

Healing Wounds and Blood Feuds in Exploring Ethiopia the Role of Dem Adraqi Elders in Rural South Wollo Zone of Amhara Regional State

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Abstract

The study explained the roles of dem adraqi elders in avoiding and healing past wounds and blood feuds between conflicting parties in rural Amhara regional states of Ethiopia. Unless healing wounds and blood feud conflict is managed properly, it results in social and economic destruction at both family and community level. The main objective of this study was the role of dem adraqi elders in avoiding blood feud in rural Ethiopia. The most common types of conflict resolved by dem adraqi elders are killing, property looting, theft and land based conflicts. Qualitative research approach was followed with focus group discussion and key informant interview as a tool of data collection. The data was collected from 11 key informant respondents and 3 focus group discussion (FGD) through purposive sampling techniques. The finding of the study showed that cost of conflict depends on the type of conflict resolution system that individuals used to settle disagreements. In addition, the practical procedure of dem adraqi elder in healing wounds and blood feuds are painstaking since it is important to avoid conflicts between parties for last without any retaliation after reaching agreements through erigiman (cursing the retaliator). In general, the work of dem adraqi elders depends on the interest and will of disputant parties. To minimize the problem of wounds and blood feud conflicts and encourage dem adraqi elders at the local level, government should make some economic support to satisfy their morality.

Keywords: Blood feuds, Dem Adraqi, Elders, Rural South Wollo, wound.

Introduction

Blood feud is a very serious human act involving the murder of the former murderer, and his relatives by the victim's family. Blood feud is primarily a tradition for many people in the world [1]. Its main initial causes are individuals, groups and societal conflict. Conflict is an Ancient occurrence of human culture. It still remains as long as people live together and can be understood as participation in a conflict between two or parties [2]. conflict can be denied as natural and unavoidable part of human beings existence and it appears to be an integral or collective component of human performance in diverse activities. In fact, one cannot separate conflict from human beings. It is not impossible to see them independently and they are live together and also making two faces of the same coin [3,4]. Although agreement is lacking, that every society has developed an indigenous institution that could support to manage conflicts of various in nature. Research shows that all communities across the globe have dispute resolution processes between themselves and with other classes. These

institutions may be informal settings which practice their work unlike the formal state conflict resolution system [5].

Some societies like modern western societies may employ the formal one more while most African societies have followed their indigenous, informal conflict resolution mechanisms. Before the introduction of formal system through colonialism during the colonial period, nearly all African societies have had their own indigenous mechanism of conflict resolution. Like other African societies different ethnic groups in Ethiopia have had their own institution and mechanism of conflict resolution. However, the state formation process of the 19th C the political contribution that followed it reduced them in many respects. In this case, the Oromo Gada system can be taken as the best example that had been effective but it has been degraded due to colonization [6].

While colonization was a major cause of indigenous institution deterioration, each ethnic group in Ethiopia has continued and verified its own indigenous institution to settle various kinds of conflicts, such as homicide and blood feud. It is a burning human-life problem. In case of blood feud, summarized the role of

indigenous judges about clan- homicide, the judges summon the leader of the concerned clans as soon as both murderer and deceased are identified. Following the judges summon, people congregate for the ultimate judgment [7]. The judges (dem adraqi elders) asked the families of the victim what they seeks, capital punishment to be meted on the assassin or other related punishments. Their response is usually negative. There is always a tendency for institutional forgiveness once the offender is forgiven a specified time is fixed for the transfer of compensation or blood money.

Rural Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia in general, rural communities of the South Wollo Zone in particular have their own traditional system for dispute resolution known as Dem Adraki Elders. It helps the people greatly by settling blood feud disputes and building social unity and peaceful coexistence among themselves. The main components and instruments that used to facilitate the settling the conflicts are negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.

Several researchers done on several indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia among nation, nationalities and ethnic groups, among those researcher Assefa, and could be mentioned[4]. The above researchers contributed on the role of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism. For example conducted a research on the Raya community living in the southern part of the regional state of Tigray in Alamata woreda on the issues of sustainability and enforceability of the decisions passed by indigenous conflict resolution mechanism which is called Mezard [8].

