The Hybridization of an Indigenous peacebuilding practices: An exploratory study of the Borana traditional peace method in the intergroup conflict in Marsabit County, Kenya

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfilment of the requirements degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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Abstract

This study explores the Gada model, which has been used by the Borana people in Kenya for many years for resolving intra and inter-ethnic conflicts, but which was over time compromised by colonial and post-colonial regimes. Nevertheless, the Gada model has historically played a significant role in East African peacebuilding. It embraces peaceful peacebuilding values and approaches useful to maintaining durable, lasting, and sustainable peace in society. Africans in general are suffering from multiple conflicts and lack of peace. Modern peacebuilding has not been able to bring lasting solutions to these challenges. As a result, much more weight has been given to modern peace-building apparatuses over indigenous peace-building approaches. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the Gada model in African peace building, to evaluate its application to current and future regional conflicts. In other words, using semi-structured interviews and historical analysis methods, the study investigates the dynamics and resilience of the Gada model and its implications for conflict transformation in modern times. Guided by the goals of Indigenous and emancipatory peacebuilding theories, the study examines how the Borana people advance their own peacebuilding approaches and practices.

The research studies the restorative functions and values of the Gada peacebuilding model from the perspective of the Borana people and raises questions about how these values can be incorporated into contemporary peacebuilding models in Kenya. The overarching goal of the study is to produce a hybrid model of traditional and modern approaches for transforming conflict into peace.

Prologue: Personal Motivation for Writing this Dissertation

I was born and raised in Nairobi, which is about 300 to 400 kilometers from where my parents were born. My mother grew up in Isiolo, which at the time was a very traditional, Muslim area. My father also came from a Muslim place. However, my maternal grandparents were strong traditionalists they did not follow either Islam or Christianity. In fact, my grandmother was always a bit suspicious of both.

When it came time to send my mother to school, my grandparents chose a Christian boarding school, even though the area she grew up in was mostly Muslim. So, in a way, I have always felt like I have multiple identities—shaped by traditional, Muslim, and Christian cultures.

A lot of different people and experiences inspired me to write this dissertation, but the most influential person was my maternal grandmother. She would often visit us in Nairobi, and I would visit her more than I did my paternal grandparents. Every time we were together, she would share stories about her life, from her early childhood to adulthood. Out of all my siblings, I was the one most captivated by her stories—I could not get enough of them!

My grandmother told us that her people originally migrated from Southern Ethiopia and eventually settled in what became the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. When they arrived in Kenya, she explained, their way of life changed in two major ways.

First, the British introduced land fencing, taking away areas that her people had once used freely. In some cases, they were banned from accessing certain lands for up to three years. This forced them back into a pastoral lifestyle, which they had actually moved away from while still in Southern Ethiopia, where they had combined both farming and pastoralism to make a living.

The second substantial change came because they were pushed away from the trees, places, and mountains that they considered sacred. This affected how they socially organized, how they related to their neighbors, and their overall culture and peace processes. For years, they had used the Gada system not just to resolve conflicts, but to organize their lives around principles like reciprocity, humanitarianism, forgiveness, equity, and peaceful coexistence with their environment.

In essence, my grandmother explained how colonialism, the arrival of foreign religions, and formal schooling disrupted the social fabric of her people. This led to increased conflicts both within the Borana community and with their neighbors. The colonialists wanted to divide and rule, and they even killed their livestock. I later learned through archives that thousands of sheep died after drinking from a poisoned well, possibly at the hands of the colonialists.

My grandparents did not receive any privileges or protection from colonial powers, whether under the Italians or the British. Even after the colonial period ended, the legacies of that time still impacted her life. You see, my grandmother was born during the war between the Italians, British, and Ethiopians, and she remembers how her people were caught between these warring forces. This conflict eroded the values that had held their community together for generations.

It is no surprise that when the violent interethnic conflicts of the 2000s broke out, I found myself reflecting on the stories my grandmother used to share. She often spoke about how her community relied on the Gada peacebuilding process to resolve conflicts. Growing up, I was deeply aware that the culture I was part of was a complex blend—an intersection of Traditional, Islamic, Christian, and urban influences. I also realized that none of these cultural forces, on their own, could fully address the social challenges my community was facing. So, I began to think about how I could bring together the best parts of both the Gada and Modernist models to help resolve conflicts between my community and their neighbors.

These stories about racialized spaces—places viewed as "white spaces" or as elite, neoliberal spaces (both African and white)—coupled with my own experience navigating the dark corners of ethnic conflicts in the Northern Frontier District, shaped my perspective. This region, where my grandparents and parents came from, was often described in conflicting ways: a paradise to some, a frontier of hardship to others. But to me, it was a land of stark contradictions. On one hand, there were the dominating metanarratives of control, where colonial and neoliberal systems had taken over and suppressed Indigenous cultures. On the other hand, there was the promise held by traditional peace processes like the Gada system. It was this tension, this contrast between imposed systems and the potential of indigenous methods, which inspired me to write this work. In the late1990s, as ethnic conflict intensified in Kenya, I was deeply troubled and began questioning why communities that had coexisted for generations were now at odds. This concern drove me to pursue a master's thesis that investigated the causes of ethnic conflict during the colonial and postcolonial periods. My findings revealed that issues such as land disputes, identity conflicts, religion, borders, and the erosion of traditional values were key factors.

Over time, the situation worsened—election violence, ethnic conflicts, disputes over cattle, environmental destruction, government corruption, and chronic under-resourcing became rampant. These challenges prompted me to ask: What can be done? This question shifted my focus toward developing models for sustainable peacebuilding. Broadly, it attempted to answer three research questions: 1) What models did the Borana use in the past and currently to build peace? 2) How are peace and conflict concepts understood among the Borana people? 3) How effective is each of these peace models

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I am grateful to Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful. I acknowledge the contribution of the PACS program and am forever grateful for the learning milieu and support I received. Thanks also to Dr. Judy Hughes for all the support since my undergraduate degree in social work, my MA and Ph.D. in PACS - you have been an amazing support system both as a mentor and outside the academic sphere. To Dr. Sean Byrne, thank you for your mentorship and encouragement over the years and for your exceptionally exemplary and diligent assistance. To my academic and thesis advisor, Dr. Eliakim Sibanda, thank you for being a mentor and for your support and encouragement. I will forever be grateful to all of you for your ideas, insights, and critiques, and most of all, for your moral support. To Dr. Jaro Arero (Papie), and Dr. Abdullahi Shongolo thank you for your support and encouragement as I could not have done this without you.

To my children Najma Issak and Kiya Arero: without you, I would have never embarked on this journey. Thank you for being there for me and for giving me hope even when I was about to quit. Najma thank you for stepping up and caring for Kiya, when I was burning candle at both ends, I will forever be grateful. To my mother, Amina Wario, my greatest supporter, thank you for the love and for prayers, and for always believing in me. I cannot thank you enough, and no words can explain how grateful I am (*Ayoo)* for your guidance. To my *Akoo*, thank you for the stories and clarification about Borana culture. I will forever cherish those moments. To my late brothers, Mohamud Mohamed Oshow and Hassan Duba Jarso –To him we belong and to him we shall return. May Allah grant you Jannatul Firdous Insha'Allah. To my elder brother Adan Oshow, my sisters Abdia Oshow, Faria Oshow and Wato Duba, thank you. To my nieces and nephews Latifa, Yasmin, Abdul, Harith, Roba, Somo, Hakim, Rukia and Mohammud you bring

so much to my life. To my friends and fellow students; Zainab Galma , Benjamin Maiangwa, Mathias Ateng, Peter Genger, Stephaney Patrick and Evelyn Mayanga. Thank you. I am indebted to you for your insight, support, and encouragement. I cannot thank you all enough.

Acronyms

APSA: African Union Peace and Security Architecture

PACS: Peace and conflict studies

UN: United Nations

AU: African Union

OAU: Organization of African Union

NEPAD: New Partnership for Africa's Development

POW: Panel of the Wise

PSC: Peace and Security Council

NFD: Northern Frontier Districts

HODI: The Horn of Development Initiative

KNUT: Kenya National Union of Teachers

REGABU: Rendille, Gabra and Burji (ethnic coalition)

SACCO: Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations

KBC: Kenya Broadcasting Corporation

NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations.

INGOs – International Non-Governmental Organizations

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

IJS: Indigenous Justice System

AJS: Alternative justice system.

IGS: Indigenous Governance System

FJS: Formal Justice System

PACIDA: Pastoral Community Initiative and Development Assistance

NAWIRI: Network for Adolescents and Women Inclusion in Reproductive Health Initiatives

NCIC: National Cohesion and Integration Commission

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

UNDP: United Nations Development Programs.

Glossary of Local Terms

Aada - *Aada* - legal application of judicial system.

Aada- culture/custom, tradition, it may broadly mean the totality of values and way of life.

Aada-Seera Borana – Custom and laws of Borana.

