



The Path to Reconciliation: Understanding the *Hiraago* Cultural Peacemaking Social Philosophy of the Hadiya, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates “*Hiraago*” peacemaking practices in the Hadiya Social Philosophy, Ethiopia. The main goal of the study is to examine how the “*Hiraago*” practice aids in the resolution of disputes and the promotion of reconciliation and social cohesion among the Hadiya. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and observation. Other techniques of gathering information included analyzing articles from cultural magazines and journals. The “*Hiraago*” practice, which is strongly entrenched in the Hadiya tradition, is demonstrated to resolve complex, concealed, and long-standing issues and foster peaceful coexistence. The study indicates that “*Hiraago*” is important peacemaking methods that influence human relations and promotes reconciliation and forgiveness among conflict parties, hence contributing to the maintenance of peace in the studied area. The study suggests more research into the “*Hiraago*” and other indigenous model peacemaking techniques in social Philosophy of the Hadiya and other community traditional practices. And it urges collaboration between traditional peacemaking methods and modern ones to improve conflict resolution and peace sustainability.

Keywords: Cultural, Ethiopia, Hadiya, *Hiraago*, Peacemaking

INTRODUCTION

Social philosophy seeks to understand the fundamental rules that govern society and shape human relations among people. For example, an individual is born into society and continues to engage with it throughout his life. The society is the soil in which his or her personality grows. In general, social philosophy attempts to explain society using the standard of social unity (John Christman, 2018). Different peacemaking practices are found in different societies at the national, continental, and worldwide levels. The main thing attention should be given to is: What a peacemaking mean?

Making peace is a deeply rooted cultural practice that goes beyond simply raising the white flag in a conflict. It involves a combination of traditions, beliefs, and pacts that influence how disputes are handled and settled in a particular cultural setting. Cultural Practices that promote peace have a significant influence on conflict resolution tactics because they provide distinctive viewpoints and approaches that are firmly ingrained in various cultural traditions. It is crucial to understand the processes of conflict in particular cultural contexts in order to promote sustainable peace and reconciliation.

According to different literatures, almost all African societies have had their indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution before the introduction of formal system through colonization during the colonial era. For instance (Tobiko, Kariako, 2013) states that before the coming of colonial powers to Africa, customary laws governed almost all affairs of the people of Africa including their customary mechanisms of conflict resolutions. However, the colonial power destroyed the indigenous institutions and replaced them by modern legal systems that have been proved to be ineffective and it fails to bring peace and order in African continent. The method of African traditional dispute settlement is most participatory one and it create opportunities for the quarry, the offender, their families and the community to be involved in identifying harm and potential restoration of peace and resolution of the conflict (Elechi & O.Oko, 2006).

Ethiopian has a long history of diverse culture and strong social values. Among these, the Hadiya is a one of nation in Ethiopia mostly living in the Central Ethiopia regional state. The Hadiya have a rich cultural heritage that includes unique practices for solving conflicts within their community. They have their own customary administration system which is known as “*Seera*” (Daniel Handino and Dr.Srilatha V., 2023). It is a system of traditional governance,

which administers different affairs of the society including conflict resolution and peacemaking. Within this system the society has different cultural peacemaking practices and dispute resolution mechanisms. The “*Hiraago*” is one of these cultural peacemaking methods.

Therefore, this article delves into the role of “*Hiraago*” in dispute resolution among the Hadiya, exploring its historical roots, key elements and application in real-life scenario. By understanding the cultural context and practices “*Hiraago*” peacemaking, it is aimed to shed light on its relevance on contemporary dispute settlement efforts and its potential for shaping peaceful outcomes in this quickly changing world.

