodike (2011), European feminism encourages women’s participation in the decision-making process in the peace process and their involvement in domestic and international humanitarian military intervention. In international humanitarian law, military intervention is considered as *ius in bello*, just war. European feminists, therefore, believes in women’s role in *jus in bello*. We will next consider the perspectives of African feminism that seats at the core of the main argument of this thesis. We will next consider the perspectives of African feminism that seats at the core of the main argument of this thesis.

1.1.4 African Feminism

Many scholars question that if there is any discernible feminist school of thought that is actively African as opposed to the Western view of feminism. “African feminism” cannot be distinguished from “western feminism” they argue that women cross-culture face similar gender discrimination, political and economic oppression. Others argue that women discrimination is a worldwide phenomenon (Lilian Lem Atanga, 2007: 302). “Some African women describe themselves as having been influenced by western feminism yet remaining conscious of ‘positive’ African values” (Atanga, 2013: 204). Many African researchers in African feminism resist not to be called “feminists” because they assumed that ‘feminism’ is against African values. They argue that, for instance, ‘Western feminists’ are “anti-men, anti-child, and disruptive of the ‘natural’ state of the family (and its hierarchy), and sometimes as synonymous with lesbianism” (Atanga, 2007: 302).

Contemporary African feminist scholars took the middle ground. They argue that ‘African feminism’ has its specificities in the African context but has similar goals as ‘Western feminism’ to support women’s access to political, economic power, and social privileges (Oyowumi Oyeronke, 2005).

African feminism scholarly debate received attention from the 1990s forums, and international seminars related to gender, language, and feminism in African. On the forum held in Accra in 2006 and London in 2008, “feminism is feminism” across time and culture, presented the idea of feminism in Africa in their particular contexts (Magaret Snyder, and Mary Tadesse, 1997; Atanga, 2007).

Africa itself is tremendously diverse and to talk about “African feminism” as a single issue may face challenges considering that the issues were widely varied from one African community to another (Dosekun, 2007). That means African cannot be treated as a single entity. Fatima Sadiqi (2003), for instance, argues that women in Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria tend to experience different problems from women in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Sadiqi Morocco women often face problems similar to the cultural, social, political, and economic challenges Arab women encounter. They also experience similar gender-based discrimination. In other words, women in Maghreb countries (Libya, Tunisia and Algeria) and women in sub-African countries tend to face different

challenges compared to the African women in Diaspora women. African and Asian women's human rights challenges emanate from political, religious and cultural norms (Oyewumi, 2003).

Contemporary African feminism rewriting the roles and identities of African women not only as passive victims of patriarchal dominance but as active political, social and economic agents in the human development of their countries, having to rights to define their destiny and having the ability to combine some aspects of indigenous knowledge and practices as mothers and wives with public influences, roles (Mama, 2007).

Some scholars argue that African feminism is a movement against Western imperialism. For instance, Ihle (2008) states that African feminism has double purposes. On the one hand, it combats with White middle-class women and European feminism. African Feminists (AF) uncovers that they deliberately avoid the potential and role of African women from their literature on IR and international politics. Why did they fail to apply what they teach and practice to Africa? On the other hand, AF attempts to challenge the African patriarchal structure. In many African societies, women are considered weak compared to men. This discriminatory attitude hinders millions of African women from using their potential and defining their destiny. In both cases, African feminists strongly argue for the existence of feminism indigenous to many African societies. The notion of African feminism has the insinuation of ethnocentrism. However, in a broad context, it emphasizes on Africa, particularly, the situation and position of women in African society. It opposes gender-subjugation in the continent. To halt gender-discrimination on the African continent, African feminists argue that women should be empowered through admission to assets such as leadership, housing, health, and education (Mama, 2007).

Oyewumi (2005) asserts that Western feminism is women movement to promote women's legal and political rights or a movement against patriarchal ideology, political and economic rights, and gender-based violence while sharing the ideological movement of western feminism, African feminism or black feminism is aimed to fight against Western colonial domination at least at the ideological level. Knowledge production of Black feminist is still under the domain of Western feminism (Patricia Hill Collins, 2000).

According to Collins (2000), in many African countries, women are fighting against arranged marriage, poverty, and racism. They are often confronted to get their rights to education and access resources are protected for survival while many European feminists argue that they are not given

equal rights with men to be hired in certain companies and governmental offices, and they are not paid equally with men. African or Black women face multifaceted discrimination when they come to Europe. As women in general, and as black women and minorities they suffer systematic discrimination in many aspects of their lives, social life, job opportunity, and in maximizing the horizon of their capacity to pursue their dreams.

Conversely, Mama (2007) states that women's status in African societies is not as such a tremendously eroded as it has been misrepresented by Western feminists. For instance, the Igbo women of Nigeria society had an indigenous system in which they organize themselves to fight for their social, economic, and political rights, and resolve conflicts. They negotiate and resolve families' conflict, group conflict, order the community to clean the area, assign the place for the market and regulate it, organize rituals to appease the community Deities. Igbo women have women's council. Mama further articulates that the membership of the council is granted based on age, lineage, and marital status. However, this membership principle does not hinder all women of the community not to attend the gathering if they want. All women who attend the meeting have the right to express their views on the issues discussed. The decisions will be notified to on-attending women. The council will schedule to gather to discuss disputes and to deliberate upon to arrive at a consensus that is essential to bring mutual understanding.

The Igbo women's council has an exclusive way of convening the assembly. In the dawn, the members of the women's council move through the village beating an *ekwe* (Igbo word for a dram). The rhythm of the beating gong indicates the time and venue of the meeting. The meeting is often held at the village square, an open space in the market. They also gather at the compound of the members of the house. Igbo oral tradition indicates that men are not allowed to attend the meeting, but the decisions of the meetings are conveyed to the male community members. Male elders who failed to comply with the notified decisions will be reproached for their negligence. The councilors can mobilize women in the community to take punitive measures such as exclusion from the community, boycotts, strikes, and refuse to cook for their husbands. The measures may extend to confiscating the assets of male elders, calling their husbands' names, and framing defamatory songs about them. Injustice to a woman is prohibited (Mama, 2007).

According to Ihle (2008), the Igbo women elect one woman who is the most respected, and the oldest member of the community to represent them to deliberate their case or to resolve conflict

arise in the community. They also consider the wealth, kinships, and seniority to elect her to hold the office to lead the women's council. The woman elected to preside the meeting, or hold office is called *Omu* in Igbo language, which means 'the great mother' *Omu* is derived from *nne Omunnu*, meaning 'she who bears children' They also call her *Ogene Nyanya* or *onye-isi-umunwanji* (the women's leader). The *Omu* was assumed to well respected and acknowledged mother of the entire community. The duty of *Omu* avoided conflicting with the men's affairs. The duties of *ilogo* (*Omu*'s cabinets) also avoided conflicting with the men's affairs. Ihle further stated that the *ilogo* has the power to remove *Omu* from her position particularly if she fails to protect women's rights. We should contrast these foregoing ideas with the institution of *siiqqee* of women among the Oromo, which is the subject of this thesis.

As black women of Africa, the Oromo women (*hadha-siiqqee* in the context of this study) have never stopped battling with socially and culturally constructed patriarchy and repressive Abyssinian colonial system that made them subject to gender discrimination (Tolosa, 2011). In Ethiopia, gender-based discrimination is socially constructed. In many of the cases, people believe that women lack the leadership capacity to give an important decision. This erroneous attitude on how men treat women in civic organizations, in governmental offices, in religious institutions, and higher education institutions in the country (Jemina Adem, 2014).

Similarly, Oromo women's struggle for social, economic, and political liberation in the pre-colonial Oromia and post-colonial Oromia are different in character and scope (Kumsa, 1997). In the pre-colonial era, the Oromo women had massive power to rule over resources, to resolve conflict, and shape the politics of the Oromo nation. In post-colonial times, the practice of *siiqqee*, a spectacular indigenous institution, has deteriorated due to external and internal forces (Bokku, 2011). They had significant contributions to conflict resolution (Etefa, 2012; Kumsa, 1997; Jalata, 2002; Adem, 2014; Tolosa, 2011). Thus, as part of the objective of this study (in chapter 4), we will examine the historical development, concepts, patterns, practice, and status of the indigenous Oromo institution that empowers women. Now, would like to discuss the general concepts of indigenous conflict resolution more.

1.2 Indigenous Conflict Resolution System

1.2.1 Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict has been studied for centuries but a more systematic study has been established since the twentieth (Schellenberg, 1996). Theoretical debates over the subject of conflict and its resolution have received significant attention from academics. For instance, most scholars do not agree on whether a conflict is a process of social interaction or disjunctive. Durkheim (cited in Spova, 1989), described the conflict as an anomalous portent and phenomenon. The conflict has a disjunctive consequence. Daniel Bell (1965) states that it divides individuals, clans, ethnic groups, and nations. It causes a disjunction of social structure and culture. Some scholars have rejected this view. They argue that contact among people is social interaction, so is conflict. They believe that conflict is a means to avert complete separation among individuals or groups or nations. It is a vehicle for change. Bohaman (1967) argues conflict is an element of the culture of a society, which is possibly controlled and used profitably to maintain social order and create a better society. Schellenberg adds his argument and says that conflict is neither good nor bad but one of the vivacious experiences in human life. Nanda (1994) agreed with Schellenberg and maintained that conflict or disagreement is a part of social life and society is impossible without it. Conflict is good because it can lead to major economic, social, and political changes (Nathan, 2007). Nathan's view correlates with Marxian's theory (Seymour Smith, 1986) which explains conflict as a prime stimulus for and incentive in social change.

Traditional African society believes that conflict has not only a disjuncture of social structure and culture but also ecological and theological effects. Violent conflict affects the environment. Parties in conflict may involve in the destruction of resources (burning crops and forests, and poisoning water) to indignant their adversaries (Wake, 2015). Burning forests can lead to Co2 emissions, thereby impose climate change, namely in high intensity conflict consume large amounts of fuel. According *seera ikkee* or *sammuu seeraa* (cardinal laws or brain of laws) in the Oromo Gadaa system, burning forest is not only crime against humanity but also sin against domestic and wild animals (Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2009: 109). The parties in dispute may kill each other. As Wake (2015: 50-53) pointed out, killing a man is destroying a valuable life created by God. In African Traditional Religion, people believe that the Creator, God who cares for the life He has created punishes a person who kills his fellow human being. A person who kills a man puts

himself in a misfortune situation for he cannot be in the presence of the Creator anymore. Murder act exposes the murder to an evil spirit that can attack her/him because God doesn't protect him unless he repents and exercise ritual to make peace. Also, he (the killer) suffers from isolation from the society in which he lives. As Dejene Gemechu Chala (2002) asserts, a ritual is needed to restore peace and justice, and reconcile the wrongdoer with the victims or victim's family, society, and God.

Regarding the sources of conflict, scholars have contesting opinions. Schellernberg (1996) uncovers that some scholars argue that conflict is intrinsic to human nature; it is an inborn human behavior. They root this view in the work of Freud, who sturdily argued that conflict is not a mere social factor but a biological fact resting within humanity. The Darwinists, taking the theory of the "survival of the fittest" as a basis, believe that completion is a universal struggle urged by inborn belligerent propensities. It exists in all human societies, so is conflict. Others repudiate this view. They argue that conflict is not entrenched in human biology but, a reaction of economic, social, religious, and political factors. They further argue that a person or society could be peaceful across time and conditions (Schellernberg, 1996: 13, 43).

1.2.2 Indigenous Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution

In indigenous mechanisms of enforcing decisions, local communities settle the conflict in the state's absence justice system. Such a conflict resolution system depends on common ethical and cultural codes that produce and impose binding rules on its members (Volker, 2007). The most important elements in this system are addressing the source/root of structural causes of the conflict, tradition of forgiveness, restorative justice, and respect for elders (can be men or women). Elders are symbolic authority to examine the cause of the conflict, adopt principles, urge for repentance, forgiveness, mutual understandings, reconciliation, and transfer of the resource for restoration (Zartman, 2010). Indigenous conflict resolution focuses on consensus-building and social healing based on discussions by parties in conflict with the coordination of the mediators. As Chala (2002) pointed out, this mechanism can lead to *ad hoc* practical contract/agreement which nurtures wider social relations constructive where nomads can share resources such as grazing land, water, and farmland to increase their incomes.

According to Gufu Oba (1996), maintaining peace-*nagaa* Boranaa (the peace of the Borana) is crucial for the well-being of society. Enforcing decisions to make peace, and imposing a sanction

against the wrongdoer are important practices in conflict resolution. Oba (1996: 119) further explained that the sanction aims to maintain “the common moral order” and forces can be used “on those who defiled custom” Confirming Oba’s argument, Adem (2014) says that sanction can be effected in terms of material. For instance, in Oromo culture women can take away the cattle of the offender, or they can destroy his home if he refuses to admit for the wrong he has done. Correspondingly, Pospisil (1967) suggests that we can apply psychological sanctions. The community can isolate the wrongdoer at the last resolution. Social isolation is the worst punishment in African culture, so is in Oromo culture.