Aada Borana- Borana way of life, tradition, custom that is closely bound with *seera*

Aada Dira- Urban culture

Aada Sikaala- Culture of the Government

Abba: legitimate father of a child, owner of something

Abba Gada- Father of Gada. Gada leader, the head of the ruling Luba class.

Abba Seera- (the leader of the laws). The oldest-living Abba Gada.

Adula–Gada ruling Council, in one Gada class there are six Adula including the Abba Gada himself according to Borana system.

Arga- D'ageetti- literally means who has seen and heard. It refers to a person who is an expert in oral history of the Borana.

Baga is a word expressing anger meaning 'dare.'

Borana- the people and the area

Buusa-Gonofa- Borana traditional social security system usually between clan members for economic and other contingencies to redress or compensations.

Dabballe- Name of the first grade in Gada grade.

D’aala: Widow Inheritance.

Doori – raaba gugurda. Senior raaba.

Gamme- didiqoo: Second Gada grade (8-16).

Gamme- gugurddo: Third Gada grade (16-24).

Gada - A period of eight-year rule. 46-54 years old. The central grade of the gada system, the grade of ritual and political responsibilities.

Gada – The Boran class generational system and the social system.

Gada- Indigenous socio-cultural institution of Oromo in general and Borana in particular.

Gadammojji- the last gada grade, senior elders with special ritual status. They perform a special rite of passage that enables them to retire from political and economic activities.

Gooro Godaana – ritual journey of the Gada leaders.

Gosa: clan, lineage.

Goona: One of the two exogamous moieties into which the entire Boran tribe is divided. The other is Sabbo.

Gumi Gaayo: Pan-Borana assembly.

Hariyya: Age-set.

Hayyu: Gada councilor, knowledgeable person elected to lead each clan for a term of 8 years.

Hayyu- Garba: Gada Councilor

Hayyu-Meed’icha: Gada Councilor of a clan in power that is represented from class

Heer: Heer is a Somali word meaning customary laws of justice system of conflict resolution. It is a Somali model of conflict resolution accepted by all.

Jaalaba- Clan leader, an age-set speaker or a person elected by lineage groups to enforce decisions.

Jaarsa biyya – Community leader who plays the role of mediator to resolve conflicts.

Jaarsa- Elder man.

Jaarsa Argaa-d'ageeti: Knowledgeable Elders/ Oral historians.

Jila: Festival/ceremonies.

Kuusa- Fourth grade in Gada system.

Luba: Gada generation class.

Makkala: - Assistant of Gada leaders or messengers.

Morans: - Rendille warriors.

Muuda – To anoint. To smear butter. The act is associated with blessing in a ritual ceremony.

Naga- Peace, harmony

Nagaa Borana- peace of Borana.

Namumma – Humanity.

Qaallu: - Spiritual leader, ritual expert in spiritual (worships). The hereditary religious leaders of the Boran. They are also known as *laddu*.

Qae: Hereditary leader of a lineage of a clan. He decides on behalf of his clan. He is senior to Jaalaba.

Qae Miilo: Lineage level court.

Qae Gosa: Clan level court.

Raaba didiqa: Fifth Gada grade. Junior *raaba*. They are prospective Gada leaders.

Raaba gugurda: Sixth Gada grade. Senior *raaba* or *doori*.

Sabbo: One of the two exogamous moieties into which the entire Boran tribe is divided.

Sabbo –Goona: Two subdivisions (moieties) of Boran. Everybody. The whole Borana tribe.

Saala-fokko: Respect (norms).

Seera Daawwe*:* Laws of Daawwe. The area beyond the imaginary line that bounds Boranland proper to the south and west. Boran living in Seera Daawwe are not considered pure Boran in that they do not follow the aada properly instead they follow the laws of Daawwe.

Seera Waaqa: Laws of God.

Seera Nama: Laws of man.

Shahidi (Swahili): Witness.

Sirkaala: Government.

Swali: *Swali* is a Swahili word meaning ‘question’.

Waaqa: The Almighty God

Waaqefata: Followers of Oromo traditional Indigenous religion.

Waaso: - Waaso is a regional name for Isiolo district.

Yaa’a: Ritual village of the Gada leaders or the Qaallu.

Yuuba- Retired *Gada* elder from active leadership. The sixth and penultimate grade in the Gada system. When the class is in power, they hand over authority to the incoming Raaba.

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Introduction

Background of the Study and Statement of the Problem

Contemporary Africa is fraught with seemingly intractable ethnic conflicts. Historically, these conflicts have been accentuated and weaponized by colonial and postcolonial authorities for their own vested interests during what appears to be an inescapable cesspool of intra and inter-ethnic conflicts (Bates, 2019). There is a collective yearning for peace among traditional communities across the African continent. This is evident through their endeavors to break free from the colonial trap entangled in colonial legacies, and their revival of time-honored traditional ways of fostering relationships across ethnic boundaries and resolving issues to promote peace (Murithi, 2006).

As rightly pointed out by Horowitz (1985, p. 150), "building colonial administration on a substructure of ethnic government helped ensure that disparities would be viewed through the lens of ethnicity," thereby fostering a postcolonial environment rife with ethnic tensions among the Indigenous populations. The traditional cultural ethos and the identities of indigenous peoples were either modified or distorted to align with the imperialists' strategy of subjugating the locals, all in the pursuit of what the colonialists claimed was a civilizing mission. Lahai, et al., (2016) effectively captures the predicament in which we currently find ourselves when he wrote:

> [The is] festering attempts by competing schools of thoughts to understand issues of … governance and peacebuilding within…theoretical boundaries—amid epistemological possibilities in proffering a lasting solution—have led to instances where the less known methods of peace activism have been relegated to the backburner (p.13).

However, they bemoaned that these epistemologies, which have mostly originated from a Eurocentric theoretical framework, made it challenging to fully understand the realities of non-

Western communities. As a proposed solution, they suggested adopting an African alternative to shape the future of the continent, rather than solely rely on essentialist theoretical frameworks (ibid). Modern Kenya is made up of forty-three different ethnic groups. Most of its population is young and consists of 75.1 percent of its total population of forty-seven million. Also, the country consists of multiple religious faiths, which starting with the largest to the smallest are, namely, Protestants; Catholics; Evangelical Churches; Muslims; African Churches, Traditionalists; Atheists; Hindus; Orthodox; and other Christian Faiths. (The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019).

The multiplicity of ethnic identities and faiths underline the fact that conflicts, with which Kenya is confronted today, differ in their nature, form, dynamics, and intensity, as compared with what its traditional societies dealt with during the pre-colonial period. For example, religious militancy, especially from guest religions, proliferation of small arms, unprecedented levels of gender-based violence, reoccurring incidents of ethnic violence, poverty, weak security, among other problems are besetting the country (Kigumba, 2011). Terrorists' incidents have progressively increased since Kenya sent its troops to fight Al Shabaab in an operation code-named Operation Linda Nchi in 2011. Most of the ethnic violence that the country is experiencing is mostly in the Northern Frontier District (NFD) with violent incidents perpetrated by Islamicist groups concentrated in the north-eastern region of the country, and Southeast and Nairobi. The conflicts are complex, layered and sometimes overlapping, calling for a more robust mechanism of peace processes and conflict resolution (Onyango, 2021). This study explores intra and inter-ethnic conflicts among the Borana and with the ethnic groups in the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya. NFD, Kenya, has experienced ethnic violence since the colonial period. Despite interventions by both the state and Non-government Organizations

(NGO), internecine violence has not stopped. Conflict is as old as relations between and among human beings, and that is because people are not perfect. An idiom by Alexander Bishop, “to err is human and to forgive is divine,” offers the reason humans’ relationships are warped. It is because humans are fallible. While scholars often credit Galtung for pioneering peace-making theory, it is evident that the theory and its practice predates his contributions.

Intervention to manage conflicts did not however begin during the colonial period. Prior to the colonial period, traditional communities had mechanisms of resolving conflicts and building peace. With its advent, the colonial and postcolonial state introduced their own arsenal of peacemaking tools. Alongside the colonial and post-colonial states, were NGOs which grew exponentially during the postcolonial period as significant peace brokers through development efforts, which helped address underlying causes of conflict and at times led in efforts to resolve conflicts at various levels of the community, starting with local communities. There is a burgeoning body of research where the state is weak and unable to provide for local communities (Elfversson, 2016, p. 171). Scholars who study communal conflict have extensively written about "how the central state, through omission or commission, fails to provide for local communities" Elfversson, 2016, p. 171). The state, usually for predatory reasons, takes sides in conflicts (Abdulrahman & Tar, 2008). These studies further suggest that in situations where non-state actors anchor their peace strategies and practices on an accurate comprehension of the local context and situated knowledge, their success is better than that of state-led conflict-resolution processes (Menkhaus, 2008; Abbink, 2000; Boege et al., 2008).