Objectives

The main objective of this article is to explore the role of “*Hiraago*” customary practice in conflict resolution and sustaining peace within the Hadiya community. The study aims to investigate how the “*Hiraago*” practice helps in settling disputes, rebuilding peace, and fostering reconciliation among the Hadiya People. Its specific objectives are as follows

1. To introduce the concept of “*Hiraago*” and its cultural significance in peacemaking practice among the Hadiya people.
2. To explore and discuss the customary procedure of the “*Hiraago*” practice in settling disputes and rebuilding peace in the study area
3. To investigate how the “*Hiraago*” practice helps dispute parties come to a stage of forgiveness and reconciliation.

METHODOLOGY

An ethnographic Methodology, having an exploratory nature along with a qualitative research approach was used. Both primary and secondary sources were employed. The first main instrument that the researchers employed for collection of data for this study was semi-structured interview. We selected Ten (10) key informants purposively those who have how know on the study topic. Accordingly, we gave freedom for our informants openly to express their attitude, beliefs and knowledge what they know about “*Hiraaago*” peacemaking Philosophy of the Hadiya People. We also allowed them to bring up new ideas during the interview depending on what the interviewee said. The second method employed is an observation. We have observed the case of customary conflict resolution in the area. During

our stay in the field, we observed two peacemaking practices. Lastly, as a secondary source of data we used the cultural magazines, journals articles and etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is commonly known that from ancient times till the present, people have given peace a lot of thoughts. A fundamental human goal, peace demands the ongoing commitment and effort of all individuals and communities. The most disadvantageous peace is preferable to the fairest conflict. There has never been a good war or a bad peace in human history. Although it is hard to define, peace is simple to understand. As a result, the meaning of peace and ways for achieving it in a violent world are explained as follows in this section:

The word ‘peace’ has several different meanings. It appears that the meaning of peace varies depending on the context in which it is used. The word peace literally comes from the Latin word “pax” which denotes a control, an agreement, or a deal to put an end to hostilities (Bloomsbury, Dictionary of Word Origins, p. 387, quoted in ‘Buddhism and Peace’ written by Ven. B. Khemanando, (Calcutta: Lazo Print, 1995).)

According to the American military history, the definition of peace is simply the absence of war. Therefore, by militaries’ perspective they fight wars to win the peace, or they use force to maintain peace. In military doctrines peace is not viewed as a means to an end, but rather as the ultimate or ideal goal by itself. However, the absence of wars and conflicts are the condition of peace that people have requested and desired, many peace scholars disagree that peace should merely be defined as the absence of war. They believe that peace is something more significant, worthwhile, and meaningful than that (www.answers.com :US Military History Companion/peace, accessed:5-02-2024)

Albert Einstein, said “peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, law, and order in short. Based on Albert Einstein definition, peace is not only the absence of war. It is the presence of justice, law and order in society too (Coretta Scott king, 2008) Prominent human rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., was not satisfied with the idea of peace being limited to the absence of unpleasant circumstances. According to him, social justice must coexist with peace in society. True peace, in his words, is not merely the absence of tension, but also the existence of justice (Coretta Scott king, 2008)

Conflict is ubiquitous. Conflict exists everywhere. But the most important thing is to know how to resolve the situation gently. The peace process has three fundamental components. These are peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace building. Peacemaking entails negotiating a peace agreement with various societal forces, including elders, leaders, elites, and regular individuals. At the country level, it has three dimensions: political-elite diplomacy, public diplomacy, and people-to-people diplomacy. Peace building entails creating the conditions for a peaceful social order that meets the fears, needs, and concerns of opposing parties, whereas peacekeeping entails establishing procedures to maintain law, order, and stability. Peacekeeping entails establishing political, military, and civilian systems to sustain a stable social order (Sapir Handelman, 2017).

Ethiopia is the home of a diversified society. Each society might have its own indigenous model of conflict resolution mechanisms and peacemaking. For instance, Megersa Regassa and Waktole Hailu et al. (2026) studied the significance of the “*hiikkannaa*” peacemaking method in conflict resolution and sustaining peace among the Macca Oromo community in Ethiopia. The study investigates the customary procedures of the “*hiikkannaa*” indigenous system in settling disputes and rebuilding peace within the community.