In rural South wollo Zone woredas there are many and different causes of conflict that might be the issue of land, wife stealing, theft, use of water for irrigation system and competitions over scarce natural resources. These triggers create inter-societal tensions, and it leads to death and homicide between people. This aggravates blood feud. It is a severe issue of social institutional instability in sustaining social security in the society. This serious problem could lead to a breakdown in the family and additional death in humans. It is a common and well known problem of all Woredas, though the numbers of causalities and incidences are different. However, this serious problem has not been addressed by previous researchers in rural South wollo Zone of Amhara national regional state of Ethiopia. The rural communities found in this region have their own well-known traditional process for conflict resolution that most woredas call Dem Adraki, the name is actually different from worwda to woreda at times, which serves as healing wounds and blood feuds and allows for good social relationships and solidarity.

The main objective of this study was to explaining the role of Dem Adraqi Elders in Healing Wounds and Blood Feuds rural Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia, South Wollo Zone

Materials and method

The researcher adopted Qualitative Research to understand Dem Adraki's role in preventing blood feud and healing wounds among

conflicting parties in the South Wollo Zone of the Amhara national regional state. The reason the researcher chose to use qualitative approach is to obtain rich and accurate information in the social setting in question. And data was collected through participant observation, in depth interviews, and focus groups discussion from selected participants in the study areas.

Data Collection Tools

Interview

As Corbetta noted when conducting a semi-structured interview, the interviewer makes reference to an 'outline' of the topics to be covered during the course of conversation[9]. To reach into results 11 interviewee participants purposefully, 4 members of Dem Adraki elders (Borena, Weidie, Saiyint Ajbar and Mehal Saiyint woredas), 2 people who lose their family due to blood feud (Jamma and Borena woredas), 1 respondent from government officials who was the head of administration and security office of South wollo Zone of Amhara national regional state, 2 other local elders (Worebabo and Borena woredas) and 2 religious father/leader (from Christianity and Islam).

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)

The groups were arranged based on their age, social position in the community and experience of resolving conflicts through Dem Adraki elders' mechanism. The strata's was identified by using snow ball sampling and guiding questions was prepared to facilitate the discussion. The first group was the leaders of Dem Adraki elders whose age was above 60; the second was with members of Dem Adraki elders and whose age was above 50. The third group was the communities who had the experiences of conflict and was losing their families due to blood feud as well as their cases are resolved through Dem Adraki elders.

Methods of Data Analysis

All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the Amharic language and later translated by the researcher to English language. During translation, the longer interview was condensed without losing the original meaning. So, it was analyzed by arranging and portraying the data collected through interviews and FGD in a way that help to detect patterns or problems, explore associations that exist in the data in the form of themes and codes. In this analysis, reiteration and elaborations of key concepts and suggestions was made on the findings that fit with the existing literature under investigation. In doing so, the researcher identified dissimilarities while comparing the findings secured against literature reviews.

Result and Discussion

Involving Dem Adraki Elders and preventing additional deadly conflict

According to the focus group discussion data Dem Adraki elders play an important role in resolving long-running blood feud dispute and building peace and harmony between local communities by ignoring their own works that can sustain their family life.

According to the informant's evidence, the Dem Adraki elders have a role to play in preventing blood feud not only after the events but also before death and other conflict occurs by mitigating the dispute before reaching the limit of death by identifying the root cause of the conflict.

Such elders play an invaluable role in holding society's well-being or protection. Since they split their time for the community with no reason to willingly anticipate God's wrath. Moreover, these elders are not confined to work only in their valued kebeles, they work for other bordered kebele through a long journey if the other kebele does not resolve the blood feud conflict. They also improve group engagement by increasing awareness of the seriousness of blood feud by saying that if there is death family disturbance then many children are exposed to strait children, so please refrain from committing blood feud.

According to the interviewee dem adraki details, elders also have a role to play in preventing loss of human life by sharing information from parties when there is dispute about mediation at that time, elders suggest that the murderer and his relative life be held until they reach agreement. And if someone disagreed with the mediation decision they submit to local government, local governments indirectly control the party. As a result, these elders are the backbone of local government by raising its load, resolving disputes and preventing the occurrence of blood feuds.