That said, some documented participation by non-state actors includes churches, mostly international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in an explosive growth of NGOs, what Kumar (2007) termed the "NGOization" of public space. NGOs tended to be more resourced and

sometimes more involved with local communities than the state, especially historically. Ossewaarde et al. (2008), contend that international NGOs, taken collectively, distributed more money than the UN. According to Rhouma (2018), World Vision International spent US$180 million during 1993-1994, after the end of the conflict in Mozambique, while the UN, through the UNDP five-year plan, budgeted US$60 million for the same country. The increasing growth of NGOs can be attributed to the vibrant spirit of liberalism, which is skeptical of the state's role in humanitarian efforts. Classical liberalism states that the only good government can do in this situation is to create conditions that empower people to engage in humanitarian efforts (Pearce, 2000).

This thesis explores intra and inter-ethnic conflicts among the Borana and with the ethnic groups in the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya. The research further examines the root causes of conflict, advocating for the establishment of sustainable social institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms. Ethnic conflicts present significant challenges to the stability and social cohesion of affected ethnic groups, underscoring the pressing need for effective management. Also, the study examines the restorative functions and values of the Gada peacebuilding model from the perspective of Borana elders examining how these values can be incorporated into contemporary peacebuilding models in the area. Further, it investigates the traditional peacemaking mechanisms, focusing on the Gada model a conflict resolution and peacebuilding paradigm, the Borana successfully used in precolonial times to resolve conflicts and establish peace.

The intervention mentioned above contributes to an ongoing discussion on destabilizing hegemonic liberal peace processes and conflict resolution mechanisms, spurred by the introduction of the “local turn” in peacebuilding to more transformative models. It does so

without, however, entirely displacing the hegemonic narratives. Instead, the study seeks ways of blending liberal forms of dealing with peace and conflict with Indigenous perspectives, which offer guiding principles. To achieve this objective, the study centers on indigeneity focusing on marginalized struggles, experiences, life stories, and narratives. The study poses challenging questions about the meaning of 'local ownership' of peace processes within the frameworks of liberalism and its legacies. In this context, the study scrutinizes the substance of local peace initiatives to ensure they are not merely expressions of unchanged liberal frameworks masquerading as homegrown mechanisms, while at the same time avoiding essentializing the indigeneity of peacemaking processes. Existing local peace initiatives have alerted us to the ever-present danger of appropriating forms of liberalism and perpetuating the continued marginalization of indigenous mechanisms, and hence it is important that we be careful about what 'homegrown' means. Does local ownership mean the reversal of top-down approaches as it seems to be understood? The study also examines the history of liberalism, with a focus on the impact of its legacies. It is hoped that an examination of these legacies will aid in avoiding the reproduction and redeployment of forms of neoliberal in local peace process, and conflict resolution initiatives.

With the advent of British colonialism, the Gada model faced severe compromise, leading to the alienation of the Borana people from their cultural methods of peacebuilding, both within their community and with neighboring ethnic groups. The neoliberal approaches to peacebuilding proved inadequate as they failed to align with the cultural ethos of the Borana, lacking the necessary rootedness in their heritage.

Efforts to address ethnic conflicts and promote peacebuilding by practitioners have been significant. Numerous studies have investigated theories and approaches aimed at managing

ethnic conflicts and fostering peacebuilding within African traditional societies in the post-colonial period (Chebai, 2023; Mutungi, 2013; Omeje, 2018; Osha, 2014; Oyeshile, 2020; Tesfaye, 2024). Despite these efforts, there still exists no consensus among scholars regarding the most effective peacebuilding mechanisms. Further, a pervasive gap in understanding persists, particularly concerning African traditional models of peacebuilding, such as the Gada model, which is a central focus of this study. It is widely acknowledged among scholars, that conventional, models of peacebuilding have proven ineffective in providing traditional societies with the necessary knowledge to adeptly manage their conflicts, both internal and with neighboring ethnic groups (Devine, 2016; Day, 2022; Natil, 2022; Nielsen, & Heather, 2022; Mpofu & Ndlovu, 2024; Zondi, 2015). Considering the highly dynamic social environment in which we live, the central question guiding this study is: Are there any discernible principles and practices within the Gada model that can inform the development of a blended model to address the current ethnic conflicts, particularly among the Borana, the focus of this study? This hybrid approach aims to integrate the strengths of the Gada mechanism and other African traditional models with those of neoliberal models. The goal is to effectively address conflicts and foster peace among and across the Borana ethnic group.

Several scholars have proposed various theories and solutions to the intractable challenge of managing intra and inter-ethnic conflicts within the Borana community, striving to establish a lasting architecture of positive peace (Mwangi, 2008; Njoka, 2011; Czuba, 2017; Boru, 2016; 2017; Mutuku, 2017; Shidane, 2020). While their studies have been useful in understanding ethnic root causes of conflict, they have not come up with models that have effectively addressed weaponized ethnic conflicts. These conflicts, rooted in the British colonial period, have been weaponized over time, prompting an urgent search of a model that synthesizes elements from

diverse African traditions and contemporary frameworks than can be effectively utilized by the Borana people, and by extension other African ethnic groups to resolve conflict and establish sustainable peace (Eaton, 2019).

My work aims at contributing to this ongoing debate by integrating traditional amalgams with modern models of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It posits that the Gada indigenous model has some precepts and practices that could be used to inform or be integrated into contemporary models to resolve conflicts and build peace among the Borana people.

Justification and Contributions of the Project

A few studies have been done on the Borana people and the Gada system (Legesse, 1973; Bassi, 2005, 1994; Dewo, 2007; Shongolo, 1994; Leus, 2006). What is common among all these studies is that they are anthropological in nature, focusing on rituals and some administrative and judicial aspects of the Gada systems. There are three theories to the judicial system that scholars have broadly advocated when it comes to Indigenous societies.

First, Decentralization Theory (Ribot, 2008); also made popular by such scholars as Melton (2004) and Benjamin (2008) argues that where there are disputes with respect to the sharing of natural resources, Indigenous systems of conflict resolution should supplement but not replace the formal laws of governance – (Western, Neoliberal laws.) Second, the Myth of the Mirror theory (Oomen, 2005), states that the laws of the country/state must be reflective of the diversity of cultures in the state. Third, the legal Pluralism Theory (Pimentel, 2010) promotes the simultaneous application of both Indigenous laws and the formal laws on a community living in the same area. (In practice, this is what was called the dual administration model used by the British in all its colonial Africa).

It important to note that all the three theories advocate for the co-existence of the indigenous and the formal laws. My study advocates for a fourth model which is a product of a synthesis of the above three models which I call the hybrid peacebuilding model. The model is arrived at by exploring the tension between the two models, whose objectives converge and on the other hand diverge. In my exploration of the tension between the two models and the construction of the hybrid model, I will pay particular attention to the indigenous Gada model, whose principles of reconciliation, unity, social harmony, social justice, Ubuntu, reparation, restoration, all built on relationships, will help shape, guide, and inform the model.

I work on the assumption that the model is unique in that it derives principles from both the Indigenous model and the neoliberal one but being strongly guided by the Indigenous model, the model that advocates for reconciling and establishing peaceful relationship among the offender, victim, community, and the environment.

Thus, my research privileged, and was informed by indigenous methodologies, and in-depth interviews from Borana Indigenous leaders, when it came to indigenous knowledge and peacebuilding processes around the Gada system. This presents a significant perspective in the literature since most of the scholarship on the Borana is often without consideration of local history, politics, culture and processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The proposed research explores the dynamics and resilience of the Gada model and its implications for conflict transformation in modern times. The overarching goal of the research is to come up with a hybrid model for transforming conflict into peace. So far, there is relatively little to nothing written about a combination of Gada-Neoliberal models to prevent intra and interethnic conflicts and peacebuilding. This thesis thus makes an invaluable contribution to academic and policy-oriented literature on the dynamics and resilience of indigenous knowledge systems and models for

conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Thus, the information gathered from this research will add to the existing literature on African conflict analysis and peacebuilding. It will contribute to the literature on indigenous peacebuilding approaches, which is an under-researched area in Peace and Conflict Studies. The findings and recommendations will inform indigenous peacebuilding practices and assist in the mitigation of similar conflicts in other parts of the country. Also, the study makes theoretical contributions to the scholarly debates on the applicability of conflict resolution and peacebuilding models in peacebuilding processes.

Research Questions

There are three overarching questions guiding the writing of this study. 1. How was the Gada way of life applied to people's day-to-day living? 2. What were its cardinal guiding principles, precepts, and practices that informed Borana's thought patterns and behavior? 3. What was in the indigenous peacebuilding model, which made it effective in resolving conflict and in introducing peaceable ethnic co-existence?

Research Objectives

There are three objectives to this study.

The first objective is to explore the Borana-Gada indigenous conflict resolution and peacebuilding paradigm to identify theoretical and practical aspects that could help construct a model that can bring sustainable peace to Marsabit's ethnic communities. To help me explore this objective I raise the question: What theoretical models are the Borana currently engaging to build peace?