1.2.3 Rituals in the Peacemaking process

Most scholars in rituals, peace and conflict studies agree that the peace process involves rituals but, they do not agree whether these rituals help to restore peace and harmony among the parties in conflict. Seymour-Smith (1986) showed that Durkheim’s view is important to understand the role of ritual in dispute processing. Durkheim believes that ritual has the power to strengthening shared sentimentality or feeling and creating group cohesion, group identity. Functionalists adopted this view and emphasized that ritual has a key role to pursue the feeling of the parties in conflict to forgive each other and develop mutual understandings. As Hoebel (1966) asserts, rituals have symbols that express emotion. They are arts, which are believed to uphold the status quo to attain the specified ends. Ritual has sacred authority. It is a drama that resolves the conflict by dramatizing the compensations and advantages of values and social cohesion, and restore social order. In African culture, the role of ritual in peace process is crucial. Adem (2014) articulates that in the Oromo culture ritual has an essential role in the peace process. Ritual is important for “anyone who is not at peace with others” and “has proved to be effective over many generations” (Bartels, 1989: 35).

Those who believe ritual doesn’t help in conflict resolution argue that ritual is a moral behavior that people often fall short of (Bartels, 1989: 35). Ritual offers temporary mental satisfaction. Ritual “offers a temporary solution” (Chala, 2002: 23). Focusing on the role of ritual in the conflict resolution process is to seek a meek remedy that may not heal the broken relationship between the parties in dispute (Schellenberg, 1996). According to this view, the ritual has less success in convincing the wrongdoer and healing the victim.

CHAPTER 2

Background

In this chapter, I will present the background of the study. A brief history of Ethiopia, and the Oromo people with a focus on their culture and indigenous political system.

The modern Ethiopian state was created in the 1890s. Ethiopia has more than eighty ethnic groups who have their own cultural identity. People adhere to three main religions: Christianity, Islam, and the indigenous religion. According to the 2007 national census the major religious groups are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians (42%), Protestants (18%) and Muslims (34%). In his 2011 research Bulcha (2011) indicates that about (7%) follow indigenous religion, *Waaqeffannaa*, particularly among the Oromo. Most of the population lives in the countryside, and the economics of the country is highly dependent on agriculture. Most ethnic groups, including the Oromo and Sidama have been suffering from political, social, and economic exclusion, and cultural discrimination by the ruling classes (Jalata, 2002; Bulcha, 2011; Bokku, 211; Gadaa, 1999; Wake, 2016). Among the group that concerns us is the Oromo, the largest linguistic and cultural groups in Ethiopia.

The Oromo people are an ancient people of the Cushitic stock who live in East Africa. The Oromo's country, Oromia was incorporated into the modern Ethiopian state in the 1890s, that is, when the Ethiopian Empire was established. USA, Russia, France, Great Britain, and Italy have provided enormous material and logistic support for Minelik of Abyssinian (modern Ethiopia) to fight and destroy the Oromo people (De Salvaic, 2005; Bartels, 1990; Baxter et al, 1996; Jalata, 2002). After the 1890s Oromo indigenous democratic governance system, such as *siiqqee* and *gadaa* institutions were marginalized, banned by Abyssinian political elites, and indigenous religious leaders and custodians of Oromo culture were persecuted and killed (Bulcha, 2011; Bokkuu, 2011). However, the basic components of these institutions are reflected in people's culture, language, mythology, heritage, oral traditions, and even continually practiced in some areas in Oromia regional state in Ethiopia (Etefa, 2012). After 1995, that is, when the freedom of culture and religion was declared in Ethiopia, there has been a revival and rapid development in *siiqqee* institution (Kelbessa, 2011; Wake, 2016).

Before presenting a brief description of the *siiqqee* institution it might be worthwhile to outline the *gadaa* system within which this women institution functions.

2.1 Indigenous Institutions

2.1.1 Gadaa System

The Oromo has a long history of egalitarian government called *Gadaa* system which encompasses system governances of social, economic, political, and religious lives of the Oromo people (Jalata, 2002; Bokku, 2011). In the *Gadaa* system, *Abba Gadaa* (leader) stays in office only for eight years. He should leave the office and hand-over the power to the next *Abbaa Gadaa* who is elected by the *gadaa* assembly and leave the office after he serves eight years in the office. However, the practice of *Gadaa* egalitarian government system has been declining since the incorporation of Oromia into the Ethiopian state the introduction of Christianity and Islam among the Oromo (Itefa, 2012; Melbaa, 1999; Kelbessa, 2011).

2.1.2 Self-help Associations

The Oromo have several indigenous institutions and associations that operate under the *Gadaa* system. This includes the *siiqqee* institution and other institutions for self-help groups or self-help. These are *michuu*³ institution, *harma-hodha* institution, and *dubbisa* institution, *qixxee* association, *daboo* association, *daadoo* association, *jigii* association, *afoshaa* association, *hirpha* association and *hirboo* association. The Oromo people have been using them to coexist in peace, to maximize and share their resources, and peaceful relationship with other people (Jalata, 2002). *Namummaa* (Oromo relational philosophy), *jaarsummaa* (mediation) and *ilaa fi ilaamee* (help) are crucial elements for peacebuilding and reconciliation (Wake, 2018).

³ *Michuu*, *harma-hodha*, *dubbisa*, *qixxee*, *daboo*, *daadoo*, *jigii*, *afoshaa*, *hirpha* and *hirboo* are the Oromo indigenous institutions which OW organized to fulfil their social, economic, political, and spiritual responsibilities in the society. Women encourage their husbands to be organized to accomplish their respective roles in society. Women use their *siiqqee* as a symbol of power to mobilize human resources and material resources when they participate in some of these institutions such as *qixxee*, *hirboo*, *hirphaa*, *afoshaa* and *jigii*. All these institutions and self-help associations are committed to promoting social justice, peace, tolerance, hope, and human development. They operate under the general egalitarian principles enshrined in the *Gadaa* system.

2.1.3 Religion

Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam in Oromia, the Oromo were followers of their indigenous religion called *Waaqeffannaa*. Today, they follow Christianity, Islam, and *Waaqeffannaa* (Bokku 2011; Bulcha, 2011). As a monotheistic African Traditional Religion, a belief in one supreme deity known as *Waaqa/Waaqayyoo* (God), *Waaqeffannaa* has established the idea of one God in the Oromo culture before Christianity and Islam were introduced to the area. This helped the people to understand the oneness of God and accept these religions. There has been peaceful co-existence among these religions (Ezekiel Gebissa, 2009). Many scholars claim these foreign religions are expanded at the expense of *Waaqeffannaa* (Jalata, 1998; Bokku, 2011). Today, there is great revival in this religion. Many of Oromo Christians and Muslims are showing interest in *Waaqeffannaa*. They consider it as their cultural heritage (Bulcha, 2011).

The followers of *Waaqeffannaa*, known as *Waaqeffataa* believe God is the Creator and sustainer of all things. He is the source of justice and order, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient (Bokku, 2011). *Waaqayyo* does not have a personal form (Bartels, 1989). He manifests himself through his deeds. People approach him through rituals. Ritual or prayer a key practice in this religion because it “provides a path of communication through which the power of divinity can flow into the human world” (Chala, 2002: 44-45). Prayer can be made anywhere but, there are particular places where they perform rituals such as the top of the hill, under the hill, riverside, under big trees. They pray for the peace of the Oromo nation, fertility, property, rain, and health (Bokku, 2011; Bartels, 1989). The leader in *Waaqeffannaa* is called *Qaalluu* (Oromo Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2009).

There other small divinities called *ayyaana* to deal with daily activities. Some scholars gave confusing definitions to *ayyaana*. For example, Bartels (1989: 112) says that for the Oromo the world of full of *ayyaana*. It a divine being with no particular representation that inhabits the sky (Morton (1975: 73). Everything has its own *ayyaana*. “*Ayyana* is given from birth to guide and guard the possessor” (Chala, 2002: 45). *Ayyaana* a person watches his daily activities. *Ayyaana* does not like a person who kills a man. “If you kill a man, you must make peace with his *ayyaana* [*with your ayyaana, too*] *italic emphasis mine*” (Bartels, 1989: 112). For Megersaa (1993: 75), *ayyaana* is “what causes the thing to come into existence as well as becoming that which it has caused” Regardless of these perplexing meanings scholars provided to *ayyaana*, the ordinary

believers of this religion believe that *ayyaana* has an active role in their daily lives (Megerssa and Kassam, 2019). In ritual practice in *Waaqeffannaa*, interaction with *ayyaana* is important. *Hadha siiqqee* has the spiritual authority to communicate with *ayyaanaa*. Kumsa (1997) and Jalata (2002) pointed out that *hadha siiqqee* can not only exercise spiritual power but influence social transformation, economic decisions, and dispute management.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

In this chapter, I will present the methodology applied in the study. The chapter articulates the research design, informants' selection and data collection and presentation technique, data analysis, method, material, and research ethics.

To accomplish the study, I used primary and secondary data. In secondary data collection, an intensive library search was done to systematically organize the main concepts of feminism in the theoretical framework of the study to identify the current debate on the subject. This helped me to embark on the literature on *siiqee*, feminism from the perspectives of the Oromo of Ethiopia on its role in conflict resolution mechanism.

The following works of scholars are used as the main sources. Asefa Jalata (2002), *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*; Dirribi Demissie Bokku (2011), *Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization*; Gemetchu Megerssa & Aneesha Kassam (2019), *Sacred Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa*; Jemila Adem (2014), *Women and Indigenous Conflict Resolution Institution in Oromia: Experience from Siiqee of the Wayyu Shanan Arsi Women in Adami Tulluu Jidduu Kombolchaa District of Oromia National Regional State*; Kuwe Tumsa (1997), *The Siiqee Institution of Oromo Women*; Mekuria Bulcha (2011), *Contours of the Emergent & Ancient Oromo Nation: Dilemmas in the Ethiopian Politics of State and Nation-Building* and Tsega Etefa (2012), *2/ Integration and Peace in East Africa: A History of the Oromo Nation*. A close look at the works of these scholars indicates that they have put much weight on sociological and spiritual aspects *siiqee* and casts light on the potential role of *siiqee* institution in conflict resolution. Indeed, Kumsa has explored in detail some aspects of *siiqee* in per-colonial Oromia. None of them researched on the current role the status of *siiqee* (its institutional capacity) among the Oromo and in wider society in Ethiopia. The sources helped me to analyze what kind of components *siiqee* has and how it has been practiced and what kind of impact it has on the social, economic, political, and spiritual conditions of the Oromo women and society in general.

The interviews were made face-to-face in Norway (Oslo) with 2 informants and via skype in Ethiopia (Finfinnee, Addis Ababa) with five interviewees. Interview guide questionnaires were

prepared with the intention of guiding the interview. The interview were done in Oromo (Oromo language) because that is the mother tongue of the interviewees. This helped me to get detailed information that in turn provide in-depth knowledge to analyze the findings.

The interview is based on their willingness and their anonymity is respected. Since I am a native speaker of this language, I did not need a translator. The interview material was first transcribed into Oromo and later translated into English. The data were critically selected to fit the context and size of the thesis and critically scrutinized to answer the research questions. Descriptions about the informants and questionnaire guides were included in the appendix. I did not impose my opinion and idea on the interviewees.

This study is categorized under a qualitative research paradigm in which semi-structured interviews were applied. The main sources of this study will be the data collected from informants who are custodians of the Oromo culture, *siiqqee*. The interview was conducted through Skype. In my interviews, I asked the informants to explain their understandings of the fundamental concepts of *siiqqee*. This helped me to see the notion of *siiqqee* through the eyes of the people being studied. I focused on describing the context in which the informants explained this indigenous institution; I attempted to understand the informants' description of this institution.

Accordingly, in this research semi-structured interview was used to draw data from primary sources. The key feature of the semi-structured interview is the partial preplanning of the questions to be covered (Bryman, 2008: 471). Using this method helped me to ask more questions to attain a better understanding of *siiqqee*. Semi-structured questionnaires were also used to conduct in-depth personal interviews with seven key informants. All informants were asked the same questions (see appendix 1).

I selected the informants based on their knowledge of *siiqqee*, practices and their knowledge about Oromo culture as a whole and their age. Some of them have been participating in *siiqqee* rituals (blessing, and reconciliation). The interview involved not only female (5) but also male (2) so that I understand the idea of *siiqqee* from males' perspective as well. The informants were selected from the Arsi area in Oromia where *siiqqee* institution is widely practiced. Two informants were selected from central and western Oromia. The age of the informants ranged from 23-77. The findings of the study will be discussed mainly based on the data obtained from them.

I am aware that it does not necessarily mean that the data collected from these informants fully represent the understandings' or views of millions of Oromo in Ethiopia. However, since the informants are custodians of *siiqqee* institution, the data collected from them can be used to analyze the overall understandings of the role of this institution in the Oromo society.

The informants were informed that the interview is needed for academic purposes and the confidentiality of the information they provided will be maintained and their anonymity were respected. The interviews were taped, transcribed and labelled as Inf1, Inf2, Inf3, Inf4, Inf5, Inf6, and Inf7. The informants were informed that the interview is needed for academic purposes and the confidentiality of the information they provided will be maintained and their anonymity will be respected.