Procedure of Dem Adraki

According to the data from focus group discussion, there are five local elders elected by the population and representative of local government in one Kebele during the current period. They've got one leader, vice leader, delegate, and the rest are assembly members, and they've called Dem Adraki. When homicide is committed between incompatible groups, Dem Adraki Elders is told by the member's murderer family group and explains the current situation as well as inviting the deceased family group to mediate. Dem Adraki Elders, starting from this notion, goes to the deceased family.

When they reach in the home of the deceased family, they spread the mat by respecting them. Then, Dem Adraki Elders (DAEs) sit down on the mat. During that time, they start the issue and communicate with deceased family group about the message of murderer and delegating them by saying the following: "he has missed and he will compensate my left ox" for deceased families. The Deceased's families neglect this notion. At the time, Dem Adraki Elders advised the deceased family by saying: "if a person dies his / her meat will not be eaten and his / her blood will not be drunk either." After listening to DAE's advice, the deceased families would say: "only if possible can they talk to their relatives." During this time DAE returns to their house.

Dem Adraki Elders invocation should start approximately 3-4 times between days or weeks before the deceased family decides to mediate. Dem Adraki Elders consider other supporting force known as "alba sat" (the assembly of religious leaders) when they

don't agree and reject the proposal. Combining with that power Dem Adraki Elders invokes the families that have been diminished. They approve of the concept of mediation at that period. Since that time, Dem Adraki Elders have been addressing the central place used to mediate with a deceased family. The deceased family then gave chance to pick the mediators to be involved in the mediation. They select the elders and they can be leaders of Dem Adraki or outside as they wish. Among the five elders they may choose 2 or 3 elders. The remaining will be chosen by the opposite party.

Two soldiers assist for mediation protection during the next meeting. The Kebele Chief assigns these troops. The first soldier manages the dead family groups at far from the assassin family group and the other manages the family group of assassins. Moreover, each soldier gathers all guns and sticks from each disputant group and places them in Dem Adraki Elders' hands. This security service will continue up to the end of mediation.

According to the data from informants Dem Adraki Elders ask one chief of each parties to assign a chief ("negere fegg") each parties provide the a chief and sign agreement in front of Dem Adraki Elders in order to provide the desirable group or individuals for mediation process in all meeting days. Then, Dem Adraki Elders ask both parties some issue of dispute that used to assume the amount of guarantee.

Dem Adraki Elders, after hearing the issues, consult with each other about the dispute issue and determine the sum of guarantee depending on the essence of the dispute. Dem Adraki Elders then tell all parties to include the assurance for the next meeting date. If the guarantee sum is very small, the parties request Dem Adraki Elders to obtain extended time to collect the guarantee. The Dem Adraki Elders are giving as they please a chance. When the guarantee arrives, Dem Adraki Elders receives it from both parties and consigns the guarantee to two elders who are members of Dem Adraki Elders; write in the document the name of the elders got. The text was reserved for other elder, who also belonged to Dem Adraki Elders. According to informant's explanation, guarantee is a power respectable of DAEs to pursue the Mediation result.

During the next meeting, DAEs mainly start to ask the cause and atrocity of both parties. It is used to understand the starting cause of blood feud. Based on the data from focus group participants, the time length of mediation process to complete an issue vary as the type of conflict. For example, when the conflict is rod conflict and the recent time, the mediation process complete from 3-4 weeks. However if the dispute is blood feud and stay some months or years, the mediation process complete from 3-4 months.

Similar to this idea, the informants said that in order to understand the issue of conflict of blood feud both parties should be asked to describe the first disagreement: What were the issues?, Who was involved?, How was the conflict handled ... etc. After hearing both sides and interpreting the issue, they understand and well known the total feature of blood feud (i.e. are the number of dead people

in both parties the same or not? does it need compensation or not? if the issue need compensation, how much amount of money?) these the likes are carefully decided by Dem Adraki Elder. The amount of compensation may range from 10,000-40,000 ETB depending on the nature of the dispute, the payment of compensation vary from one people to another.