The second is to investigate ethnographies of peace and conflict to better understand the dynamics of the conflict. How are conflict and peace concepts currently understood among the

Borana people? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these models? The third, is to discuss the implications of ethnographies of peace and conflict for grassroots peacebuilding approaches. Central to this exploration is the question about the effectiveness of each one of these ethnographies.

Significance of the Study and Contributions

The significance of this study is at various levels: academia, policymaking, and community. The study makes five contributions listed here not necessarily in the order of their importance. First, the study contributes to government policy formulation and planning by providing evidence-opportunities, enhancing's that can inform policy decisions and evaluate their outcomes, identifying emerging issues and trends that may require policy attention or intervention, developing innovative solutions and approaches that can address policy challenges or opportunities, enhancing the capacity and skills of policy makers and practitioners to use research effectively and critically, and fostering dialogue and collaboration among different stakeholders, including researchers, policy makers, civil society, and the public playing a vital role in enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and legitimacy of government policies and plans. Second, it will add to the extant literature on conflict and peacebuilding by identifying new or emerging sources, dynamics, or consequences of conflict and violence, as well as potential solutions or interventions to prevent or resolve them, testing, refining, or challenging existing theories, frameworks, or assumptions about the causes, patterns, or effects of conflict and peacebuilding, using empirical evidence or logical arguments, developing new or improved methods, tools, or indicators for measuring, analyzing, or evaluating conflict and peacebuilding processes, outcomes, or impacts, providing new or alternative perspectives, insights, or recommendations on conflict and peacebuilding issues, based on different disciplines, paradigms,

or contexts, synthesizing, comparing, or integrating existing literature on conflict and peacebuilding, highlighting gaps, inconsistencies, or controversies, and suggesting directions for future research and enhance the understanding, awareness, and capacity of scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders to address the complex and multifaceted challenges of building sustainable peace in a diverse and changing world.

Third, the study will inform indigenous peacebuilding practices and help in conflict mitigation of similar conflicts in other parts of the country. Indigenous peacebuilding practices are rooted in the local culture, values, and traditions of the communities involved in the conflict. They often involve dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, and restorative justice. Research can help to document, analyze, and evaluate these practices, as well as to identify their strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Research can also help to disseminate and share these practices with other stakeholders, such as policymakers, civil society organizations, and academics, who can learn from them and support them. By doing so, research can contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable peacebuilding strategies that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people affected by conflict.

Fourth, this study aims to contribute to the literature on alternative peacebuilding approaches by exploring how local actors in conflict-affected contexts use their indigenous and contemporary peacebuilding mechanisms as a means of fostering dialogue, healing, and sustainable peace. The study will contribute to highlighting how different indigenous peacebuilding traditions has been used to challenge dominant narratives of violence, create spaces for participation and inclusion, and promote positive relationships among diverse groups and analyze the opportunities and challenges those local peacebuilders when using traditional peacebuilding mechanisms.

By highlighting the voices and perspectives of local actors, the study hopes to enrich the understanding of alternative peacebuilding and contemporary peacebuilding approaches and their potential to foster more sustainable and inclusive peace processes.

Finally, the study aims to make theoretical contributions to the scholarly debate on the applicability of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes in different contexts. It will do so by examining how several factors, such as the nature of the conflict, the role of external actors, the participation of local stakeholders, and the alignment of interests and values, affect the outcomes and sustainability of these processes. The study will also explore how different approaches and methods of conflict resolution and peacebuilding can be adapted and tailored to suit the specific needs and challenges of each situation. By doing so, the study will provide insights and recommendations for practitioners and policymakers who seek to design and implement effective and context-sensitive interventions in conflict-affected areas.

Organization of Chapters

The thesis consists of six chapters, and they are organized in the following way. The first is the Introduction that includes the research background as well as theorizing the project background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study and limitations of the study. The following is Chapter 1: The Institutional, Social and Historical Background of the Study of the Borana. Chapter 2: The Precolonial Social Biography and Worldviews of the Borana chapter provides details about the background of the study area such as physical settings including topographic, location, social economic activities and means of livelihood. Chapter 3: Literature Review focuses on conceptual or theoretical framework, and the review of related literatures. Chapter 4: Methodology, Methods, and Research methodology, method of data collections, sampling

method, method of data analysis and ethical consideration. Chapters 5 and 6 provide the key findings of the thesis and Chapter 7, the overall summary of the thesis and conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter One

The Institutional, Social and Historical Background of the Study of the Borana

Introduction

One of the key motivations for the revival of traditional African models of conflict resolution is decolonization, which Smith (2020) contends does not simply involve the transfer of political power, but requires a commitment to a total societal, cultural, and psychological transformation. This chapter briefly reviews the precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial history of the Borana people, but primarily focuses on their social and cultural organization and religious beliefs to understand how their traditional conflict resolution mechanism persists over time.

This chapter examines the role played by elders (the linchpins of African Cultures) in African communities. Additionally, it explores the significance of land and ethnicity in the African context. The chapter further investigates the intersecting of identity with ecosystems and land. It then discusses how British colonialism detrimentally impacted African communities by dismantling the fundamental cultural cornerstone, namely traditional leaders. It then shifts to briefly investigate the life of the Borana before their migration to the Northern Frontier District (NFD), their forced transformation into pastoralists, and concluding with an exploration of their settlement in the Northern District and their interactions with other 'pastoralist' groups within the colonial framework. Finally, the chapter provides a broader background to the study of the Borana and their peacebuilding processes.

Understanding who the Borana are requires tracing their history and understanding their traditional system. One may ask what a traditional system connotes. Tradition is one of the challenging terms or concepts to define in various disciplines of social science. Accordingly,

many social scientists accept the anthropological definition of tradition as being a “Folk way of life or social practice which is viewed as being threatened by modernity but existed with hybridity or certain form changes” (Phillips & Schochlot, 2004). Boege (2011) defines the traditional system as,” traditional systems originate from the past culture or values prior to colonialism or pre- contact history of local communities but have gone through changes persistently over time due to interactions with outsiders….” (p. 432).

The advent of colonialism in Africa revealed the European understanding of African traditions as backward, inferior, and devoid of history. This misapprehension of the facts necessitates the investigation of Borana traditional ways of life and conflict resolution mechanisms from a broader lens that considers colonialism’s impact on Africa and the influence of Eurocentric ideologies.

Prior to the British colonial period, African people's rich culture, experience, and interactions with nature and achievements were recorded for generations in sculptures and caves, in their oral history, as well as in written language in the western and southern parts of Africa (Oyeniyi, 2021). In contrast, the historical period of the earliest Africans' contact with European empires was marked by the dislocation of African identity, knowledge, and values, began during the cross-Atlantic slave trade after the conquest of the Americas by Western imperial powers. Much of the European documentation does not go far beyond the early sixteenth century (Reid, 2011). This false view of Africans as people without a history before European and Arab contact resulted in the wholesale devaluing of African culture. The paradox is that European travelers, for successive centuries, utilized the oral traditions of African peoples as their primary source in writing about the land and the societies they encountered (Oyeniyi, 2021).

Some might question the reasoning behind the study of African precolonial and colonial history, especially in modern times, but this task is pivotal for developing an accurate understanding of the Borana worldview, particularly for recognizing the meaning of conflict and its resolutions. Struggling over the same question, Falola (2000) identified two reasons to study precolonial history and cultures, stating:

> In the case of Africa today, the study of precolonial cultures serves two related needs. First, colonialism does not manifest itself in the same way everywhere as an insular system, but instead interacts with already existing social systems to ensure its rule. Colonial domination is undertaken and maintained both through brute force and existing hierarchies and social relations and codes. A history of African cultures then clarifies the basis by which colonial regimes are established as the complex interaction between Western and African social systems. Second, since African cultures are today (as they have always been) heterogeneous and evolving, such history allows us to understand the complex mix of urban, rural, Western, "modern," and hybrid experiences, values, identities, relations, and institutions that characterize contemporary African societies (pp. 3-4).

To appreciate the thought-patterns of formerly colonized peoples, then, it makes sense that we should define culture. As many scholars have pointed out, culture is a concept that is difficult to define. Cognizant of the elusiveness of the definition of culture, the sociologist Rodney Stark (1992) aptly observed that "culture is the complex pattern of living that humans have developed and passed on from one generation to the next" (p. 40). Thus, Stark (1992) used the concept of culture to identify people according to what they believe, what they do, what they know, and how they act. In short, everything that humans learn is culture.

According to the anthropologists Strauss and Strauss (1991), "cultures are designs for living formed through historical process," and they are mechanisms through which individuals adapt to social life (cited in Billington et al., 1991, p. 4). Culture has three components. First, it is a social construct that is created out of imagination by communities who live by it. Second, culture is not neutral, it is gendered, context-specific, and biased; and third, it is not static, but

dynamic and constantly changing. Thus, culture provides connection, meaning, and value based on a given society's cultural and social worldview and knowledge systems (Mazzocchi, 2020).