According to Gumi Boru (2016), “*Gondooro*” is one of the Indigenous Methods of Conflict Resolution and Justice Administration systems in the same community cultural practices. “*Gondooro*” helps to enhance community cohesion, restore relationships, and rebuild mutual trust. Like these studies, scholars have researched different community-customary conflict resolution mechanisms. Accordingly, this article emphasizes how the “*Hiraago*” indigenous model of peacemaking practices operates and its significance in maintaining peace and resolving conflicts within the Hadiya.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

***Hiraago* Peacemaking practice**

Culture, tradition, and custom play a significant role in the social, economic, and political activities of human beings. Therefore, experts in the field agree that they have the potential to have a positive impact on daily activities and peaceful coexistence. In the culture of the Hadiya, when people die in a natural or man-made accident and an unusual event occurs in society, the society finds the cause and solution of the problem in a meaningful way through

traditional peacemaking practices known as “*Hiraaga*” Examining the nature of “*Hiraago*” and its benefits in the peacemaking process is the main focus of this critique.

Concept and purpose of “*Hiraago*”

“*Hiraago*” Peacemaking is a traditional conflict resolution process deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Hadiya societies. “*Hiraago*” is the word of the Hadiyyisa Language, the language of the Hadiya Nation. According to our elder respondents, its lexical definition is becoming conscious of the incident that happened earlier and describing what is going to occur in the future based on what is happening at the movement. Though it isn’t possible to give the exact meaning of the word “*Hiraago*” in Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia), literally, it is an approximate meaning of the word prophecy. Contextually, it is possible to interpret “*Hiraago*” as a traditional prophecy. “*Hiraago*” is a prophecy, and “*Hiragaanichcho*” is a prophet. “*Hiraagaano*” is the plural form of “*Hiraanichcho*.”

It is believed that “*Hiraago*” is a way of conveying admonition or advice to an individual, family, community, or country through the person chosen by the creator. It is also a cultural system that allows us to live together without the risk of being killed or injured when there is a misunderstanding or conflict and life is lost.

“*Hiraago*” has two aspects. One is the art of finding a solution by examining related things when an extraordinary event or emergency occurs, and the other is predicting what will happen in the future to an individual, environment, nation, country, and the world. Although it is not possible, I can give an approximate meaning to the word prophecy.

The main purpose of “*Hiraago*” is to identify the cause of hidden issues and incidents that happen repeatedly and to get solutions to those root issues. As the elders said, it is the main mechanism for conflict resolution in the Hadiya culture. They added that though “*Hiraago*” is not a written law, it connects economic, social, and political life, and besides being a typical tool for the implementation of traditional justice, its role is very important in terms of creating peace between people and avoiding conflicts.

If an individual who has been given the wisdom of “*Hiraagima*” by the Creator fails to apply it in a proper manner, forgets serving the people adds or subtracts anything from, or receives payment (compensation) for his service, the grace of “*Hiraagima*” will be taken away from him. Hence, this reveals that “*Hiraago*” is the gift that is given by the almighty Creator.

The distinction between “*Hiraago*” and Religion

As traditional elders said, “*Hiraago*” is a special art given only to “*Hiraagaanichcho*” by the choice of the Creator and not based on individual philanthropy or religion. From the time of Hadiya’s ancient traditional religion called “*Fundaanano*” until today, it is an indication that “*Hiraago*” has no religious basis. Therefore, this information shows that an individual who is the “*Hiraagaachcho*” would be a follower of any faith and the wisdom of “*Hiraago*” given by the Creator. Also, they said that when an extraordinary event occurs, individuals who go to “*Hiragancho*” go for “*Hiraagisimaa*,” regardless of religion.