According to the data from focus group discussion, there are some types of decisions that are hold by Dem Adraki Elders depending on the nature of blood feuding action.

- The murderer must leave his birth place to another and should not return to this place. However, if he leaves from his birth place, his remain relatives can mediate with deceased family groups and remain in their birth place.
- The murderer must pay compensation to the ceased family. Even if his money is not sufficient for compensation, he must invoke and collect the money by wearing skin and gird on skip.
- From both parties, if the numbers of dead people are the same, they simply mediate without any payment and compensation. For example, in Saint Ajbar woreda of south wollo zone 10 people died from both of parties per year on average, then the parties would be mediated and oriented to marriage between members in the groups.

According to informant evidence, after the blood feud issue of mediation phase has been completed, DAEs give the murderer family a chance by saying the following: “What do you want to be involved in the last mediation date” The murderer then tells DAEs of the appropriate people to be involved out of fear of the deceased relatives. For example, if a man absent from relative to deceased family in the last mediation date and does not make the oath of allegation, he break down the mediation contract and kill the murderer in other time.

In this way, the idea of the murder family inform to the chief of the deceased family by DAEs to bring such desirable people. The chief also informs to DAEs the providing date of desirable people. Then DAES discuss with both parties the last mediation date and decide it. As the informant’s explanation, before the last mediation date, DAEs transmit two important messages to both parties. The 1st message, both parties should collect and bring their relatives or group in the last mediation date. The 2nd message, both parties bring all eating and drinking things.

With regard to the data from the interviewee and focus group debate, the last position of mediation is favored by the involvement of the family group of murders. It could be remaining in place beforehand, or at the river and elsewhere. Moreover, the data indicates that there are four types of accusation oaths which used to close the mediation process. These are: cross, “Tabot,” water, and musket or gun.

Cross

Based on informant evidence, the religion leader brings the big cross (‘metsore meskel’) to the place of mediation meeting and the

two incompatible parties have executed oath of accusation of mediation contract. By this time, by carrying this large cross the religion leader stands in the center of the DAEs. Then, each of the deceased family begins the main actor of the issue by sacrificing themselves in front of the DAEs by believing: “if he thinks bad notion and completes bad behavior on his opponent by leaving this mediation deal, the cross will rule by him.” Similarly, the murderer family groups also complete this oath of allegation.

Spiritual Thing (‘Tabot’)

According the data of informants, both parties with their relatives are integrated in the selected area of the last mediation date and the oath of allegation carry out through spiritual thing (‘Tabot’). The “Tabot” choice could be in the interest of the family group of murderers. Maybe it’s Michael, Gabriel and others, for example. The DAEs call on the parties to complete the accusation oath. -- party of the deceased family, in particular starting the main actor of blood feud, commit itself to the DAEs by believing the following: “If he thinks bad notion and completes bad behavior on his competitor by violating this mediation deal, St Gebreal must be hostage to them.” This oath of indictment is completed both by the murderer family party individually.

Water

According to respondent explanation, the last mediation meet carry out at river and the oath of allegation complete through water. During this time, one of the elder who is a member of DAEs educates the principle of oath of allegation. After that, the deceased family and murderer relatives exist in opposite sides of the river. Then, beginning with the deceased relatives, each person holds water through his / her hand and completes the accusation by believing the following: “beginning from the date of mediation, if he thinks bad notion and completes bad action on my opponent by breaching this mediation contract, his / her river will rule by him.” At that time, the water which is in the hands of the deceased family slops to the flowing river. Similarly, each of the murderer family completes this oath of allegation.

Musket /Gun

Based on the focus group discussion results, this implies that practically blood feud mediation contract of accusation oath completes via musket / gun. As previously common condition, when the accusation oath completes, the soldiers gather all muskets and any sticks from each member of both parties and bring them into the hands of DAEs. After that DAEs provide two muskets by loading bullet and setting down on the land in the middle of them interchangeably their mouth.

Then each of the deceased families and relatives, beginning with the blood feud participant, come forward in two muskets setting. Then, by jumping the setting musket independently, by believing in the following, he / she must commit itself: “If one doesn’t kill him, the other will kill him” by quitting mediation deal, as he thinks bad notion and completes bad behavior on his rival. In the same way, his remaining relatives and the party of the murderer relatives complete this cycle individually with oath of accusation.