As previously noted, knowledge of the traditional Gada worldview is vital for understanding the social lives of the Borana because it forms the basis of their interpretation of the world, particularly in terms of how they practice a culture of peace. By extension, learning about the Gada tradition reveals a great deal about how Borana culture was damaged and distorted during colonization and in the post-colonial period.

Research Context: Historicizing the Role of Traditional Leaders, Land, and Ethnicity. Colonial Precedents

Many African nations located in the southern part of the Sahara region are inhabited by various ethnic groups coexisting within borders that were arbitrarily established by the colonizers (Oduntan, 2015). Even after gaining independence from European powers, many post-colonial nations encountered recurrent ethnic-based conflicts, resulting in political turbulence, civil unrest, and large-scale atrocities, including genocide (Heerten & Moses, 2017).

The British colonization of Kenya is an example of this process. The British built and refined the colonial model in Ireland before exporting it Kenya and around the world (Byrne, et al., 2018; Rahman, et al., 2017). Britain declared Kenya its colony on July 23, 1920, after having ruled it as part of the British East Africa Protectorate from 1895. The process of British colonization in Kenya was a difficult and prolonged endeavor, as they faced significant opposition from the Nandi in the East African Highlands, and the Maasai, who prevented them from penetrating further inland during much of the 1890s. Despite this resistance, the British were ultimately able to subjugate most of the Kenyan ethnic groups by 1906, with the assistance of other ethnic groups (Gathogo, 2020). Similarly, the Kikuyus resisted British rule, culminating

in the Mau Mau wars in the 1950s. However, many of these groups were already weakened by a range of factors, such as diseases, famine, internal and inter-ethnic conflicts, as Parsons (2010) noted:

> The resulting famines [which] contributed to the devastatingly high mortality rates that afflicted the highlands at the end of the nineteenth century…. Hunger and epidemic diseases weakened East Africans' struggles to cope with the British invasion. Once again smallpox played a central role in western empire building. Spread by the caravans along with Cholera, pneumonia, and other deadly pathogens, it ravaged communities whose relative isolation in the Highlands made them dangerously vulnerable to contagious old-world diseases. Rinderpest, a highly virulent cattle disease originating in South Asia, and bovine pleuropneumonia (lung sicknesses) made matters even worse by wiping out herds that were both a food source and a measure of wealth (p. 213).

Parsons (2010) contends that between 30 percent and 50 percent of the population in the central and northern Highlands died due to human and biological disasters. When the British colonized Kenya, they began to erode and alter traditional African customs and cultures, often citing the need to "civilize" the local population, along with the assistance of missionaries[1] from their home countries.

Parson (2010) further noted that:

> Seeking to lend credence to their promise to civilize the "primitive races" of Africa, imperial speculators and their mission allies portrayed subject peoples as implicitly and often irredeemably backward. Most missionaries genuinely believed that the imperial wars of conquest were liberating, but the popular theories of social Darwinism and pseudoscientific racism, which depicted non westerners as biologically inferior, gave his seemingly benevolent imperial project and inherently sinister reality (pp. 289 -350)

Contrary to what the colonists said was the primary goal of their imperialist reach, the civilizing mission proved to be a nonbenevolent endeavor. As Cesaire (1972,) eloquently observed,

[1] Although missionaries accepted to link their gospel work with ethnic groups – "If a man (person) will not work , [they] shall not eat – to the colonial coercive and abusive labour apparatus, they sometimes opposed the state labour laws and cultural values the state tried to impose on African populations, But in the main missionaries accepted to be used as agents of the state that assisted in destroying African cultural values and pushed the latter into the settler economic system.

"colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism." (p. 35). Cesaire claimed that because colonialism had demonic dynamic traits such as brutality, hostility, and a propensity to dehumanize and destructively intrude into other people's life, it decimated the colonizer.

By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, “it was no longer possible to be African and civilized within the British Empire. Africans became a people without a history, people who lived in timeless and unchanging backward “tribal” societies” (Wamagatta, 2016, p. 1). The British exhibited self-righteousness as they sought to undermine African culture and its leadership, which they deemed as anachronistic and dictatorial (Wamagatta, 2016, p. 1). Political dominance often paves the way for economic oppression, permeating every aspect of a nation's life. However, after the British colonized the Kenyan people, they faced the immediate challenge of determining the fate of pre-colonial administrative structures and grappled with the complex task of governing a population with whom they had limited understanding of their language, customs, and cultural values.

Moreover, they encountered significant difficulties in terms of financial resources and the availability of personnel who shared their imperialistic ideologies, as their numbers were relatively small and lacking in experience (Richen, 2009, p. 36). However, the lack of adequate material resources left little room for resistance against the state's onslaught of Indigenous communities. Controlled access to land and job opportunities by the colonial powers further weakened the resolve of Indigenous populations to successfully stand up against such oppression. Additionally, chiefs were relegated to lower statuses, further diminishing the Indigenous communities’ ability to invest in traditional collective action. This deliberate strategy

of divide and rule employed by British colonialists facilitated the development of separate structures within and between ethnic groups, nurturing a sense of competition for material incentives and self-enrichment among ethnic elites (Richen, 2009).

Traditional leaders and Indirect Rule

Contrary to Engebert's (2000, p. 118) view that colonialists managed to "import" administrative political institutions, and intentionally chose not to rely on pre-colonial traditional leadership rather than eradicating African traditional administrative systems, they incorporated them into their colonial organogram structures as subordinates to their imperial architecture, mainly to exert their own dominance over the African population (p. 118). As well, the British incorporated traditional leadership structures as an attempt at legitimatizing their colonial hegemony, (Englebert, 2000).

When interviewed about what happened with traditional, customary leadership at the advent of colonialists, elder Duba Jarso said:

> When the British wrested power out of the hands of Africans, they did not completely do away with the leadership structures. Instead, they cherry-picked from it what they liked, especially those elements of tradition and customs that helped them to control Africans and built them into their own structures of colonial dominance. Most of those chiefs became their puppets. Basically, precolonial traditional structures were coopted and changed to suit imperialists in governing our people.

Similarly, R. O**.** Collins and J. R. Burns (2014, p. 298) observed that,

> The colonial bureaucracies soon came to be dependent on Africans with only a rudimentary Western education to act as interpreters, policemen, clerks, and typists and to do a variety of other menial jobs in the colonial service. These positions were poorly paid and offered few opportunities for advancement…. This cadre of minor civil servants was necessary to make the colonial administration function, but they could not be and were never considered as political leaders. With limited resources and few European political and administrative officials, all the colonial governments were therefore forced to rely on the traditional or accepted African leaders to carry out colonial policy and practice.

Everson N. Wamagetta more poignantly expressed the reasons chiefs were *sine quo non* to the running of the colonial state when he observed that,

> Colonial rule was an expensive undertaking, and administrative officials were few and widely scattered for effective administration at the local level. The protectorate could also not afford to employ and maintain an administration fully stuffed by white administrators from top to bottom. Moreover, many of the early administrators knew little of their subjects' culture. That is why chiefs proved indispensable since they made colonial rule cheaper as they were poorly remunerated functionaries (Wamagetta, 2016, p. 1).

The British colonialists used every means, by hook or by crook, to enlist the collaboration of traditional and newly trained African functionaries during the process of land annexation, and colonial times, as again R. O. Collins and J. M. Burns (2014) brilliantly stated:

> During and after the conquest, the administration sought the cooperation of the existing African political leaders using flattery, bribery, rewards, or threats. When the collaboration of a traditional leader was not forthcoming, a pliant nonentity was often given a position of authority and expected to execute the wishes of his colonial overseer (pp. 298-300).

In practice, this type of governance is what came to be known as British indirect colonial rule,[2] whereby traditional chiefs were responsible for running the affairs of their people, but under imperial state direction. As well, the colonial state heavily relied on Indigenous elites to manage local affairs, either coopting them or coercing their participation in the system. By preserving pre-colonial systems, the British introduced the practice of divide and rule (Clapham, 1985) to prevent ethnic groups from organizing collective resistance. This tactic aimed to hinder the formation of unified opposition across ethnic divisions, transforming chiefs into agents of colonial rule (Collins & Burns, 2014, pp. 298-300).