I am aware that it does not necessarily mean that the data collected from these informants fully represent the understandings' or views of millions of Oromo in Ethiopia. However, since the informants are custodians of *siiqqee* institution, the data collected from them can be used to analyze the overall understandings of the role of this institution in the Oromo society.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion: *Siiqqee* Institution in Conflict Resolution in Oromo Culture

This chapter is the main part of the thesis. It aims to answer the research questions, it presents the main components of *siiqqee*. The chapter explores and analysis the essentials elements of *siiqqee*, how it has been practiced by the Oromo women.

4.1 Historical Development of *Siiqqee*

Siiqqee has complex socio-political and historical development. In sociolinguistic culture, while they did not always call feminism (the noun), there have been Oromo feminists (the adjective or verb) since the era of Akkoo Manoyyee (Akko Ha Banoyee) fighting against women abuse. According to Oromo oral literature, the era of *Akkoo Manoyyee/ Laso lasoyyee* was characterized by matriarchal power (Bokku, 2011). There are two myths of the origin of *siiqqee* oral tradition. The first mythology says that *siiqqee* institution was started immediately with the evolution of Gadaa system. Abba Gada gave the *siiqqee* ritual for his wife to have spiritual power and serve as *ayyantuu*, meaning female *qaalluu*, spiritual leader. Abba Gadaa gave her the *siiqqee* stick for ritual practices and use it as a recreational value but not to practice power for social, political, and economic purposes (Endalkachew Lelisa Duressa, 2018: 9).

The second myth says that *siiqqee* institution came into existence after women had been removed from the *gadaa* office. According to Wake (2016: 105-208) and Bokku (2011), during the matriarchal administration of Akkoo Manoyyee/Qarooyyee/Garooyyee, Haadha Sonkooroo, Moote Qorkee, and Akkoo Manoyyee were said to be the queen of the Oromo people. They misused their power and abused men. They killed so many men and established cruel rules to subdue them. Men rebelled against her rule and took the *gadaa* office. Before 2800 years, men negotiated with women and developed the concept of *Siiqqee* institution in which women would exercise their rights (Bokku, 2011). Women had roles in society to exercise their religious, socioeconomic, and political rights (Kumsa, 1997). Nevertheless, this mythology of matriarchal tyranny has been conveyed by men for many years and is mostly accredited from a patriarchal perspective. Further research is needed to interrogate this male's ordained mythology.

Siiqqee is an institution through which Oromo women exercise their economic, political, social, cultural, and religious rights. It has multiple meanings and symbolizes different ideas constructed

in Oromo culture. The study focuses on two meanings of *siiqqee*. First, “*Siiqqee* as a stick symbolizing a socially sanctioned set of rights exercised by Oromo women” (Kumsa, 1997: 15). It is the name of the stick women use as a symbol of power. It is made up of a tree called *harooressa*. Second, it refers to an office or institution in which women exercise their collective rights, perform their collective duty, and exercise their power to sanction some unethical acts in the society (Kumsa, 1997; Jalata, 2002). According to Adem (2014), *siiqqee* is given to a girl by her mother on her wedding day. Some argue that the father curves the *siiqqee* that his wife gives to a girl because women do not create artifacts (personal conversation). Men and unmarried girls have no right to carry *siiqqee*. Duressa (2018) reports that *siiqqee* is associated with the power of and respect for a married woman. Married women hold *siiqqee* when they go for social events.

Siiqqee also symbolizes women’s power and the role they play in society. It implores women’s rights and radiates a message of reconciliation during social conflicts both among the women and the wider society among the Oromo (Kumsa, 1997). For example, when *gumaa* (murder case) is not resolved by elders, women may call for *iya siiqqee* (*siiqqee* cry) to urge the parties in dispute to resolve their conflict and reach at a mutual understanding. If they refuse, they impose a punishment (they can take away the properties of the person who refuses reconciliation) for the sake of the wellbeing of the community because nobody can take away the peace of the community (Adem, 2014). The conflict between individuals, families, and certain groups can affect the entire community (Wake, 2015).

Siiqqee is, therefore, a symbol of political, social, and material culture by which Oromo women accomplish their social, cultural, economic, political, and spiritual roles in the Oromo society (Inf7). It is a material culture because it is created by humans (the Oromo’s) knowledge and skills.

The oral literature on the Oromo indigenous knowledge system indicates that *Siiqqee* had been practiced among all Oromo clans such as Macaa and Tulama, Sikkoo and Mandoo, Ittu and Umbanna, and Rayyaa and Asaboo in pre-colonial Oromia. However, the function of *siiqqee* institution is limited to conflict resolution at the local level and spiritual practices among the Arsi Oromo. The modern Ethiopian legal system, the situation of a changing society, and secular political ideas remain an obstacle to the role, played in advocacy. Some aspects of it were disregarded by the idea of a secular state and modernization. Some Ethiopian scholars (Bokku, 2011; Buclha, 2011; Adem, 2014) argue that the *siiqqee* institution has the potential to build peace,

promote gender equality and democracy in Ethiopia if it is integrated critically into the Ethiopian legal system.

The operations of *siiqqee* institution could be at any particular place, or any meeting point, for instance, in the village where conflict occurs, or on the street, or at the riverside, or on the top of the hill, or under Odaa tree (sycamore; a symbol of the *Gadaa* system; Oromo national emblem) or at the home of the women beaten by her relative. Also, it might cross-link with the tradition of religion and conflict resolution.

According to Etefa (2012), since the advent of Christianity and Islam among the Oromo, and the incorporation of Oromia into the modern Ethiopia state, *siiqqee* institution and its practice has been marginalized and over-taken by non-Oromo culture. Jalata (2002) and Bokku (2011) state that Oromo culture and indigenous institutions such as *gadaa* system, indigenous Oromo religion, and other cultural values were destroyed and replaced by Islam and Christian values and the Abyssinian culture. Oromo culture is also not a perfect space for Oromo women. Although women's right is enshrined in the *gadaa* system, male domination is vividly seen in the Oromo community (Kumsa, 1997). Male domination excludes women from equal access to economic and political power and social capital (Zara Burka, 2017).

4.2 Perception of Siiqqee by Other Religious Groups

In Christianity, especially Pentecostal and protestant dominated areas, Oromo cultural values such as the practice of *siiqqee* and traditional marriage practices and symbols or artifacts that convey Oromo myth have been considered as demonic (Bokku, 2011). According to Burka (2017), Christianity systematically discriminated *siiqqee* institution and intensified the challenges women encountered in a patriarchal society. Burka (2017) and Adem (2014) argue that women were considered incompetent, unwise, and weak in making a good decision. Their practices in society were less valued. Adem further states that this unfair attitude towards them still has a consequence on their role in civic associations, educational institutions, and governmental institutions in the country. Burka also uncovered that this cultural understating has influenced women's contributions to conflict resolution and leadership in the church among the Oromo and in the larger society in Ethiopia.

Among Christianity dominated areas, the ideas, and concepts *siiqqee* institution have been less accepted than in areas dominated by the Islamic religion. For example, *iya siiqqee* is widely practiced among the Arsi Oromo more than anywhere else in Oromia. Although *siiqqee* has immense elements, there are socio-cultural, economic, and religious attitudes and practices that undermine women. There are many social and sexually constructed expressions and proverbs that undermine women (Adem 2014; Daba 1992). Kumsa (1997) states that Oromo women have never been accepted such unwholesome sociocultural and religious-oriented discrimination against them. My informants said that the Oromo women kept the concepts of *siiqqee* exist in their expressions, songs and self-help group. They have a collective identity and respond collectively to their situations (Inf6; Inf4).

Informants asserted that male constructed the cultural value that gives a privilege for men over women in decision-making on certain matters and the role they play both at the family and society levels (Inf3). Man, a husband is seen as an expert and head of the family and consulted on various matters, bring solutions, and give a decision. This is because men are considered as intellectuals, powerful, superior, hard-worker, wise, and brave. Women are weak, cowards, have no confidence, and there should be the head of the family always to secure the family (Inf1). According to Kumsa (1997), feminist scholars contested this social and cultural fabricated repression against women. They focused on women's expertise and potential in conflict resolution and rituals, strength in economic management, and contextual understanding of customary law or the traditional justice system. Two of my informants argued that this is not to discriminate against women, but it is all about power and responsibility sharing. Women have responsibilities to rule over all the resources in their homes including to decide who many cattle the family should use for milk and how many they should sell increase their income while men are responsible for duties outside the home such as farming, leading cattle to the field, gathering crops are often seen as man's responsibility (Inf2; Inf5). However, not all women accepted this status. Women have a sense of self-worth and they can contribute to human development. They deserve political institutions to support them in Ethiopia. There is a great need for a good policy that promotes gender equality through education, employment, political power, and access to material resources in Oromia/Ethiopia so that women can use their potential to define their destiny (Adem, 2014).

According to Duressa (2018)), conceding gender issues and applying good policy to empower women is crucial. Tackling the gender gap in a community leads a society to challenge the male status quo and improve the situation of women in all spheres. “It is a degree of women’s access to and control over materials and social resources within the family, in the community, and the society at large” (Duressa, 2018: 8).

4.3 Functions of *Siiqqee*

Based on the data collected in the study, *siiqqee* as an institution helps in the peace process at different levels. As a stick, it symbolizes women’s political and spiritual power and respect in the community. *Siiqqee*’s functions as an institution and a symbol are interconnected and reinforce each other.

4.3.1 *Siiqqee* as an Institution of Conflict Resolution

Oromo women apply an indigenous understanding conflict resolution mechanism in their *siiqqee* which they use to fight for their economic, social, and political rights. They use this institution to mobilize resources during pandemics and hunger (Bartels, 1990; Etefa, 2012; Baxter et al 1996; Jalata, 1998; Kelbessa, 2011). According to Inf3 and Inf6, women are more effective to resolve conflict and resource mobilization at the local level.

Oromo girls (unmarried women) have also their cultural practice, association, called ⁴*addooyee* in which they share their ideas, mobilize resources to support each other, defend their rights, and accompany each other during their wedding. In this age category, they learn how to socialize, debate, and defend their rights, and they start to use their expenses make an influence in their families and societies as *hadha-siiqqee* as soon as their get married and receive *siiqqee* from their mothers (Inf2; Inf6; Inf3).

⁴ *Addooyee* is an age group in which unmarried Oromo girls organize themselves, particularly from 11 or 12 years old until they marry. *Addooyee* comprises 2 to 4 members. There is no family clan, or class boundary to make *addooyee*. But they often organize *addooyee* for girls of the same village. In *addooyee*, Oromo girls discuss ideas, deliberate their cases and make their voices heard in the group. They can talk about things enshrined in *seera safuu* (moral laws) in the *Gadaa* system. For instance, sexual issues. In spring the *addooyee* give each other the type of grass called *ballammii* (crown-grass) as a symbol of respect, hope and commitment to continue *addooyee* social-web. If the members in *addooyee* is 2, they give each other a crown-grass with 2 blades. The same principle apply based on the numbers of members in *addooyee*. If one of the members in the group is interested to include a new friend, she can present a crown-grass that has blades equivalent to original members in the group plus the new one.

The researches done on *siiqqee* institution show that in Oromo society women are considered as peace-makers (Etefa, 2012; Kumsa, 1997; Bulcha, 2011; Adem, 2014) involved in conflict resolution to avoid escalating the conflict. They tend to avoid conflict and bring sustainable peace more than men (Inf7). In their presence, the conflict has a minimal chance to escalate (Inf7; Inf6). According to Witworth (1997), they are generally considered as peacebuilder and keen to resolve conflict than igniting. Women are more passionate to take care of others (Inf6).

Siiqqee has three features that can be utilized in African feminism scholarship. First, it has the feature and potential of crossing borders to building peace. Historical records show that at least since 16th –century, women have been exercising their *siiqqee* power to resolve conflict among the Oromo people and other neighboring ethnic groups who have been fighting with the Oromo in the territorial expansion (Bokku, 2011; De Salvaic, 2005; Baxter et al., 1996; Adem, 2014).

Second, in pre-colonial Oromia, Oromo women used *siiqqee* as a method of a ceasefire to stop men from going to war (Kumsa, 1997). They take and hold *siiqqee* (a sign of power to prevent men from going to the battlefield in this case), in the process stopping from taking up their spears. Spear is a traditional weapon that the Oromo men used to fight their enemies (Inf6). If his wife refuses him to go to war and uphold her *siiqqee* in front of him (that means she is saying ‘No’ to him), then he would not go to war (Inf4).

Even when their husbands are involved in the fight, they have a moral responsibility not to take sides; they should be neutral to bring peace for all (Inf2). They would raise *siiqqee* so that they would be identified as an authorized body delegated to stop the war (Inf3). My informant described women’s role in conflict resolution saying, “*Umaatu nu eebisee. Nuti nagaa garee gidduutti, biyya keessattis buusuuf eebba abbota keenyaa qabna. Dhala namaa hundaaf nagaa hawina. Lola dhaabsisnee nagaa fidu ni dandeenya*” (Inf2). Meaning: The Creator, God has blessed us. We have divine power to bring peace among groups and in the nation. The blessing of our ancestors is upon us. We wish peace for all human beings. We can make peace between the parties in conflict.