Both leaders of both parties join in front of DAEs in order to close the mediation process by blessing ceremony. Then DAEs carry out the blessing ceremony by saying: "God bless you, God grant you the love, God grant you the Holy Spirit, and God makes the Devil far away from you." Finally, the religious leader's blessing ceremony ended. According to this condition, the written mediation contract document to be read by DAEs in front of the people and they explain the whole mediation procedure process which means the type of decision, amount of assurance, and amount of compensation and the like.

After that if the mediation contract is in fast the bread is breaking down and also if the mediation contact in the situation of ester. The sheep is captured by the main actor of murderer family. If there was a murderer, the sheep would capture by himself. Then, the main actor of the deceased family sleuthed the sheep.

In which time, before all of the DAEs and any members of both parties, the two main actors load each other from the meat of the sheep. After that all people including DAEs together eat and drink the collecting food and soft drink. Finally, the process is closed by blessing ceremony. According to my informant's idea, DAEs write report to the main manager of administrative and security issues. By describing and explaining the process mediation from the beginning up to end. Additionally, by touching some points like: decision making, amount of compensation, amount guarantee, and other mediation contract. Finally, the manager receives their report.

Types of Conflict that can be resolved by 'Dem Adraki' Elders

According to the data from respondents, even though Dem Adraki Elders can be resolved different types of conflicts like: burning of living house, theft, and dacoit of currency they mainly, focus on blood feud and rod case conflicts.

Blood Feud Conflicts

With regard to informant interpretation, two or more persons can exist in non-compatible condition in case of several causes of conflict. When this situation increases and hits a warming point, one of the two parties kills the other who would be living in his controversy. The local government authority then monitors the murderer and shows up well to the bride. During that time, both the murderer and deceased family group exist in higher tension and threaten of blood feud conflict.

The assassin families notify DAEs of the current situation and invite them to mediate in the deceased family community. DAEs ask the deceased family group to enter into a settlement deal if it is necessary to involve the assassin (prisoner), otherwise the murderer's remaining family group with the deceased family group must. If the deceased family agrees with the concept of mediation, the prisoner leaves the bride well and returns to his position on the basis of a kebele chief by talking and explaining the issue with local government and, eventually, by signing it. Upon the murderer's return, the elders of Demraki conclude a

reconciliation deal between the family of the murderer, including him and the deceased family party by using their system and fulfilling their criteria.

Unless the deceased family groups agree the involvement of murderer with in mediation contract, the murderer family group commuted themselves based on the rule of DAEs. The rule said that, if two parties compete mediation contract without the murderer (prisoner), all of the murderer family group must complete the following: "they will not invite the prisoner in any situation if he sick and his prisoner life and also if the prisoner or murderer complete his periodic penalty of jail, he will not return to his location (place of birth) up to the end of his life". Then, the deceased family group and the remaining family of the murderer complete mediation contract through DAE, with oath of allegation.

On the other hand, when the murderer exists in prisoner life or bride well, his families do not ask their opposite party for mediation contract until the penalty of jail of murderer complete and leave out. After the completion of the penalty, the murderer family including him may mediate with the deceased family through DAEs depending on the interest of the deceased family.

Road Case Conflict

In any contentious question, the implications of informant data, rod dispute, occur. It may be long-term cognitive factors, and social factors' day-to-day behavior. If the rod dispute happens between two or more parties that are incompatible, one of the two parties is very hurt. Then, to get psychiatric help, the wounded families keep him and go to the recent health center.

During this time, by thinking of the wounded man, the injuring (winner) man and his family will swallow into higher danger and tension of the subsequent crisis will die. If the injured man does not die then the injuring party will be satisfied and will require permanent reconciliation by DAEs with the opposing group. Before the exacerbation of rod conflict and raise up to homicide, the winner families inform the existent condition to DAEs and invite them to the injured family in order to get mediation contract.