The colonialists effectively established a network of Indigenous intermediaries "who combined the useful authority derived from some customary title to office with the literate skills and

[2] The intellectual originator of the expression Indirect rule was Lord Lugard who popularized the concept in his book entitled. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*

exposure to basic administrative training that would make them serviceable auxiliaries of the would-be Weberian State"[3] (Young, 1994, p. 150). In places such as Northern Nigeria, Uganda, apartheid South Africa, and colonial Zimbabwe, to name a few examples, British colonists spectacularly succeeded in establishing collaborative relationships with local Indigenous leadership. Thus, the concept of indirect rule in colonial Africa operated in a manner that led to conflicting practices. While the colonial state allowed traditional leaders to retain leadership positions within their communities, using customary laws, it simultaneously eroded traditional customary laws, political systems, and governance structures to align with its own interests. Collins and Burns (2014) aptly highlighted these paradoxical practices when they pointed out:

> First, the system confirmed traditional rulers in their positions of leadership, but the British advisors demanded that the chiefs undertake a host of new and unpopular responsibilities, including raising soldiers for colonial service, collecting new taxes, and providing laborers for public works projects or for white-owned farms…Second, indirect rule aspired to govern Africans through their own laws in native courts, but that "customary law" was inevitably transformed by the demands and presence of the colonial administration (pp. 298-300).

Under the new structure, the chief's role was crucial in legitimizing the colonial governance strategy. Consequently, the British colonizers appointed chiefs to societies that lacked them, such as the Kikuyu, Maasai, and the Borana. Commenting on the creation of the

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[3] The Abstract of the *Oxford Handbook of Max Weber* provides a useful definition of a Weberian State. It states that "Weber defines the state as a political institution that claims successfully on the monopoly of violence." Further, the Abstract explains how this definition was arrived at, and asserts that the "definition is a result of Weber's historical studies revealing the monopoly as the decisive criterion, which distinguishes the modern occidental state from all other historical forms of domination (Anter, Andreas, 'The Modern State and Its Monopoly on Violence', in Edith Hanke, Lawrence Scaff, and Sam Whimster (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Max Weber*, Oxford Handbooks (2020; online edn, Oxford Academic, 11 Feb. 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190679545.013.13, accessed 1 July 2023). Similarly, Munro observed that Weber, "(i)n his lecture "Politics as a Vocation" (1918), the German sociologist Max Weber defined the state as a 'human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.' Munro, A. (2013, March 6). state monopoly on violence. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/state-monopoly-on-violence
Anter, Andreas, 'The Modern State and Its Monopoly on Violence', in Edith Hanke, Lawrence Scaff, and Sam Whimster (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Max Weber*, Oxford Handbooks (2020; online edn, Oxford Academic, 11 Feb. 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190679545.013.13, accessed 1 July 2023.

system of chiefs where they previously did not exist, and what resulted from that practice Robert L. Tignor (1971, p. 340) stated,

> In these communities the creation of chiefs where they had none before caused a decisive break with pre-colonial past. It is easier to attribute the main political characteristics of these colonial societies to the colonial system itself than to precolonial inheritance. Also, political corruption and intense competition for office will be seen to be direct consequence of colonial rule.

While there was a stark parallel between colonial and postcolonial traditions and cultural practices of chiefs that were imposed in chief less African communities, and significant discontinuity with pre-colonial Africa, the same cannot be said of those societies that had chiefs before the advent of European colonialists. Precolonial communities with chiefs were relatively stable and aboded by their culture which the colonialists left relatively untouched. As Tignor (1971) eloquently said,

> In the chiefly or hierarchical societies of Africa, on the other hand, political discontinuities between the precolonial and colonial periods are often not so dramatic since precolonial government by chiefs was retained rather than supplanted. All the same though, colonialism by and large disrupted the precolonial African institutions (p.342).

The chiefs, who were once responsible for preserving cultural traditions, resolving conflicts, and promoting peace within their community, were utilized by the British to recruit wage labor for settler Europeans, and propagate a culture that was inimical to their own people. This led to the chiefs being answerable to District Commissioners (DCs) instead of their own communities. The Native Authority Ordinance introduced in 1902, granted chiefs complete authority as representatives of DCs when dealing with fellow Africans. As a result of performing their duties in this capacity, the chiefs became unpopular among their people.

This feeling was poignantly expressed by elder W. Galma (Personal Communication, December 1, 2022) when he commented:

> Most of our African chiefs abandoned our people and joined the colonial government who provided them with monetary incentives. They turned against their own people, customs, and traditions in favor of the white people's culture which suppressed us. Besides, they collected taxes on behalf of the government and forced us to perform public works, and to work for white farmers. There was tremendous hatred towards chiefs by our people.

Along the same vein Wamagatta made a notable observation about the Chiefs and their unfavorable actions within their own communities when he observed,

> [The chiefs] had to report crime, apprehend offenders, build roads and bridges, recruit labor for the white settlers and for communal projects, control warriors, collect taxes, preside over their local tribunals, keep law and order, and implement government directives….The chief was responsible for all lawlessness, and misbehavior of which his people may be guilty, that on him will rest the onus of keeping the peace of his district, of collecting fines inflicted by government , and on occasions of even arresting criminals. (Wamagatta, 2008, pp. 295-314).

Basically, the introduction of the colonial state transformed traditional structures in defective ways that served the interests of the state, as Christiaan Keulder (2010, p. 150) asserted

> Many traditional leaders effectively transformed themselves from custodians of their people into custodians of the colonial order. This not only eroded their support base, but also overemphasized their coercive functions. Frequent interventions by the colonial authorities into matters traditional and customary, coupled by the strategy to employ customary law as a mechanism to enforce the colonial order, transformed the customary into a site of contention and struggle.

Christiaan (2010) concluded that there were two consequences resulting from Africans' support of the colonial state's interests, which could be argued to have contributed to ethnic conflicts. He asserted,

> The fact that many traditional leaders acted in the interest of the colonial order pitted them directly against other more progressive social forces that resisted that same order. This paved the way for inter-elite strife in the postcolonial order. The fact that "tribe" was used as the political base for the colonial order, and that the subsequent development of tribalism became the dominant socio-political ideology, ensured that ethnicity would remain an omnipresent ingredient of the post-colonial political order. (Christiaan, 2010: 150).

To consider chiefs as mere pawns on a Chinese chessboard, manipulated by the colonial state, would be disingenuous. Some scholars like Mamdani have portrayed traditional leaders' multifaceted relationship with colonialists in one-dimensional way where these leaders are seen as puppets of the imperial government who ruled over their people in a despotic way. Mamdani's persuasively written work leaves the reader with the belief that all traditional leaders were despots who did not oppose the colonial governments (Mamdani, 2018). There is however some compelling evidence that shows that while it is true that these traditional chiefs were colonial proxies, they in some cases, actively exercised their own agency and even exploited the corrupt colonial system to benefit themselves. Through another lens, Bonaya Guyo (Personal Communication, Interview, January 29, 2023), an elder in the Borana community contended that not all chiefs were in the service of the colonial administration. He argued that some chiefs or traditional leaders opposed the colonial administrators and stood with their communities:

> Some of our traditional chiefs refused to be used by the colonial government, although they continued to accept salary from it. They opposed the expropriation of land, the forcible removal of their people from ancestral lands, forced labor, excessive taxes, corporal punishment, and destocking. They fought strongly against the distortion of their traditions, customs, and culture, especially the methods the colonial state used to resolve communal problems, which was at best divisive.

It is clear from what the elder stated that some traditional leaders became obstinately defiant of state authorities, leading to their classification as recalcitrant and subsequent removal from their positions. Abdub Molu is among those leaders who earned the label of an "evil leader"[4] according to the DC, ultimately resulting in his removal from leadership. At one point, the DC even contemplated deporting him from Sericho to Marsabit, suggesting he be reunited with his own Borana people to prevent further disruption, a move driven by concerns about Molu and his son and nephew causing "*fitina*" in the region. DC J. Pinney opined, "I consider no progress can

[4] KNA/DC/150/2/3/18, District Commissioner Report, Isiolo, 1947-194, p. 25

be made at Sericho until Abdub Molu is removed" and he recommended that "he should be removed to Marsabit where he [would] still be amongst a branch of his own 'tribe." But [would] be too far away from this District to do further harm."[5]

Molu staunchly supported Borana tradition, distinct from the caricatured version of traditions promoted by the state. He actively advocated for Borana traditional peace mechanisms, dedicating himself to their promotion within his community. Molu did not mince words for those aligned with the state, often referring to them as "*shenzies*" or "*dubas*," (fools) sometimes even *jasus* or spies.[6]

Despite the DC's success in removing Molu from his elder position, the fear of Molu challenging his deportation in court prevented any actual deportation. The communication between the DC and solicitor confirmed this concern the DC had consulted on the matter (See Appendices A and B).

Gababa was another of those chiefs who demonstrated remarkable political astuteness, shrewdly navigating the challenges posed by the DCs. He was chief of the Garri, who were neighbors of the Borana in Marsabit. Gababa showed unwavering loyalty to his people and culture. He adamantly resisted complying with the tax demands imposed by the colonial state, leading to his and some co-elders' subsequent arrest.[7]

In response to the oppressive conditions, some of Gababa's followers chose to leave NFD, and crossed the border into Ethiopia to escape taxation.[8] Gababa also adeptly played imperial powers against each other, as illustrated by his strategic move of sending 'sensitive'

[5]Ibid., p.21.
[6] Ibid., p.19.
[7] KNA/PC/NFD/1/1/8, NFD Annual Report, 1945, p. 2.
[8] Ibid.

information to the Abyssinians about the British while serving as chief under the latter.[9] His allegiance seemed to shift opportunistically between different masters, aligning with whoever offered advantages and benefits for his people, all while preserving and upholding his cultural values.