The discretion to the role of women in Oromo society is connected to the notion of peace. Because the Oromo believes that peace is the essential key to all cosmic and human orders, possessing the maximum and most dominant value for humanity to pursue (Dewo, 2008: 140). Women are a vital segment of society to promote and protect peace. Megerssa and Kassam (2019: 226) articulate that the Oromo people “strove to maintain a harmonious balance between its constituent parts” Lack

of *nagaa* in an individual can affect peace of the entire family, village, group, clan, the community and the nation as well (Bulcha, 2011). Therefore, Oromo women are very much occupied with talk about *nagaa* and work to ensure *nagaa*. According to Etefa (2012), Oromo people love peace and invest time in peacemaking. *Nagaa* is daily bread for Oromo and women are considered as guardians of peace (Adem, 2014). Peace is Oromo's daily bread (Bulcha, 2011) and it "forms the integral component of the Oromo moral philosophy" (Megerssa and Kassam (2019: 226).

Oromo women have always been at the epicenter of the peace process in pre-colonial Oromo society as women did across various pre-colonial African societies. As Kumsa (1997) articulates, Oromo women's peace agency in the society is located in the people's cultural, spiritual, social, and political contributions to the overall well-being of the society. Kumsa's observation is confirmed when she said that Oromo traditional society's perception of women's role to make peace out of conflict and women as natural peacemakers are high, at least at a mythical level (Inf6). Isike and Uzodike (2011: 32) also agree with Kumsa regarding this mythology arguing that,

Women in neo-colonial Africa states appear to have lost this myth/sacredness that surrounded their being and social existence in pre-colonial Africa. This is because apart from being marginalized socially, economically and politically, they have increasingly become victims of male violence.

The informants aptly articulated that in the Oromo culture, if the husband violates her rights, that is, her right to decide on resources in the home, or if he denies her not to participate in *siiqqee* gatherings to exchange ideas and to discuss women's rights and other social issues, women can apply *iya siiqqee*. If she makes *siiqqee* screaming-apply *iya siiqqee*, the husband will be exposed to be chastisement enshrined in the gadaa law (Inf7). Women who called for *iya siiqqee* will punish him. They can also insult him which is traditionally accepted by men as obedience to *hadha siiqqee* (Inf2).

Third, *siiqqee* institution is inclusive. There is no race, class, and religious and political boundaries to become a member of *siiqqee* institution. This tradition is a vital ancestral heritage that helped the Oromo since they developed the concept of *guddifacha* (adoption) the process through which non-Oromo can be included into the Oromo family, lineage, and clan system to get an equal benefit and share the responsibility to defend Oromo land from the enemy (Bokku, 2011). The Oromo oral tradition indicates that this institution had vital roles to build peace among the Oromo and between

the people and other ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Adem, 2014; Etefa, 2012; Bulcha, 2011; Bokku, 2011). *Siiqqee* institution mythically functions in the peace process at various levels, for instance at individuals, families, groups, and national levels.

4.3.1.1 Mother and Son Conflict

In the Oromo indigenous conflict resolution mechanism, the conflict between mother and son can be resolved by *siiqqee* institution. It is important to clarify what it applies to mean ‘mother’ or ‘son’ in this context. My informant explained that ‘mother’ in this context doesn’t necessarily refer to only the biological mother. It also includes any woman who is considered as a mother based on her age and role in society. ‘Boy’ refers to any boy in the village. Beating a mother is an offensive action and not tolerated in the Oromo society (Inf6). If a son or man beat his mother, the people say “*maratee dutee haadha rukute* [meaning] the boy has gone crazy, he shouted at and beat his mother” (Adem, 2014: 76). Another informant asserted that “the elders often talk such offensive by whistling because it is shame to the community in the son and mother live in” (Inf7). A son who beats his mother as a mentally unhealthy person (Inf6). Oromo culture “never allow mothers to be violated by being beaten” (Adem, 2014: 76). A son who beats his mother should be corrected in a way that gives lessons to the community (Inf6).

In this kind of conflict, the woman (the mother) who is beaten by the son can call *siiqqee* screaming. The mother can also tell the neighboring woman that her right is violated and help her to call *siiqqee* screaming. Tolosa (2011: 290) states that women (*siiqqee* group) who called *iya siiqqee* to fight against the violation of mother’s right by her son is called *saddeta*. Women who hear ululation (*siiqqee* screaming) pass the message of ululation to other women by screaming to let them know that women’s right is violated. The nature of the conflicts is dramatized using songs and poems. A good example is if a son misbehaves towards his mother.

Intala aayyaa dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?

Ilma na dhaanee dhageetee? Oduun si geetee?

Baasa na bahee dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?....

Translation:

My sisters, have you heard? Has information reached you?

My son has beaten me, have you heard? Has information reached you?

The inconceivable has happened to me, have you heard? Has information reached you? (Adem, 2014: 66-67).

When they arrive at the home of the victim, they call her to join them and continue to ululate and urge the son to admit for his wrongdoing. “If the son attempts to run away or incline to refuse them, the women have the power to destroy or take away his property. He has to admit and accept the sanction women put on him according to the Arsi Oromo customary law” (Inf6). After they arrive at the woman’s home who is a victim of the son’s abuse, they form two groups and sing the following song one couplet or stanza in turn.

Garee A

Baasoo baasoo

Baasa nabahee ilma nadhahee

Baasoo baasoo

Ateetee simbirree maalii?

Simbirree barii hinjirree maalii?

Aayyyoo arbi cilaaloon bahee

Cillaffatee na dhahee mucaan an dahee

Elel elel elel elel elel elel

Translation

Group A

Inconceivable, inconceivable

The inconceivable has happened, my

has beaten me

Inconceivable, inconceivable

Garee B

Baasoo baasoo

Baasoo baasoo

Baasan gahee mucaan andahee

Simbirree baarii

Simbirree baarii hinjirree maalii?

Noor ayyoo...

Eee aayyoo....

Group B

Inconceivable, inconceivable

Inconceivable, inconceivable

Inconceivable, the son I have given

	birth to has beaten me
Atete, birds of dawn	Birds of dawn
Birds of dawn, what a surprise is this?	Birds of dawn, what a surprise is this?
The elephant has gone up Chilalo	Welcome mother
The son I have given birth to hit me violently	Yes mother...(Adem, 2014: 67-68)

The above song indicates that women are committed to supporting the victim, justice will be served, and appeal to the woman to forgive the son and create mutual understanding with the son. According to the Arsi Oromo customary law, the son comes and lays in front of the victim and asks for forgiveness. If he fails to apologize, they continue to sing the above song until they resolve the conflict. If he continues to refuse, the women would warn him with the following song.

Song	Translation
<i>Ateetee siinqee dhiilgee</i>	<i>Atete of red-brown siiqqee</i>
<i>Lallaaftuu qoonqoo giingee</i>	<i>Soften stuttering throat</i>
<i>Fooyyee na seetee?</i>	<i>You think I am weak (Adem, 2014: 68)</i>

The song indicates the son's refusal of his wrong act, escalating the conflict. If he refuses to admit, the case will be reported by women representatives to elders in the community to intervene to handle the issue (Adem, 2014: 68). The elders that the son has tripled the offense: he beat his mother, he refused to ask for an apology, refused women who gather in solidarity to support the victim. *Hadha siiqqee* express their demand that the son should be punished per customary law. According to (Inf7), the women urge the elders and the whole community to hear their concerns, voices, and bring the offender to justice. Otherwise, they will not return home. If women stay out for days and nights, their husbands face challenges to take care of the children, the elderly, cattle, so forth. My informants would suggest that this puts massive pressure on men. Thus the elders should urge the offender, that is, the son to admit for his wrong did and restore the victim, the mother (Inf6). After consulting the women councilors and get important information about the processes women (councilors) have been through, and they reach a mutual understanding with the victim and the offender, the elders tell the son what he should pay to restore the mother. When

they agree to reconcile, the body will prepare *daadhi* (a local drink made of honey) particularly if he is younger, or poor. If he is an adult, he should slaughter animals (Inf6).

4.3.1.2 Wife and husband Conflict

Defending human rights, particularly, women's rights is the essential aim of *siiqqee* institution. According to Jalata (2002) and Kumsa (1997), when a man (husband) violates his wife's right, she takes her *siiqqee* stick and go out, and call for *Iya siiqqee* (woman shout and call other women in the village to join her to defend her. During *iyya siiqqee*, they can gather at different places. For example, under Odaa tree-sycamore (is a symbol of peace, justice, inequality, spirituality, and rule of law), or in an open area, or outside the village, or at the river bank. They make critical consideration of the case to investigate and analyze what kind of social, economic, and cultural implications it may have. After they evaluate the case, they present it to elders through their representatives. The elders deliberate the case. If they failed to resolve the case, the elders bring the case to *Dhedhecha Abba Gadaa* (the Supreme Court of *Abbaa Gadaa*) to adjure the case according to the Oromo customary law. Nevertheless, most cases, they resolve without handing over the case to *Dhedhecha Abba Gadaa*. However, if the wrongdoer refuses to admit and the court couldn't handle the case, if it is a murder case, the punishment will be serious. The death penalty could be applied (Inf7).

The more the case gets worst and reached the *Abba Gadaa's* Supreme Court, the more it produces victims. First, the woman was a victim who calls for *iyya siiqqee*. She is denied justice. Second, the women who were involved in *siiqqee* screaming were not respected by the man who refused to admit for the wrong he has done against his wife. Their role in society is undermined and diluted. They are considered as victims. Third, elders who took over the case to build a bridge between the former victim (the woman) and the offender and between the second victims (women, *siiqqee* group) and the man who rejects their proposal to make-peace. In all these processes, all mediators became the victim of injustice. The Supreme Court is therefore the ultimate court that can decide the fate of the offender. In such a case, the death penalty against the offender may rule out in such conditions. As discussed in this study, all these processes are accompanied by various songs and rituals (Inf4; Inf5; Inf2).

In wife-husband conflict-related *siiqqee* call, women act as actors in the formation of collective or group identity. They act collectively as a victimized group in the community and as subjects of knowledge. They have a moral obligation to treat the victim (woman) and the offender (husband) with dignity and respect. All women in the group share the pain of the victimized woman and. In the resolution process, attaining personal interest, passing unbalanced judgment, and insult are discouraged (Inf7). “*Iya siiqqee* focuses on the case to make peace in the family and confine the conflict so that it will not spread and affect the community” (Inf6).

Kumsa (1997) articulates that even though the *Gadaa* system protects Oromo women’s rights through *siiqqee* institution, women often experience systematic discrimination. Their rights are usually limited to controlling resources in homes. Wake (2018) articulates that Oromo women have the power to control and manage the resources in their homes regardless of their religious and social background. Critical feminists argue that this kind of gender discrimination is socially constructed and subject to change modern legal system (Steans, 1998). In Oromo women’s case, women can appeal to a traditional court hearing (elders, *qaalluu* and *Dheedhecha Abba Gadaa*) to change some social practices that hurt women’s roles in their family and society, and empower women in a changing society. The Abba Gadaa and his councilors discuss women’s appeal and present it to the *caffee* (*Gadaa* assembly) to share their opinions and argue and make-decision. Women have the right to participate in the assembly and argue for their case/application and argue against any views that aim to de-value their case. If the assembly agreed the change or amendment will be effected (Inf7; Inf6; Inf3). According to Adem (2014), in contemporary Oromo society, women presents their case to the secular court to get justice served when their rights are abused. That means states took over the role of the traditional court system practiced in the *Gadaa* system.

Although the concept of a secular state dominated the Oromo customary law, the *siiqqee* is still used as a symbol of power, peace, and victory among the Oromo, particularly in Arsi Oromo. My informant described *siiqqee* as a “women’s weapon” when she referred to a stick as a symbol by which they fight against any kind of abuse inflicted on them by their husbands or anybody in the society. She argues that,

When we carry *siiqqee*, we tell our husband and community in which we live that we are aware of our rights and responsibilities. We can act and react. We know the moral distance

between us and men. Men should also know that. If they try to make thin or thick this distance, a big hole will be created, and they can't reach us" (Inf4).

Every married woman has *siiqqee* and automatically qualify to call for *iya siiqqee*. Marti Tolo Østebø (2009), in her research on *Wayyu* among the Arsi Oromo, states that if a woman has married in the form of *butii* (forced marriage), *siiqqee* is not given to her. A woman without this traditional stick is more abused than a woman who has *siiqqee*. Adem (2014) states when a mother gives *siiqqee* to her daughter on her wedding day, it has its own ritual practice and power transmitting process. Women who didn't pass through this process have no right to get this stick, *siiqqee*. A woman who has *siiqqee*, has full rights and respect in their family. But a girl who married through forced marriage will be given *siiqqee* by her mother when she comes to visit her parents with her husband. The same ritual process will be applied to give her *siiqqee*. Then, she becomes *hadha siiqqee* and quality to practice *iya siiqqee*, get all the rights she deserves as *hadha siiqqee* in the family and society (Inf7). She can claim full control over resources in the home.