DAEs go to the injure family and invoke them for mediation by describing the following and occurring condition. Then, the injured families discuss themselves about the issue. After that, they may agree to mediation contract. Finally, the two opposite parties complete mediation contract through DAEs based on their criteria. It may have compensation or not depend on the nature of the dispute.

The Power of Dem Adraki Elders in Preventing Additional Deadly Conflict

According to my informant who is the leader of the DAEs, they have concluded a lot of mediation contract for the different parties to blood feud. There is no breach of its mediation contract among them. Their decisions are all rooted in them. Therefore, in their kebele, peas and safety are created in connection with the mediation contract; there is no one who disagrees with the decision

and its compensation. When they see the act of homicide in their kebele now a day decreases with to the past situation. This is the product of mutual support for the decision by the DAEs.

Additional to the above theory are the thoughts of other informants. According to this knowledge and clarification, the strength and acceptability of DAEs is demonstrable by saying the following from the community's first election process: "Who is experienced? Who isn't even experienced acceptable? Who's afraid of super natural might? Who is smart and observant? And who within the group is fair-minded? The method of selecting DAEs, based on the above parameters. In this sense, almost embedded in the power of DAEs and their mediation contract. The other main informant who is DAEs supervisor said some people break the mediation contract and destroy their previous opponent by buying musket by getting compensation when they see it as a woreda point. That idea runs counter to the idea above. Because the informant understands not particular one kebele as the result of the total woreda communities. This idea doesn't represent the situation in my area of study.

Based on the data from an interviewee, the power of DAEs is respectible based on different ways. The owner of data who is members of DAE states that the two parties which were completed mediation contract did not create additional conflict because, they fear previously completed oath of allegation. Therefore, DAEs have advanced power and acceptability in the surrounding areas of their kebele.

According to the concept of FGD, the influence of DAEs not only resides in the human social life but also in the human mind of the study area cultures. An informant who is a member of losing family via blood feud conflict said that the elders of Dem adraki are fair-minded judges, elaborating this notion. Since, after thorough comprehension of both parties' concerns, they judge their decision. In that sense, by believing, the parties recall in their minds: "why is it going to be right to do bad action on their opposite party? The informant also said that "DAEs are the biggest fathers for all community members" in the surrounding area after harming Dem Adraki Elders in the previous weeks, months ... etc. The informant also stated that in the surrounding area "DAEs are the biggest fathers for all community members."

Conclusion

Blood feud is a very serious human act involving killing by the victim's relatives, the former murderer and his kin. Within the study region, blood feud and other disputes are common. To avoid this situation the residents have an organized body called Dem Adraki which is the assembly of local elders. Dem adraki usually gives wider services for the community and perform mediation contract (Irq) between the disputant parties.

Dem Adraki fulfills other procedural goals such as: obtaining assurance from all sides to respect the mediation process forms of compensation depending on the essence of the conflict. On the other hand, the types of accusation oaths that used to close mediation contract (irq) as moral promise such as: spiritual thing

(Tabot), cross, musket / Gun, and water. Since the murderer family claims that "if their entire opponent completes the oath of indictment, they will not perish."

In the end, Dem Adrakis settled two forms of conflicts: blood feud and rod dispute. All parties are rooted in their decision to settle their problem through Dem Adrakis, and value their influence. Thus, the study area has almost peace and stability. By the his load in settling blood feud disputes, Dem Adrakis is the right hand of the local government and they write reports to local government based on their decision. The local government gets their decision and helps them by supplying pens and papers to make their work easier. Finally, local government gives reward awards at the end of a year to certain elders who have good success in their mediation activities.

Dem Adrakis has qualities of strength and frailty. When we see their strength they would go any remote area without payment by believing in the worth of their tiredness from God if they are to be desired by one of the disputing parties when there is blood feud dispute in the surrounding area. When we see their vulnerability, when blood feud dispute happens in their kebele, they join into two or more individual or party disputing parties to come up with parties for reconciliation and peace. Either of the groups, or both, reject Dem Adraki 's idea during that period. They can not monitor the defiant party by intimidation without reporting to local government to reveal the defiant party's characteristics. Lastly, Dem Adraki's work depends on the study area 's interest and voluntary participation of the disputant groups.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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