Contrary to the state's assumption that the release of Gababa and his fellow leaders would influence the Borana who had fled to Ethiopia to come back to the NFD, this expectation did not materialize. Instead, Gababa and his comrades chose to reunite with their people in Ethiopia. Subsequently the state would for three years unsuccessfully endeavor to persuade Chief Gababa and his community to return to the NFD.[10] The evasion of state control by ethnic groups in NFD was motivated not only by the desire to escape taxation but also to safeguard their traditional practices. In his work on Indigenous communities in Asia, James Scott (2015, p. 8) highlighted a parallel sentiment that resonates with the Borana and Garri, stating that "state aversion and state prevention permeate their practices, and often, their ideology as well."

However, despite concerted protests, including some chiefs leading their people deeper into the forest to avoid state intervention, the colonial government ultimately prevailed. It not only subjugated the various ethnic groups in the NFD but also undermined their traditions. Christiaan Keulder (2010, p. 150), makes an eloquent argument about the enigmatic role chiefs played in their communities, which he contends was contrary to Mamdani's work on this subject. Keulder opines,

> Although Mamdani's argument is a compelling one with great explanatory values he, like many other scholars, is guilty of treating the often very complex relationship between traditional leaders and colonial authorities in an oversimplified manner. To start with one can, present sufficient evidence that not all traditional leaders accepted playing their part as despots. They resisted colonial authorities, but not always in open confrontation.

[9] KNA/PC/NFD/4/3/4, 5th King's African Rifles on Gurreth Degodia peace treaty of March 1923.
[10] KNA/DC/MDA/1/1, Intelligence Report No. 79/1/5/528, District Commissioner's Office, Mandera, 31 March 1928.

That said, it can be stated that some traditional leaders use the power conferred on them by the state through the Chiefs' Authority Act (1902) to exploit their own communities. For example, they utilized force on their own behalf as well as on behalf of the government, plundered communal resources – embezzled taxes they collected from their people, penalized those that defaulted from paying taxes by confiscating their livestock, robbed their own communities. Indeed, they illicitly acquired massive land for themselves from their own people. (Clough, 1978; Parsons 2012; Wamagetta, 2016), something that was antithetical to traditional mores. They also enjoyed exercise of limited personal power, and with the newly earned power they made laws and dominated local politics as colonial functionaries. As well, it was rewarding to be a chief, beyond possession of power over his people the chief was paid handsomely by his colonial master, especially those that managed to pacify their community and demonstrated obvert obedience to his colonial master. Writing on the role of chiefs in Kenya with reference to their remuneration Parsons, (2010, p. 235) asserted,

> Those who managed this difficulty balancing act reaped considerable dividends. By the interwar era, the chiefs earned annual salaries of up to eighteen hundred shillings at a time when an unskilled laborer was lucky to make two hundred shillings a year. Moreover, the chiefs' control of the native courts and tribal police created ample opportunities for graft and corruption. They could also manipulate young district officers, who rarely developed a conversational command of African languages. The chiefs further dominated the local native councils that managed tribal finances in the most politically active reserves. As virtual tyrants in their locations, with the privilege of defining custom and tradition, they could claim what was supposedly communal tribal land for themselves.

Thus, the introduction of colonialism brought significant changes to traditional societies, notably the breakdown of relationships between communities and their chiefs. This led to an increase in intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts that could not be effectively resolved using neoliberal conflict

resolution and peacebuilding methods. Furthermore, the existing indigenous mechanisms to resolve these conflicts was also found to be inadequate which further compounded the issue. However, in Kenya, as in other countries elsewhere in Africa, the role of chiefs in traditional societies has remained consistent from the colonial to the post-colonial era, where the colonial authorities treated the chiefs as civil servants who represented the state at local level. This perspective is evident in a reported address by the Nakuru County Commissioner**,** Gilbert Kitiyo, who spoke about the role of traditional chiefs in Kenya**.** Kitiyo is reported to have said the Chief and his assistant enjoyed "sweeping powers" derived from the chiefs Act. It is important that we understand where the chiefs derived their powers to fully comprehend Kitiyo's assertion which was made within the context of the Chief Authorities' Act. Colonial and postcolonial chiefs derived their authority from two sources, from their traditional communities and second, colonial and postcolonial Chiefs' Authority Acts. However, the tone of Kitiyo's address suggests that the Act was organically connected with precolonial sources of traditional leaders' authority, the people.

However, it is important to note that the chief's role has undergone some changes since the inception of colonialism. Examples of changes, while the commissioner accurately observed that the role of traditional chiefs among their respective communities included "promoting good health, security, political stability, policing, social welfare, environmental conservation, food security, and economic development campaigns at the community level," there is a subtle shift in their accountability. Rather than being solely responsible to their communities, chiefs, much like during colonial times, are accountable to the government. The *Chief's Authority Act* (Revised

Edition 2012 [1998)[11], to which the commissioner referred, may seem supportive of traditional leaders exercising the authority they held during the precolonial era.

However, a close read reveals that the government has veto power over traditional leaders on matters of traditional culture and custom. This implies that postcolonial Kenya continues to marginalize traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Additionally, the commissioner's statement that "Chiefs and assistant chiefs fulfill national government functions at the local and sub-local levels demonstrates that the chiefs owe ultimate allegiance to the state. Despite devolution, they continue to be officials of the national government" further demonstrating how the post-colonial government like its colonial predecessor, continues with the suppression of chiefs' sovereignty over cultural, traditional, and customary matters (Mwale, 2022).

One strong indication of the government's disregard for traditional leadership is the absence of a formal role for traditional leaders in their own communities within the Kenyan constitution. In a research paper on the role of traditional leaders in Kenya, Mziwoxolo Dano, former researcher at the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, disapprovingly noted that the government did not prioritize traditional leadership. He opined:

> Traditional leadership is not formally recognized in Kenya, and indigenous people continue to be marginalized[12] in elective politics. There is hope that the devolution of powers will be comprehensively addressed through constitutional and legal reforms, to give local communities power and capacity to manage their affairs according to their culture, traditions, and ways of life, as long as it not contradictory to the Bill of rights.

[11] The Act defines the roles of appointed chiefs and their assistants.

[12] In their article entitled*, Marginality: A Critical Review of the Concept. Review of Development and Change,* Varghese & Kumar, (2022, 27(1):23-41) provides us with a useful definition of the term marginalization when they state that the 'marginalized' refers to people or communities on the lower spectrum of the hierarchy in terms of economic, social, or cultural resources or power. These resources are critical for equal participation in each society whether it is regional, national, or global. They can impact the possibility of a group's chances of a dignified life with their counterparts.

While Dano (2019, p. 3) regrets that the constitution of Kenya does not have the role of traditional leaders in it, he however noted that customary law played a significant role in the country's courts. He noted:

> The only substantial role played by traditional leaders is through the recognition of customary law in Kenya. The Kenyan Judicature Act No. S 3 (2) outlines the applicability of customary law in the Kenyan Courts, clearly stating that all courts shall be guided by African customary law in civil cases in which one or more parties are affected by it, as long as such customary law is not repugnant to justice and morality or inconsistent with other written laws.

The major problem lay in the transitional period from colonial to postcolonial where the colonial government transferred power to a nation, and where elective politics was based on dominant ethnic groups, and where in some instances incoming postcolonial governments envisioned a modern state in which traditional leaders did not play a role, or were eliminated (Mashele, 2004).

The Most Poignant Instance of the Postcolonial Undermining of the Authority of Chiefs

In the final analysis though, customary courts and all the modalities utilized by chiefs in conflict resolution played an adjunct role to the constitution rather than a role of equal partners. Despite all attempts by post-colonial governments across Africa to reduce the popularity of traditional leaders among their communities, the institution of traditional leaders has not only shown itself to be resilient and relevant to traditional societies but has also proven more popular than political leadership, especially at local governance level where it has filled various capacities. Logan (2013) eloquently observed that "African traditional authorities have proved to be highly resilient, remaining just as much a part of the modern' political landscape as any legislature local council" (p.353). Logan states that her position is based on empirical research, and further enumerates the ways in which traditional leaders are lynchpins of stability. Carolyn Logan persuasively points out,

> Data collected in 19 countries reveals a tensity of support for traditional authorities that challenges those who argue that these leaders are unwanted and undemocratic. While Africans find these leaders to be flawed, they enjoy widespread popular legitimacy, and most believe that traditional authorities have an important role in local governance. The public values the role traditional authorities in managing and resolving conflict, and their leadership qualities accessibility to ordinary people. Evidence also suggests that traditional leaders play an important symbolic role as representatives of community identity, unity, continuity, and stability (Logan, 2013, p.353).