Hussen (2004) points out that women have the right to decide what and how to use for their family consumption. For instance, women have absolute rights to decide to use butter for wedding ceremonies, for festivals, for rituals (Kuto, Bacha and Taye, 2018), and to share with their neighbors and to sell to maximize their income (Inf4). It is generally accepted that Oromo men feel shame to attempt to interfere and control activities in the homes. Women have social web and collective responsibility in their communities to support each other during weddings, harvests, funeral, child-birth, and the like. It is not acceptable if their husbands prevent them from participating in such communal activities (Ebise, 2004). Thus, Oromo men distance themselves from having a conflict related to controlling resources in their homes and denying their wives to women's cultural activities in society (Inf3; Inf5).

4.3.1.3 Group Conflict

Siiqqee can resolve conflict at the social group level (Kumsa, 1997). It resolves conflict among individuals, or families, or groups, or clans. It also resolves conflict among different ethnic groups and nations (Adem, 2014: 69). Conflict can be caused by many reasons. It can be caused due to dispute or social conflict on resources like grazing land, if someone trans-passes while plowing land (the farmland), murder, when there is theft, territorial issues, or when the enemy comes to

destroy *Nagaa Oromo* (the peace of the Oromo. Women apply *siiqqee* conflict resolution mechanism to negotiate peace among the parties in conflict (Inf5).

According to my informants, in many traditional African society, conflict between individuals often transformed into group conflict. This is due to a strong relationship between families, relatives, clans and ethnic groups in African culture, and people easily identify themselves their relatives and strive to defend them (In6). The Oromo women understand that personal conflict can spread to the entire community. When they see or hear that there is a conflict leading to a physical fight between groups, or clans the Oromo women call for each other to apply *siiqqee* conflict resolution mechanism to stop the conflict. Women move to the place, stand between the parties in dispute and raise their *siiqqee* and tell them to stop the fight. As Adem (2014) pointed out, the Arsi Oromo women had played a momentous role to resolve the conflict between Oromo clans, and between the Oromo, and non-Oromo such as Sodo, Sidama and others. In the conflict resolution process, *hadhaa siiqqee* (a group of women who participate in the conflict resolution process) often delegate three, or four, or five women can be to negotiate peace between the parties in conflict. It does always imperative for all women to move to the area, but all women are expected to attend *iya siiqqee*. They are selected based on their experiences, husbands' lineage and reputation in the community. They approach the parties in fighting, and raise their *siiqqee* to the sky and ululate. The parties in conflict should stop immediately. If they disobey women and continue fighting, the women insist on them to stop. If they are unwilling to respect the women's order and keep fighting, *siiqqee* curse will also follow against those who refuse to stop the fight (Inf3; Inf2; Inf4). Non-Oromo people who lived among the people are benefited from *siiqqee* institution to live in harmony with the Oromo people.

My informants argued that today women have no such power to stop the fight, impose sanctions on those who failed to cease the fight or to declare war against the enemy of the peace of Oromo. In contemporary Oromo society, women can hold their *siiqqee* on certain occasions like weddings, holidays, local and national political and spiritual gatherings and can make a speech about their rights, religion, culture, and politics, and bless the assembly. But they can't impose sanctions or call for *iya siiqqee* in a way it had been practiced before the introduction of the Abyssinian colonial system and secular state (Inf6; Inf3; Inf4).

According to my informants, in Oromo culture women are considered as peace-makers. Oromo focuses on women's cooperative and caring attributes (Kumsa, 1997). It is not mandatory to hold *siiqqee* stick to resolve conflict, particularly when there is a non-premeditated conflict erupt. If conflict erupts among individuals or groups, Oromo women can resolve conflict without holding *siiqqee* (Inf3; Inf5). That means *siiqqee*'s peace-making dynamic is attached to women, not to the stick. Women in the village who heard ululation, immediately take their *siiqqee* and join bare-handed women and urge the group in conflict to stop the fight. If the husband prevents his wife not to join *iyya siiqqee* (*siiqqee* call or *siiqqee* gathering), he will be punished. If the women deny joining *iyya siiqqee*, she will be also punished (Adem, 2014). If they obey women and stop the conflict, the group which instigates the conflict will slaughter an animal. Slaughtering animals in this situation is used as punishment for the wrong-doers and sign of reconciliation. If they refuse to stop the conflict and slaughter young ox, women use the Oromo customary law and exercise their right to curse them and ask the elders and *Abba Gadaa* to declare that or tell the society that this group is isolated (Inf6).

The informants acknowledged that *siiqqee* institution has no visible power in contemporary Oromo's politics. The Ethiopian legal system discriminated the *siiqqee* traditional customary law (Kumsa, 1997). According to Jalata (2002) and Bulcha (2011), the Ethiopian educational, social, political, and economic policies excluded the indigenous knowledge system of the Oromo like *siiqqee* and others and detached the people from their heritage. The Oromo women who hold *siiqqee* are recognized to make an open prayer or declare the opening of local and regional gatherings, for a cultural show. They have no power to influence the secular state, the Ethiopian government which follows the secular judicial system (Inf5; Inf6; Inf4). For instance, Women's (*hadha siiqqee*) participation in the peace-making process between the Eritrean government and Ethiopia government, and between the Ethiopian government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLF) in 2018 indicate that the practice of *siiqqee* is overhauled by the secular state. It seems that the office and practice of the *Gadaa* system and *siiqqee* are highly influenced by the secular government. As we will see in the following section, *siiqqee* exists at mythological rearm, namely in the peace process at the national level.

4.3.1.4 National Conflict

In 2018, Ethiopia and Eritrea agreed to end the hostile relationship between the two countries. In this peacemaking process, the Ethiopian prime minister, Abiy Ahmad Ali took a group of women from his cabinets (most of them were Oromo) and visited Eritrea. Many human rights activists and traditional scholars, and community leaders from the Oromo ethnic group were discussing *siiqqee* on social media that the Abiy leadership has the presence of these women as the symbol of peace and reconciliation between the countries. The Ethiopian ministry of information, the Ethiopian Television, and other private Televisions in Ethiopia also reported that *hadha siiqqee* (the mother/s of *siiqqee*) were sent to Eritrea with the prime minister to make peace between the two states (Aljazeera, 8 June 2018). Some argued that this was the time of glory for the Oromo people because of the power of *siiqqee* institution or it was the renaissance of the *gadaa* ruling system after a century and decades (Inf5).

In February 2019, the Ethiopian government in collaboration with the Oromia regional state government organized a national conference at which the *hadha siiqqee*, Abbaa Gadaa, community elders, leaders of faith-based organizations, opposition political parties' leaders, and activists were invited to discuss how to resolve the conflict between the government and the rebel group, Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). The conference selected and nominated about 51 traditional leaders and traditional scholars in conflict resolution including *hadha siiqqee* were involved in this conflict resolution. Many human rights activists and OLA supporters were reluctant about the selection and argued that the government systematically used this group, including *hadha siiqqee* to force the rebel group (OLFA) to disarm and reintegrate in society. Community leaders and *hadha siiqqee* announced that they will bless those who accept their peacemaking proposal (to disarm the rebel and re-integrate them and the government to full fill its promise to resources to train the rebels and create work for them) but curse those who fail to accept this peace-making process. Most of the OLA refused the call for disarmament and remained in the jungle. The government also refused the call from *hadha siiqqee* and elders to work genuinely to halt the conflict as a responsible government and provide proper care of the rebels who accepted the call for peace and disarmed. The government continued to attack the rebel group who remained in the bush violently, and several civilian lives were perished. The rebels also claimed attacks on the state army and security forces in Wallagga and Gujji zones in the Oromia regional state (Walta Media, 2019). The conflict

between the two bodies is still underway. Because of this, there is a massive human rights violation, lawlessness, robbery, and loss of human life are routinely taking place (Inf4; Inf6). The role of *hadha siiqqee* proved weak and unfit in contemporary Oromo/Ethiopia politics because of the unwillingness of the political elites to consider *siiqqee* as an independent conflict resolution institution and institutional incapability of *siiqqee* institution.

This disdain puts the status of *siiqqee* institution under question about to what extent this institution is significant to influence the political life of the people, does it fit in this the changing society like in Ethiopia? What kind of identity *siiqqee* should have and how it can negotiate its institutional identity in the contemporary political situations in Ethiopia. One of the *siiqqee* group (*haadha siiqqee* who was delegated as a mediator between the government and rebel commanders, said that “*Nuti amma hadha siiqqeeti. Garuu bilisa taanee waan Uumaa fi ummatti nurra eeguu hojjechuuf kan uumama jallisutuu harkaa nu qaba. Irra guddeessan waan mootumman godha jedhuu goona. Siiqqeen gatii dhabde*” (Inf4). Translation: (We are *siiqqee* holders. Nevertheless, we are not able to do our duties as God and people expect from us because there is a power that threatens us not to do so. In most cases, the government forces us to what it wants us to do its political agenda to stay in power that has nothing to do with our practices in our indigenous institution. *Siiqqee* lost its value, power and respect). This tells us that this indigenous conflict mechanism is under attack by the secular state and the rebel group who is fighting for self-determination. Traditionally, *siiqqee* functions well in the context of mutual understanding and shared responsibility among the parties in a conflict where both parties share the pain of the victim and agree to create hope and a new relationship. The government wants to use the *hadha siiqqee* and the reconciliation committee to intimidate and hammer the rebel group in a subtle tactic (Inf5).

Siiqqee institution failed to resolve the conflict between the parties because of four main reasons. First, *siiqqee* institution has no systematized structure to negotiate reconciliation in secular. This is due to the ill-treatment Oromo indigenous knowledge system by Ethiopian successive governments and internal problem created by Abba Gadaa. The Ethiopian governments have been excluded Oromo values and heritage such as Gadaa system and *siiqqee* from the educational curriculum at all levels (Bulcha 2011; Jalta, 2002). *Siiqqee* has never had the experience to intervene between the government and armed group, OLA since the formation of the current Ethiopian state. All indigenous intuitions that ought to protect *siiqqee* were subject to elimination,

and this made *siiqqee* vulnerable. Some Abba Gadaa were not willing to transmit power in eight years and developed nepotism to stay in power, and this affects the operation and status of *siiqqee* institution (Bulcha, 2011). In other words, it didn't get a favorable political environment to mature itself to cope with secular society. Second, according to the principle of the *siiqqee* institution, women call for *siiqqee* by themselves, with no need for the government, other group initiation to organize *hadha siiqqee* to resolve conflict. Nonetheless, in the case of 2019, the government played a vital role in mobilizing women and finance the mediators. This forced them to serve within the framework of the government and gave chance to the other party (rebel) to mistrust the *hadha siiqqee*. Third, the women (*siiqqee* group) didn't do intensive discussion among themselves about the matter. They did not consult the local community leaders in the areas the rebel group operates. They didn't listen and identify whether or not the grievance of the community is against the government or the rebel. For instance, the community in Western Wallagaa were not interested that the rebel would disarm because they are curious that the government is not protecting their interest and will crush them after the rebel will be disarmed (Inf3; Inf5). Fourth, *hadha siiqqee* didn't follow the traditional procedure practiced in *siiqqee* intuition to resolve conflict. They were gathered in Addis Ababa together with the ruling party's representatives, authorities, opposition political parties' leaders, community leaders, and activists elected by the government to discuss and make an official call for rebel hand over their guns and integrate into the community (Inf2; Inf5; Inf6). The next day, the committee traveled to several areas in Oromia where the rebel operates. About 1000 rebels were disarmed. However, most of the armed members refused to disarm established three arguments. First, the mediation process was exclusive. The government has played the main role exploit the peace process and the mediators didn't invite the rebel leaders to take part in the discussion. They appeared on national TV called upon us (the rebels) and urged us to disarm and integrate into the community, and we will be forgiven the damage they caused so far. Second, the rebels argued that they have been enemies with the government for decades and the government is going to put them in jail and kill them after the hand-over their guns. Third, the rebels argued that the Oromo's quest for national self-determination is not addressed, and they do not trust that Abiy's government will answer this ultimate question of national interest to which thousands of Oromo are being perished to indemnify (Inf5; Inf2; Inf7).

My informants added that many of the disarmed rebels were put in jail, tortured and killed by the government security forces. Some of them were either attacked or killed on the streets in Addis

Ababa, Adama, and Bushoftu. Many of them are still suffering in different chamber centers in Ethiopia. Consequently, the reconciliation and reintegration process did work out and remains the main factor for the loss of thousands of lives of civilians, rebel groups and the government army (Inf6; Inf4; Inf1). There is a need for genuine political discussion that includes all stockholders with reciprocal respect, constructive dialogue to resolve this conflict to bring the spirit of peace and harmony.

4.3.1.5 *Danbi*

The Oromo women apply *iya siiqqee* to practice which is called *Danbi* (prayer for spouse in conflict, environmental issues and the like) to exercise their spiritual power to intervene in environmental issues. *Danbi* is a prayer that women do when there is famine, or pandemic, or drought (Inf6). When there is no rain women gather at the river-bank to pray to *Waaqa* (God) to provide them a rain (Adem, 2014). They take food with them and eat there at *danbi* (Inf6). “They do not return home until the rain comes” (Adem, 2014: 69). They may stay there for many days and nights until *Waaqa* provides rain to the inhabitants (Inf6). *Hadha siiqqee* pray not only for peace on earth but peace with nature. According to Inf7, if their husbands refuse a woman to join *danbi* to pray or beat her when she comes back home late, *iya siiqqee* will be applied to punish the man.