According to the information we received from the elders, the ancient religion of Hadiya is based on the worship of evil spirits. Gifts are given to god in kind and money. The spirit, if worshipping god, is passed through generations, is genderless, and usually occurs in old age. The spirit works in both males and females. Unlikely, “*Hiraago*” is an art that can only be seen by male elders. On the other hand, there are two quarrels about whether “*Hiraago*” is transmitted by generation or not. Those who say it is transmitted usually refer to the tribe where “*Hiraagaano*” originates. But those who argue that it is not transmitted hereditarily conclude that though “*Hiragana*” is more common in certain tribes, it also occurs occasionally in all tribes. Overall, this discussion shows that “*Hiraago*” has no special connection with religion. It is given to individuals by the creator, regardless of any religion. However, there is disagreement about whether “*Hiraago*” is transmitted by generation or not.

Key elements and Procedures of “*Hiraago*”

The Hadiya people’s indigenous peacemaking process, known as “*Hiraago*,” has been used for decades to solve disputes or to finish the hidden issues among the people. The key elements in the “*Hiraago*” practice contribute to fostering peace and reconciliation. According to the researchers’ observations and the elders’ statements, “*Hiraago*” peacemaking practice has the following key elements:

Transparency: it is the first and most key element of the “*Hiraago*” social philosophy of the Hadiya. The elders said, “Nothing is hidden or buried before the *Hiraagaachcho*. The condition of the accident, damage, etc is reported clearly from the beginning to the end” As the elders added in the “*Hiraago*” peacemaking process, being transparent before the “*Hiraagaanichcho*” helps to solve all difficult things and the hidden issues well. Hence, this

information reveals that transparency is one of the important elements of "*Hiraago*," which assists individuals in getting what they seek from "*Hiraagaanichcho*".

Redemption: According to the participants of the study and the researchers' observation, in the Hadiya culture, "*Hiraago*" is a way of stopping the evil from being passed on to the next generation due to the wrong that a person has done. "*Hiraagaanichcho*" tells how and in what condition the wrong committed will end. Then, the elders close the issues accordingly. This result shows that redemption is one element of the "*Hiraago*" philosophy of the Hadiya.

Since "*Hiraago*" is a pre-process of "*xiiga guulla*" conflict resolution rituals, it emphasizes the repair of connections and the healing of conflict-related hardships. It is not only about obtaining a rapid conclusion but also about restoring trust and repairing broken relationships between individuals or groups. This is admitting the harm done, apologizing and forgiving, and working toward reconciliation and mutual understanding. This shows that by emphasizing healing and repair, "*Hiraago*" aims to prevent future disagreements and promote long-term community harmony.

In the "*Hiraago*" peace making process, first the elder sent people to "*Hiraagaachcho*" to reconcile the quarreling people. The people who are sent are from both the mother's side and the father's side. In addition, one of the elders in charge of reconciliation added. Those people got to Hiraagaachcho home and represented the issues. Then "*Hiraagaacthhcho*" sat under the tree of his house or the door of the house, and asked the people to come to his house to explain the situation in detail. Then "*Hiraagaacthhcho*" tells them how to settle the issues, and it is reported directly to the elders. Finally, the elders reconcile the issue accordingly.

In general, in the "*Hiraago*" peacemaking process, when elders walk for reconciliation, they don't accept any compensation in money or in kind other than offering coffee or food according to the wishes of the parties. In fact, even if there is a mistake they make, knowingly or unknowingly, during the peacemaking process, they shake off their clothes and wash their feet.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article highlights the relevance "*Hiraago*" peacemaking cultural practices among the Hadiya in Ethiopia. The study uses ethnographic methodologies, document analysis, and a

survey of related literature to investigate the concept of peace and the efficacy of the “Hiraago” cultural practice in peacemaking. The findings indicate that the “Hiraago” practice is an important indigenous model method in dispute resolution and maintaining peace in the study area. More research on the topic is suggested, as well as collaboration between traditional peacemaking techniques and legal systems to successfully address conflicts and maintain long-term peace.

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