One of my informants states that *siiqqee* screaming in *danbi* (when husband refuse his wife to join *danbi* or beats her when she comes home from *danbi* prayer) case has different procedures from *iya siiqqee* which is made when a husband beats his wife for other reasons and *iya siiqqee* aired when there is a dispute among individuals and groups. In *iya siiqqee* triggered in *danbi* case, women from the village take food with them and go to the home of the beaten woman. This called is called *elelfta* meaning-*siiqqee* song in Arsi Oromo. They can take honey, butter and other food items, and eat there. They stay there until the man admits to his sin of violating the right of his wife and restore her. If he refuses, women declared him wicked and punish him. In such castigation, they can confiscate his private property, take his cattle and slaughter to serve the victim (Inf7). According to Inf3, this customary law applies against the woman who absents from *danbi* on her own will and discards to admit. Women who gathered for *danbi* can go to her home and take away all her property because she disrespected *siiqqee* and the society at large. Inf6 stated that a woman who has reasons for not able to take part in *danbi* and other *iya siiqqee* can send their *siiqqee* stick

through other women. That means she participate symbolically through her *siiqqee* stick as *siiqqee* stick represents power in this context. It represents the voice of the woman. Inf5 and Inf2 aptly elucidated that a woman can send her *siiqqee* via her friends to the gathering to have her say through her stick. Metaphorically, her *siiqqee* represents her and her voice is considered the voice of the majority.

4.3.1.6 *Siiqqee Migration*

Oromo oral tradition tells that if the husband violates the right of his wife, and if it takes a long time, for instance, two or three days to resolve, the *hadha siiqqee* (women who participate in *iya siiqqee*) will not return to their homes until the conflict will be resolved (Inf6; Inf4; Inf7). They stay all night there deliberating the case. The arbitration includes singing *ateetee* song (Kumsa, 1997: 30-31). If the case is not determined until the dawn of the next day they “set out on *godaansa siiqqee* (*siiqqee* trek)” (Kumsa, 1997: 129) or they go for migration. According to Inf3, “on their journey for *godaansa* (migration), they make *elelfata* (ululation). In their song, the Arsi Oromo women say *biyya dhiifnee, gara laga shaala deemna* (meaning- we leave our country, we move down to *shaala* river). *Shaala* is the name of a river in the Aris area. The Wayyu Shanan Arsi Oromo woman in Adami Tullu area, Adem says, “We leave our country, we descend (move down) to *Shalla*” (Adem, 2014: 76). *Shaala* is a river close to the Adami Tullu area. This migration is not necessarily traveling long distances for hours or days. It could a short journey to a nearby river or to a nearby “*qilxuu* tree, considered a female tree” (Kumsa, 1997: 129). What is critical here is the social and psychological impact that this migration put on the husband of the woman who refuses to admit his wrong-doing. *Siiqqee* migration shocks the community because it is a serious level of disappointment at the ignorance of the man who violated the right of his wife that lead women to migrate (Inf4). Inf2 agreed with Inf4 and argued that this kind of *siiqqee* migration shows the seriousness of the matter and determination of women to restore justice and the unwillingness of the husband to get forgiveness and respect the moral code of the society. “If you abuse women, you can’t have a peaceful and good society”, added (Inf7).

Hence, when women declare that they will take the case to another level, that is, when they start going for migration, the elders in the community immediately organize themselves and beg the women not to migrate, not to bypass them. The elders kneel in front of the women on migration, they take off and throw their clothes in front of them (Inf5). In Oromo culture, people believe that

in *siiqqee* migration when women migrate and cross the river bad fortune gets the husband who refuses to repent. His families, property, and societal capital will be damaged. *Siiqqee* migration is for just cause, and the community will suffer will the elders couldn't tackle the issue (Inf6; Inf7). The Oromo has an expression for such a condition. They say *gaachanni namarra lufa* which means "a good event is believed to pass over once self" (Adem, 2014: 90).

When they reach at the river-side, women say to the victimized women the following.

<i>Garee Siiqqee</i>	<i>Ayyoo Miidhamte</i>
<i>Siiqqee</i> members	The victim woman
<i>Miidhamtee miidha qabda,</i>	Ee...(yes)
Your right is violated, you victim	
<i>Kadhattee dhabde miidhama qabda,</i>	Ee...(yes)
You have asked to restore but you are denied	
<i>Malkaatti baqattee miidhama qabda.</i>	Eee...(yes)
You are migrated, you a victim (Inf7).	

This song indicates the seriousness of the case. The man who refused to admit will face severe punishment. If the elders couldn't able to intervene and handle the conflict, women raise their *siiqqee* and curse the husband and take away his possession. *Siiqqee* not only urges respect for women's human rights and reconciliation *danbi* and *siiqqee* migration, but it also legitimizes *jus in bellow* (just war) as a last resort to save humanity and restore peace.

4.3.2 Declaration of War to protect Nagaa of Oromo

In pre-colonial in Oromia, women can declare war against the enemy of the *nagaa* (peace) of Oromo. According to Kumsa (1997) and Jalata (1999), if there is a potential threat to the people that means if the enemy threatens *nagaa* of the Oromo nation). Even after the era of Akko Manoyyee, that is after women were removed from *Gadaa* office, women can stop war declared by Abbaa Gadaa. Therefore, *Abbaa Gadaa* (head of the state) and *Abbaa Duula* (war general) can present the case to the councilors of *Gadaa* office and *hadha* of *siiqqee* (women) to discuss with

them and decide to declare war as the last resolution. War can't be declared without *hadha siiqqee's* getting recognition. Women have the rights to be consulted to provide their opinions on whether or not permissible to declare war against the enemy. If they are convinced they use their *siiqqee* (as sick and symbol of victory over the enemy) and their *siiqqee* institution (as a political power) to legitimize the war. Once they allow declaring war against the enemy of *nagaa* of Oromo, they use their *siiqqee* (sick) to mobilize people to support those who are on the battlefield (Bokku, 2011; Jalata, 1999). However, if they don't believe in the cause of the war and the Abbaa Dulaa and their husbands failed to convince them, women can refuse the war plan and stop it. They refuse to handover their armors (spear, shield) and food that they can take with them (Inf6). If the Abbaa Duulaa and their husband attempts to disrespect them and go to wage war, they call for *iya siiqqee*. They abandon homes and stop all communication with their husbands and stay out until they top the war. Women had massive power in Oromo culture in pre-colonial Oromia (Inf7; Inf6). In the previous section, we discussed how this theoretical understanding of the role of *siiqqee* failed to be practiced in contemporary Oromo politics, despite its relevance in day-to-day socioeconomic life. Its role in observing the process of the power transmission from Abba Gadaa to the new one, and its ritual impact to legitimize the new Abba Gadaa are crucial and unembroidered, especially in the area under the domain of *Gadaa* system.

4.3.3 Power Transmission: Power Balance

According to Jalata (2002) and Etefa (2012), there has been peaceful power transmission every eight years in the *Gadaa* system. When the old Abba *Gadaa* hand-over power to the new one and live the *Gadaa* office, women use their *siiqqee* to bless the new leader. Women stand in raw and raise and hold their *siiqqee* sticks and the newly elected *Abbaa Gaada* and those who nominated to work with him walk under the raised *siiqqee*. This symbolically indicates that power is transmitting from the old leader to the new. In this process of power transmission, as Inf6; Inf3; Inf5 described, women, use *siiqqee* as a national symbol to authenticate a new leader in the public sphere.

According to Oromo oral literature, since they were removed from the *Gadaa* office during the immemorial period, women have never got the chance to take the *Gadaa* office again (Bokku, 2011). *Siiqqee* has never been able to change the status quo of *Abba Gadaa* from this higher office. In steads, it reduces women and made them subject to present their cases to the Abba *Gadaa* office.

Even though they have a certain power to decide whether the war should be declared, use resources and conflict resolution, women are excluded from the decision-making process in certain conditions where masculinity plays a vital role in *Gadaa* office (In5). However, it is important to that as mentioned before, although they do not participate in decision-making about declaring war on the enemy of the *nagaa* Oromo, women can avert the declaration of *Abba Duulaa* (Bukku, 2011). Inf6 said that “women can stop their husbands not to go to battle”. As Legesse (1973) states, theoretically, they do not only check if the power is transmitted without any abuse to the new *Abba Gadaa* but also challenge the power of *Abba Gadaa*. *Siiqqee* doesn't empower the only female but also male. It legitimizes that the new *Abba Gadaa* is a legitimate body, the leader in office for eight years. However, *siiqqee* legitimizes one power flow, that is, power transmission from one *Abba Gadaa* to another, not from *Abba Gadaa* to woman. Women also take part in *danbi*, prayers for peace, end of famine and epidemics.

4.3.4 *Siiqqee in socioeconomic Life*

4.3.4.1 *Collective Goal: Communal Property*

In Oromo culture, women can fight for their collective interests. They have their own institutions and self-help associations to secure not only their right to practice their right and political rights but also to indemnify their social capital and access to the economy. For example, they have an association called *harka-fudha* (vising a ‘new mother’). *Harka-fudhaa* is an important cultural practice for Oromo women until today. For instance, the Wallagaa Oromo women take *Galaa* (food prepared for this event), *dadhii* (local alcohol make of honey), *itituu* (yogurt), and *dhadhaa* (butter), *Araqii* (local alcohol) with them when they visit a ‘new mother’. They eat and drink and chant dance. Male can also visit “a new mother” with their wives and often give money as a gift to a “new mother”. If the ‘new mother’ has no milk-cow or dairy cow, a woman can discuss with her husband to decide to give her a milk-cow so that she can feed her baby. Her husband can present his arguments against her proposal but he can't prevent her because of two reasons. First, it is culturally unacceptable to deny to give a dairy-cow to a poor woman with a new baby. Second, the wife has more power to decide about how to maximize or use resources in the home than the husband does.

During the funeral, the Oromo women contribute money, make food, and support the family who lost their family member usually for 5 to 9 days. In certain circumstances, they would in turn continue visiting the family for weeks until they recover from their sadness. They organize themselves in a self-help association called *afosha* in which they save money every month and use it during birth, wedding, and funeral (Inf7). As Inf6 asserts, women use *siiqqee* institution to mobilize human power and material resources to support the needy among them. In *siiqqee* institution, power and resource sharing are significant. *Siiqqee* allows and empowers women to go from village to village to mobilize resources to help the poor, save the life from famine, epidemic, and another natural catastrophe that invades the country. *Siiqqee* encourages communal life and solidarity. In the countryside, Oromo males build homes, fix roads, build bridges, and plow the farmland for the widow and orphan in the community to help them get food security. In some areas in Oromia, for example, among the Karrayyuu Oromo, the women can build homes.

According to Kumsa (1997), Oromo women use the power of *siiqqee* to exercise their rights and have control over their labor. They control their own economy such as the crops after they collect them and cattle. They have the power to decide which cattle to use for milk and which one they may sell to increase assets or income in the sphere of the household.

Three of my informants indicated that there have been reports that men often argue against women's rights to have control over resources. Men often use certain cultural elements that misrepresent and underestimate women to dishearten them (Inf7; Inf6; Inf4). That means *Siiqqee* is not guaranteed to secure women's right political power share and access to the economy today.

Some researchers indicated that Oromo women's challenges of land ownership and control over their sources were intensified after Oromia was incorporated into the modern Ethiopian state (Kumsa, 1997; Jalata, 2002; Bokku, 2011). Kuto et al., (2018: 1), also states that the Oromo women gradually "lost the collective ownership of lands and other natural resources" because of colonial domination. Likewise, Inf4 says that Oromo women lost the customary rights to land and natural resources. The dominant culture, that is, the Abyssinian colonial culture, and their economic and political policies in Oromia undermined indigenous culture and introduced a hierarchical system that made the people powerless in which women became the most victimized group in society (Walta Media, 25 January 2019).

Kumsa (1997) discloses that Oromo women have a strong social-web. They organize themselves to work together increase their income, support each other by preparing food and *farsoo* (traditional beer), and *araqii* (traditional alcohol) when men build homes and harvest crops for their *siiqqee* members. This helps them to save their time and to maximize their income (Inf3). They believe that when they are in this group, they are more protected from domestic violence and more secured particularly when the economic problem strikes their family because a member of this group has an automatic right and to share the common resources they saved. My informants argued that they safe in this sociological community (Inf5; Inf2). “*Siiqqee* helps not only to bring peace but also to current husbands when they pass the boundary and infringe women’s human rights” (Inf1). *Siiqqee* unites Oromo women to fight for their collective interests.

4.3.4.2 Humanitarian: Solidarity

The radical humanitarian feminist view in *siiqqee* institution manifests when the Oromo women participate in activities such as solidarity. Women move to the homes of their husbands’ after they married them, the hosting community see women as strangers and accommodate for them to come together and support each other (Inf5). Oromo women’s understanding of their presence in society has *dichotomic* approaches. On the one hand, they consider themselves a pillar of the society. On the other hand, they consider themselves as strangers in the host community and identify themselves with each other. To handle this, literary opposing positions, they use *siiqqee* as an institution to serve the community as they are one of the segments in the community and show solidarity to the ‘newlywed’ woman so that may feel belongingness. They have a cultural ceremony to familiarize a ‘newlywed’ woman with the new situation, village and community, the women in the village organize certain rituals and ceremonies to welcome her. The ‘newlywed’ woman has a *siiqqee* and she is automatically a member of *hadha-siiqqee* (women) in the village.

In this humanitarian context, the newlywed woman is given cultural orientation. Her senior informs her about the community (lineage, clan, ethnic group, who is *oobo* and who is *coora*. *Obo* and *coora* is the gender-based moral distance from the husband’s lineage. They introduce her to senior women in the community. They give her all information about the community so that she may do a bizarre thing and disrespect and isolated. She will be informed who is *obo* and who *coora* (Inf4; Inf3) is. This culturally oriented solidarity helps her to sense belongingness and create a common identity with them. She becomes a member of *siiqqee* group which supports each other

by providing each other food, drink, clothe, traditional medicine, and performing rituals during the wedding, birth, marriage, sickness, funeral, famine, and in other situation when they need help from each other (Inf5; Inf7). They have no written documents or agreements to do this. Nevertheless, they make the ‘symbolic oath’ (I call it symbolic oath because they do not have words or verbal oath for this, but they (senior women) accept the ‘newlywed’ through ‘solidarity activities’ like advice and material provision, information exchange) to stand in unity to support each other and defend for their human rights. They make this oath when they come together to form a *siiqqee* group. A newly married woman has the right to join and make an oath. Once a woman makes this ‘symbolic oath’, it legitimizes her to take part in all *siiqqee* related activities the group does. *Siiqqee* is “exclusively women’s solidarity institution that is legitimized by tradition and respected by society” (Duressa, 2018: 9). In *siiqqee* instruction, action has a louder voice than words; it is action commenced and oriented indigenous institution.

4.3.5 *Siiqqee as a Symbol Respect of a Married Oromo Woman*

Siiqqee stick is not an ordinary walking stick. It is a material culture given to a daughter on the day of her wedding by her mother. It is a symbol of respect for married women (Duressa, 2018: 9). There are some essential respects connected to the use of *siiqqee* by a married woman in the Oromo society. For instance, if a woman holds *siiqqee* it means that she is married, she is authorized to bless the Oromo nation; she can call upon the community to do solidarity; she can alert society that there is a conflict in the community and there is a need for preaching peace for all and respect for humanity, she can for *iya siiqqee*, she has the spiritual authority called *ateetee* (Oromo women’s sophisticated ritual practices) to ask *Umaa* (the Creator or God) to give children for the barren woman, stop the calamity, bring rain and peace (Inf3; Inf7).

Siiqqee shows that she is equipped and mature to made political decisions, practice rituals, negotiate reconciliation and punish men in the village who violate the accepted value of the community. However, most of these notions exist at the conceptual level today, not in practice. As all my informants expressed, the Oromo women like other women in Ethiopia still believe that they are inferior to men, particularly, in the political sphere and access to material resources. One of the informants aptly puts it as follows: “the Ethiopian government when they put women on the position in certain offices, men often try to put words in our mouths (women) that we should say to people” (Inf5). Men often try to dictate to women what they should do and how we should so

that we may stay in that position. They try to make us submissive and dependent psychologically. Men do not think that we can do things by ourselves (Inf5; In4). This means that men are reluctant to recognize women's capacity to make a political decision or to take a leading role in the political sphere. Inf3 puts this situation as follows.

Still, there is a long journey before us as women to challenge the customary understanding of the role of women and the status quo of masculinity in our society. For instance, we have very few women in academic institutions. We have very few business-women. In *Waaqefannaa* ritual practice, women have never been given *qaalluu* office to carry out the role of male *qaalluu*. Women are discriminated against in many in both religious and political institutions in Ethiopia.

This tells us that fighting against gender-based discrimination is an unfinished work that should be kept on to tackle at all levels.

4.3.6 Siiqqee as a Spiritual Power: Ritual Stick

The Oromo women use *siiqqee* stick to exercise their right to religion. They use this stick in rituals practices in the people's indigenous religion. For instance, when famine and the social problems occur, and individuals face social problem or sick, Oromo women pray to *Waaqa/Waaqayyo* (God) to bring rain, prosperity, and mercy (Kumsa, 1997). When they do rituals they raise their hands and *siiqqee* to show that they submit themselves to *Waaqa Uumaa* (God the Creator). The sick show their spiritual power to communicate with *Uumaa* (the Creator) and connect Him with the community. When they get answers from God for their prayers, they put their *siiqqee* on the grounds and ululate. Raising their *siiqqee* to the sky, women pray to *Uma* (Creator) for fertility, peace, and protection of their country (Inf; 6Inf7; Inf3; Inf4). As mentioned before, when a woman cannot give birth, they come together and pray to their *ateetee* (the spirit of fertility) holding the *siiqqee* raising *siiqqee* over the head of the barren woman (Inf7; Inf6). Barren women often feel shame and that they are less important because they are contributing to the continuation of the lineage of the family and society (Inf5). Hence, the senior women visit her, sing, and pray for her to give her psychological therapy and social capital.

Siiqqee is used in fighting for environmental stewardship. My informant said that,

We are the most vulnerable to the environmental problem, climate change because we make up a large share of the agricultural workforce. The less income we access comes from

agriculture. Therefore, we should fight for the environmental right to make sure the wellbeing of our society” (Inf2).

The above quotation shows that *siiqqee* is concerned not only about human rights but also about environmental right. In her research on *Wayyu Shanan* Oromo of Arsi, Adem (2014: 50) describes the process of *siiqqee* ritual as follows.

In the first place, if a problem occur concerns the environment such as drought, women go to *laga* (the river) for *fala*. Then, they ready cattle to be slaughtered for *fala*. Such *siiqqee* prayer ceremony goes on for two to three days...Women who participate in *fala* go collectively elatedly ululating, singing *ililchaa* (voice of happiness).

There is a common song during this *siiqqee* ritual.

Ateete siinqee waraana beeraa,

Gooftaa araara deema jette ateeteen,

Ateetee sarbaa fixeensaa,

Gooftaa araara deema jette atteteen

This is translated as:

Atete siinqee, the war of women

Atete has said she is going to reconcile with the Lord.

Atete's feet are wet with dew,

Atete has said she is going to reconcile to the Lord (Adem, 2014: 50-51).

Oromo women pray to *Waaqayyo* (God) through this *siiqqee* ritual, *ateetee* to interact with “divine to get help preserve peace in their land” (Adem, 2014: 51).

4.3.6.1 Curse

As we have seen before, *siiqqee* has multi-functions. It uses not only to bless but also to impose psychological sanctions or curse on individuals and groups in certain circumstances. This is called *abaarsa siiqqee*, meaning *siiqqee* curse (Kumsa, 1997: 128). It is no “verbal curse”, as we will see

below, but psychological sanction. The idea of encompassing the prospect or psychological sanction, namely, curse using *siiqqee* in conflict resolution is one of the crucial concepts in the Oromo indigenous mechanism in conflict resolution. Thus, it is vital to clarify why and when the practice of curse is applied. As Adem articulates, once *hadha-siiqqee* (women) went out to negotiate to resolve the conflict which is taking place among the party in the conflict, all women who attended the *siiqqee* gathering can impose curse. They do not return to their homes without reaching a common understanding of the cause of the conflict and resolve the dispute (Adem, 2014: 76). If the mediation is will not be fruitful and conflict escalates, and they couldn't able to come to a common understanding, *hadha siiqqee*, the women representative handover the case with a report of all the process they have come through to the *Abba Gadaa*, or *qaalluu*, or *yuba*, or community leaders, elders. These negotiators (*Abba Gadaa*, or *qaalluu*, *yuba* and elders) tirelessly discuss and analyze the case and deliberate with parties involved in the conflict to come to mutual understandings through constructive discussion and reciprocal respect (Inf6; Inf7). If the individual or group who did wrong against the victim/victims are failed to admit and reject to ask for an apology, the mediators have the right to impose a curse or sanction on the wrongdoer. They can also declare other societal sanctions such as isolation to any of the parties in conflict who reject reconciliation proposed after critical deliberation of the case. In such a sanction, the mediators outline and declare what the person or group under sanction can do and can't do until the sanction will be lifted (Inf5; Inf7). Most of my informants agreed that it is the *Abba Gadaa* who often activates and declares the sanction since he can represent other agents according to the *Gadaa* system. *Hadha siiqqee* can also impose a curse before handing-over the case, the matter to the *Abba Gadaa*.

According to Wake (2015), social sanction is the worst punishment in Oromo culture. The people's life is exceedingly interrelated in social, economic, religion, and politics as religious aspects. The Oromo prefer to pay such punishment in terms of, such as, cattle or money instead of going through suffering isolation (Inf5). Social isolation is the highest sanction the person could face until he repents and ask apology (Inf4). If the sanction is imposed on a person who refuses to admit the murder case, the community will be informed by *Abba Gadaa* not to interact with the person. If they disobey the declaration and trespass the restriction of the mediators, and hide the killer in their homes, or communicate with him, they will be punished. If the killer attempts to make another murder, *Abba Gadaa* orders the community to remove a person to a place where people do not

live, for instance, before many years they send the offender who dined to repent to the judge to live alone (Wake, 2015). Sanction (Tolosa, 2011; Kumsa, 1997) and isolating are the last resolutions in Oromo customary law (Wake, 2015). *Siiqqee* curse is no ‘verbal curse’ but it is a systematic sociological and psychological punishment that has a massive social, spiritual, and economic impact on the person (Wake, 2015). It the worst level of sanction activated as a lost resolution. It is has an adverse psychological impact on the well-being of the person.

4.3.6.2 *Song*

In the conflict resolution process, the Oromo women use a song as psychological preparation to admit their wrong-deeds and moral appeal to the individuals or groups who refuse to cooperate in peace-making and ask for divine intervention from *Waaqa nagaa*, God of peace (Inf4). The song is full of Oromo’ mythology and socio-cultural expressions that can capture the mind of the parties in conflict and lead them to make peace and reconnect themselves to the community in which they live. Women can intervene in the conflict caused at different times, places, and levels. They can handle conflict raised at a wedding ceremony, funeral, on resources distribution, in family, among clans, and ethnic groups. They raise their *siiqqee* to exercise the power and social responsibility to resolve the conflict. According to Inf5 and Inf6, there is a condition in which they don’t necessarily use *siiqqee* in peace-making processes. For instance, when the conflict arises among children and teenagers who can’t logically present their cases, women can resolve the conflict without rising or using *siiqqee* (Inf2). Inf3 added that they also do not use *siiqqee* sick to handle the conflict raised among women. Since *siiqqee* is attached to their social, spiritual, economic and political lives of the mediators and women in conflict, they come to a mutual understanding without challenging the mediators for not holding the sick. They can simply tell them to stop the fight and make peace. But if the parties in dispute (children, teenagers and women) failed to stop the conflict, they should hold *siiqqee* as a symbol of power and hand over the case to the families of the parties in conflict. They closely follow up on the case. If the problem is not solved at the family level, they hand over the case to the community’s leaders. However, they do not make *elelfta* (sing) or *iya siiqqee*, they do not ululate or sing. “Song in conflict resolution in *siiqqee* institution is an essential element and has dynamic power to attract and pursue the parties in dispute and the community as the whole” (Inf6) because they are emanated from the culture and indigenous knowledge system of the people.

When they intervene in the conflict between adult individuals, or groups or clans, or ethnic, women put their *siqqee* between the parties in dispute and continue to *elelfa* (ululating) until the community leaders join them to start negotiation for reconciliation (Inf6). Adem (2014) has written the song developed by Waayyuu Shanan Arsi Oromoo women during the conflict resolution process as follows.

Aayyoo hoffallee tiyya akkakee nu hoffalchimee!

Hoffallee jirra hoffallee tiyya akkakee nu hoffalchimee!

Hoffallee tiyya ta guyyaa har'aa akkakee nu hoffalchimee!

Hoffallee tiyya sii kadhaa akkakee nu hoffalchimee!

Callee daraarama kuullee, rabboo araarami nullee!

Woji hinceesisuu hoffallee tiyya nu hojjalchimee!

Lolli hinceesisuu hoffallee tiyya nu hoffachimee!

Magaaltu dhalee hoffallee tiyyaa nu hoffalchimee!

Dhiira siingalee hojjallee tiyya nu hoffalchimee!

Goraan shimshimii hoffallee tiyya nu hoffalchimee!

Gorii natti himii hoffallee tiyya nu hoffalchimee!

Ejersa jaboo jaboo lafa gaaraa,

Ta jabaatte lee rabbuu nu gargaaraa,

Mee araara.

Elel elel elel elel elel elel

This song is translated as follows:

Oh my successful mother, help us as you usually do!

We have succeeded; my success, help us as you usually do!

My successful one; of this day, help us as you usually do!

My successful one; I will pray for you, help us as you usually do!

Beautifully arranged Bead; God forgive us!

River Woji cannot be crossed (has risen); my successful one, help us as you do!

Conflict cannot be ignored; my successful one, help us as you do!

The ox/cow gave birth; my successful one, help us as you do!

A man brought (married) you; my successful one, help as you do!

The strawberry has thickly blossomed; my successful one, help us as you do!

Drop by and tell me; my successful one, help us as you do!

The strong olive tree on a hill,

What we find difficult, God will help us with,

Get reconciled.

Amen amen amen amen amen amen (Adem, 2014: 71-72).

This song shows that the Oromo women ask for a divine intervention to resolve conflict. They are peace-loving and committed to promoting peaceful co-existence and reciprocal respect. This song is a vehicle that passes the conflict resolution process to the next “peace-making group” in the community. After they sing the song, *hadha siiqqee* hands over the case to elders, or *Abba Gadaa* to negotiate peace to reconcile the parties in conflict. Although the hand over the case to the elders, they can punish if the husband or one of the parties or both parties in dispute refuses to admit to their wrongdoings and reject to stop the conflict (Adem, 2014). They can impose punishment in collaboration with elders on the parties in conflict if they are not willing to stop the conflict. The punishment can be applied in different ways. They often order them to slaughter ox (usually young ox) for disrespecting women by refusing to stop the conflict. If they cannot provide ox, they can prepare *dadhi* (a local drink made of honey). If they are poor and can't provide *dadhi*, they are them to bring green grass as a sign of peace, hope and life. If the offender refuses to accept this punishment, social isolation will be declared immediately (Inf5).

In the Oromo customary law, the punishment or slaughter is paid not for reconciliation but for disrespecting *iya siiqqee*. After the slaughter is paid, women adjudicate that the arbitration should be restarted. In this conflict peace process that demands slaughter payment, normally women do not need to stay outside when the elders negotiate peace-making (Inf1). Then, women can return to their homes. Those who want to stay can also stay and join the elders to contribute their opinions. Once the elders handle the situation and the parties in dispute came to mutual understanding, all women who have returned to their homes can come out to participate in *siran fixaa* (conclusion conflict resolution). In *sirna fixaa* ceremony, women have an especial song to express their happiness for the conflict is settled and bless the parts who made peace and elders who mediated peace (Inf3; Inf4). They sing the following song.

Argadhee galee gammadee!

Ani dayaa na deessifee!

Borilleekabami!

Sanyiin tee haa kabajamu!

Busaa bubbeen si hinargin!

Madiinni badduun si hinargin!

Camcammeessa hamaa oolaa!

Waaqni isin haa ulfeessuu, ulfaadha!

Translation:

I got what I wanted, I go home happy!

I give birth (am fertile), you helped me to deliver,

Be honoured tomorrow and after,

May your descendants be/are honored,

May you be spared from malaria and the storm,

May you be spared from the evil eye,

Survive famine and drought,

May God honour you, be honoured! (Adem, 2014: 73).

In this peace-making ceremony, that is, after the parties in dispute are reconciled and the above song is sung, the community leaders, seniors men of the village, the disputed parties kneel in front of women to receive the blessing them (Inf6). *Hadha siiqqee* has a spiritual authority to empower and bless community leaders. Adem (2014:73) states that “all the rich men and peoples on hierarchical position” also kneel before the women “to accept the blessing”. In this process, “elders in array [*stand in line*], (italic- added by me), turn by turn blesses both arbitrated parties and women” (Adem, 2014: 73).

The elders bless as follows.

Irree harka mirgaa si haa gadhu!

Irree farda booraa si haa godhu!

Nama kabbajamu tahi!

Nama nagaa buusu tahi!

The above blessing is translated as:

May you be a man of the right arm!

May you be a man of a strong horse!

Be an honoured man!

Be a peacemaker! (Adem, 2014: 74).

After this ritual, women put and tie *gogaa* or *medhicha* (a piece of the skin of the slaughtered animal, ox) on the right arm of the husband (if the case is wife’s human rights violation) who slaughtered the animal in their respect (Adem, 2014: 74; Inf6). Then they bless and advise the man expressing their happiness and gratefulness to his respect for women and give him hope that his family is a part of the society (Inf6; Inf7).

Once the peace-making process is concluded with the above songs, people believe that a new relationship, hope is created (Inf3). Women and elders who are involved in the process of

mediation, shift their ceremony to more religious rituals. Adem further asserted that they thank the Oromo Deity (the God/god they often call *Waaqa/Waaqayyoo*, which is called God in English) with the following song.

Ateetee sirroofnee rabbirraa milkoofnee,

Ta guyyaa har'aa sirroofnee rabbirraa milkoofnee

Waaqa sii kadhaa sirroofnee rabbirraa milkoofnee,

Goraan shimshimii sirrofnee rabbirraa milkoofnee,

An haadha abdi sirroofnee rabbirraa milkoofnee,

Abdiin ta rabbi sirroofnee rabbirraa milkoofnee,

Ateeteen toltee maal alla goota olgali aayyoo....

Translation:

Atete, we are corrected, we got from God,

For this today, we are corrected, we got from God,

I beg the Lord for you, we are corrected, we got from God

The strawberry has thickly blossomed, we are corrected, we got from God,

I, a hopeful mother, we are corrected, we got from God,

Hope is from God, we are corrected, we got from God,

Atete succeeded, what are you doing out? God's home mother... (Adem, 2014: 74-75).

After this song, people return to their homes with joy. The song expresses that former enemies are now friends and the entire community is at peace. The community at peace with God.

One can imagine how it is joyful if the Ethiopian society and government genuinely, including the Oromo, consider some aspects of this conflict resolution elements and procedures, and contextualize it in the modern legal system to resolve conflict. Recognizing women's contributions to society, their potential to lead and create a better society, and their ability to resolve conflict in

a way that brings former enemies to mutual understanding heal individuals, families, groups, and nations.

Siiqqee as the idea of feminism from the Oromo perspective had been practiced by Oromo women since the evolution of the *Gadaa* system or after women were removed from the *Gadaa* office by male domination. Oromo women used *siiqqee* in peace process at different levels. They follow specific principles to elect representatives when they negotiate peace-making and apply various procedures/rules in the conflict resolution process. The parties in conflict and mediators (elders, *Abbaa Gadaa*) have vital roles in the peace process. However, the role of *siiqqee* institution is challenged by non-indigenous religions and the secular state in Ethiopia.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Findings

The aim of this has been to offer an in-depth understanding of the role *siiqqee* institution, the Oromo women's institution in conflict resolution. To conceptualize that matter, theoretical concepts of feminism in IRs and African notions of feminism were used. As designated in the chapters above, some of the feminist perceptions on IR, not how feminists' constructed new ideas to rebuild the IR theory, but also their limitations. Although it can give an interesting inspiration to consider indigenous knowledge in IR, as feminist philosophy from the Oromo perspective, and as a version of "Third World" feminism, *siiqqee* lack well established conceptual framework and institution to be practiced in contemporary Ethiopia/Oromo society that can be efficiently used in the debate about feminism.

This study has contributed to the documentation about the development, concept, and practice of *siiqqee* in the past, its current challenges, and its functions. It also uncovered that there is a discontinuity in the understanding of *siiqqee* and its practices in pre-colonial and post-colonial Oromia.

The study applied a qualitative research paradigm. Semi-structured interviews and relevant tools were used to collect the primary data to answer the research questions. The study attempted to answer the research questions: *How siiqqee institution has been used in conflict resolution in Ethiopia/Oromia?* To answer this question, the study attempted to describe *siiqqee* as a stick and institution, explore its fundamental concepts, analysed how it has been exercised to conflict resolution, to give blessings, to impose curse and sanctions, to mobilize human and material resources to maximize income to support the poor and to interact with Oromo Deity, God.

The study showed *siiqqee* institution had played a substantial role for women to practice their power in pre-colonial Oromia. *Siiqqee* is as a stick symbolizes Oromo women's political, economic societal power and spiritual authority. As an institution, it uses as women's organization, duty, responsibility, and authority to resolve conflict. *Siiqqee's* notions, institution and practice were developed in the context of Oromo culture. There are two contrasting ideas concerning the origin of *siiqqee*. The first view suggests that *siiqqee* was started at the same time with the

evolution of the *gadaa* system. *Abba Gadaa* gave the first *siiqqee* to *hadhaa siiqqee*, his wife. The other view proposes that it has emerged after women during the era of Akkoo Manoyyee who were ruling the people became cruel to men. Men rebelled against them and removed them from the office. Then, the people developed *siiqqee* and enshrined it in the laws of the *gadaa* system so that it operates under *gadaa* laws and women can practice their rights.

This study reveals that the role of *siiqqee* in the peace process at individuals, families, societal or groups, clans, various ethnic groups, and national levels was significant in pre-colonial Oromia. In post-colonial Oromia, the practice is *siiqqee* have been practiced in some places in Oromia such as Aris. Today, its practices in Arsi is challenged by the introduction of non-indigenous religions and secularism.

In *siiqqee* institutions, women select their representatives based on their seniority, age, experience in conflict resolution, knowledge and articulation of Oromo culture, a good witness in the society (free from bad conduct, free from lie, stealing, gossip, and false witness). They call her *hadha siiqqee* (this name applies to any married woman who has the *siiqqee* stick and all women in the *siiqqee* group). *Siiqqee* peace process involves different forms and patterns: screaming, mediation, arguments, contextualization, symbols, migration, ritual, sanction, isolating, curse, and blessing.

The findings show that *hadha siiqqee* do not only to resolve a dispute and stop a war and defend women's, children's and strangers' rights but also mobilize resources to support the poor, widow, orphan, and elderly in society. They use *siiqqee* to mobilize resources during famine and war. They pray to *Waaqa* (God) to bring rain, to stop epidemic or calamity, and for peace and fertility. *Hadha siiqqee* mediates between *Uumaa* (the Creator) and humanity.

Oromo feminist epistemology emphasis women's participation in the peace process as the mediator between the parties in conflict. It focuses on consensus building, repentance of the offender, the restoration of the victim, mutual understanding, and the reintegration of the parties in conflict in the community. However, this doesn't mean that Oromo women have never been involved in warfare. The study shows that they had been also legitimizing war as a last resort and participating in warfare, for instance, in pre-colonial Oromia, Oromo women had a tremendous impact on whether war should be declared against the enemies who attempt to impend *nagaa Oromo*, the peace of Oromo. Oromo women believe in *jus in bello* in the *Gadaa* system and they practice (through *siiqqee* institution) their rights either to legitimize or to denounce just war

declared by Abba Gadaa. The roles of *siiqqee* as an institution and as a symbolic stick are interrelated.

Hadha siiqqee' participation in the peace process to resolve the conflict between the Ethiopian government and the OLA was unsuccessful. Because both parties were unwilling to go through a *siiqqee* conflict resolution process to end the conflict. They were driven more by their political interests. *Hadha siiqqee* has no strong political institution to impose sanctions on them to make peace.

6.2 Prospects for Future Research

There is a great need for further study to investigate the scope, limits, sociological logic, and philosophy of *siiqqee* to use some aspect of this indigenous conflict resolution mechanism in Ethiopia today, and to bring it into feminist debate IR theory, particularly, as to what it can contribute to African feminism, black feminism epistemology. There is also a great need for further research as to why conflict resolution strategies in *siiqqee* institution complement gender protagonist or role expectations, why *siiqqee* institution is placed on feminine values and *gadaa* system on masculine values since the time rebilled against women, has it biological orientation or social constriction. Further research on these issues will help to tackle some of the inconsistencies in the literature on this institution. The conclusion and recommendations are anchored on the data presented and findings discussed in the study.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide Questionnaires

The research question: How *siiqqee* institution has been used in conflict resolution in Ethiopia/Oromia?"

Questions asked to answer the research question:

1. What is *siiqqee*?
2. How is *siiqqee* institution used in conflict resolution among the Oromo and its wider applications for resolving conflicts in the wider society?
3. What power does *siiqqee* symbolize?
4. How is *siiqqee* used to enforce sanctions?
5. How Oromo women practice *siiqqee*?
6. When is the application of *siiqqee* most appropriate?

Interview Guide Questionnaires

1. How do you understand *siiqqee*?
2. Do Oromo women use *siiqqee* to defend their rights and resolve conflict today? If, yes, to what extent? In what kind of situation? If not, why?
3. When Oromo women start and stop using *siiqqee*?
4. Do all women use *siiqqee*? Do they have equal power under *siiqqee* institution?
5. What *siiqqee* represents and how that presentation gives women access to power?

Appendix 2: Informants Descriptions

Siiqqee Traditional Scholars and Researchers

No	Informants' names	Sex	Age	Occupation	Position	Date of Interview	Place of Interview
Inf1	Anonymous	female	68	Retired	Hadha siiqqee	10.07.2019	Addis Ababa
Inf2	√	√	56	Home wife	<i>Hadha siiqqee</i>	25.07.2019	√
Inf3	√	√	77	Retired	<i>Hadha siiqqee</i>	13.07.2019 25.05.2020	√
Inf4	√	√	59	Widow	<i>Hadha siiqqee</i>	05.07.2019 05.06.2020	√
Inf5	√	√	61	Retired	<i>Hadha siiqqee</i>	07.07.2019, 20.05.2020	√
Inf6		male	63	Married	<i>Researcher</i>	25.02.2020	Oslo
Inf7		male	48	Married	<i>Researcher</i>	25.02.2020	Oslo



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