Indigenous peacemaking practices were trumped by the constitutional courts

Land, Colonization Dispossession and Conflicting Perspectives and Values

With the introduction of colonialism, and as soon as the colonialists scored victory over Africans, they started to dispossess them of their land, pushing them from fertile and well-watered vast tracks of land, which were then settled by white colonial farmers. As James Scott (2009, pp. 4-5) eloquently observed when commenting on the completion of the colonial project,

> From the (colonial) state centre… this [completion of colonization], in part was, an effort to integrate and monetize the people, lands, and resources of the periphery so that they become, to use the French term, *rentable*—auditable contributors to the gross national product and to foreign exchange. In truth, peripheral peoples had always been firmly linked economically to the lowlands and to world trade. In some cases, they appear to have provided most of the products valued in international commerce. Nevertheless, the attempt to fully incorporate them has been culturally styled as development, economic progress, literacy, and social integration. In practice, it has meant something else. The objective has been less to make them productive than to ensure that the economic activity was legible, taxable, assessable, and confiscatable or, failing that, to replace it with forms of production that were. Everywhere they could, states have obliged mobile, swidden cultivators to settle in permanent villages.

To the colonialist's land was foundational to their agenda of resource ex traction. In her interview with D. Denvir (2023) for the *Jocobin* podcast, the *Dig*, Brenna Bhandar disapprovingly observed colonialists' obsession with land possession, and the reason they had it as their most coveted of their possessions. She stingingly stated:

> The control and possession of land is central to colonial endeavors, primarily because of the main objective of colonial rule, which is resource extraction. In order to extract

> resources, as much and as efficiently as colonial authorities aimed to do, control over land is basic. We see this right in the genesis of different kinds of colonial enterprises. We can think about this from the late fifteenth century with Spanish and Portuguese colonialism, and then through all the different forms of European colonial rule, that asserting sovereign jurisdiction over foreign territories is really the beginning point of colonialism.

Cecil Rhodes the unflinching colonialist who founded the colony of Rhodesia and the diamond empire, De Beers, revealed his attitude when he famously quipped, "I prefer land to Niggers" (Calderisi, 2021, p. 332). Through the founding of Rhodesia people were displaced from the lands on which they had lived for years and even expropriated unoccupied land. For extractive colonialism, the kind that was extended over Indigenous peoples, unused land was considered economically unproductive and was seen as an asset awaiting exploitation. These views are antithetical to the traditional views of the Borani, for that matter, views of any Indigenous population that has an "ontological relationship to land" (Martello, 2008; Smith, 1999; see also Boas and Dunn, 2013; Sibanda 2017).

Besides the control colonialism had of land and material possession, it also sought to control the minds of the colonized. To complete the process of domination, colonizers recognized that they had to capture the minds of the colonized. As Steve Biko, the South African leader of the Black Consciousness Movement perceptively noted, "the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed," resulting in South African blacks being complicit in their own oppression. He chided, "the Black man has become a shell, a shadow of man bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity (Biko, 1998, p. 29)." According to L. Willson (2012, p. 3), Biko was "appalled at what he saw all around him in South Africa at the time." What is striking to us, which we can extrapolate from Biko's observation, is the process in which Africans were reduced into pliant subjects to the colonial, rule, a process that Cesaire terms *Thingification*, a view by colonialists that conceived of the colonized as animals worthy of being

treated in dehumanizing ways (Cesaire, 1950). A process that Albert Memmi (1965) posited was an impetus driving colonialists to defend their colonial system. At the end of the day, the colonized ended up believing and internalizing these demeaning stereotypes about themselves, and as a way out attempted to emulate the lifestyle of their colonial oppressors, what Fanon described as submissive imitation (Fanon, 1962, 2021; also see Said, 1979). Arguably, Biko was not merely deconstructing the derogatory language employed by the colonial apartheid state against Indigenous Africans for the purpose of degradation and exploitation. He was also shedding light on the profound impact of colonialism on the African population. Biko's words reveal his sharp awareness that colonialism not only manifests in overt socio-political structures but also penetrates the psyche of the oppressed. This infiltration leads the colonized to internalize false narratives, convincing them that they are undeserving of respect, both individually and for their country. As well, colonialism eroded confidence in their cultural, economic, judicial, religious, and traditional institutions. Biko's insights illuminate the insidious nature of colonial influence, transcending mere physical oppression to shape the very perceptions and self-worth of the colonized.

Africans were also forced to pay taxes and render free labor if they could not afford the taxes. This complete penetration of colonialism and transformation of African traditional means of production made the occupation project cheaper.

> In colonial Kenya capitalist penetration transformed precapitalist modes of production, proletarianized labor and extracted surplus. The hut and poll taxes, coupled with the Master and Servants Ordinance worked to force Africans into wage labor while unpaid communal labor played the role of a labor tax that extracted surplus from the peasant sector. Under communal labor, the precolonial reciprocal or collective labor organization was not redistributed among peasant households but instead used to make the colonizing mission cheaper. The administration did not have to pay a wage to the workers, and most communal labor projects were within walking distance of the worker's homes. In essence the more well-off Africans in Kenya could afford to pay taxes while the impoverished had to also submit to extra coercion (Okia, 2019, p. 12).

To justify the extraction of an involuntary form of labor from Africans "…communal labor was unearthed as a tribal relic, the hieroglyphs of the long-lost communal text now deciphered by the British and given back to the [African] people through coercion. *Kazi ya Umoja*, as communal labor was called; a "timeworn" colonial "invention of tradition," by the colonialists (Okia, 2019 p. 24). Forced communal labor assisted in the development of the colonial state, while the conditions of the colonized workers remained poor. It also buttressed the power of colonial chiefs as they were responsible in the enforcement of communal labor, collection of taxes and fines from those who defaulted in their payment of taxes.

The use of forced labor continued into the post-colonial period where it was described in different terms by different societies. For example,

> In Tanzania, Emma Hunter's work on voluntary labor showed how postcolonial government borrowed and reconstructed communal labor practice, known as *kazi ya kujitolea*, or "voluntary work" into notions of self-reliance as "voluntary work in nation building." [This was don] under the national program called *ujamaa* or "familyhood." Okia, 2019, p. 10).

In post-colonial Kenya communal labor was reconstructed as *Harambee* which meant "lets pull together." The nature of communal labor is still contested among colonial scholars who,

> have tended to see communal labor as a milder coercive labor practice. Regardless of the way "traditional "labor has been interpreted; the work itself hovered around the shifting boundaries of involuntary servitude. Although "traditional" labor was not defined as forced labor, there were penalties for noncompliance that could include fines, imprisonment, or even corporal punishment (Okia, 2019, p. 2).

Thus, colonialists stole the African livestock, labor, and land which are the most emotive of their possessions. The colonial state expropriated large tracks of land for commercial purposes, selling most of it to private individuals and companies. These entities, in turn, cultivated commercial crops or extracted minerals from the land. The colonial states employed various forms of land

utilization that stripped Africans of their livelihoods. In some instances, land was sold to white farmers at nominal prices. Land grants were allocated to white farmers in countries such as Southern Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, Kenya, and other African states, with the aim of cultivating cash crops like coffee, tea, tobacco, sugar cane, and sisal. Unfortunately, this shift replaced food crops that had traditionally sustained the African population.

Labour emerged as the principal commodity during the colonial era, manifesting itself in diverse forms forced, compensated, with the migrant-labor system being the most prevalent. The migrant-labor system involved sending Africans to work in various colonial states. Notably, Africans in Botswana, Congo, Mozambique, and Rhodesia were frequently sent to work in mines in South Africa (Suping, 2022).

The primary beneficiaries were the colonial states, with the well-being of African laborers overlooked. This system was brutal and violent. Collins and Burns (2018, p. 314) picturesquely portrayed the migrant-labor system, a description worth quoting in length for its invaluable insights when they said,

> The system was based on a combination of the employers' need for cheap labor and the need of African labor to earn income, especially to pay taxes. Male labor was recruited by African chiefs, private European recruiters, and parastatal recruitment agencies. The incentives employed by recruiters included promises of food, blankets, and free transport, as well as unrealistic assurances of high wages and attractive working conditions. Coercion by armed recruiters was not uncommon. In many colonies, the contract required the worker to be subject to a master-and-servant ordinance that enabled the employer to threaten penal sanctions for misbehavior or desertion. Housing and food on the mines were often inadequate; health care for the numerous diseases contracted in cramped living and working conditions and the injuries from a hazardous occupation was deficient if it existed at all. The forgotten women who remained at home paid a heavy price by having to take on greater responsibilities to work the farm with no support.

To appreciate the African perspective on land, it is important to understand their conceptualization of the interaction between people, land, nature, culture, law, social systems,

and ecosystems. This relationship can be captured in a single sentence which is that humans are an integral part of the ecosystem.

Africans define the ecosystem as a system that encompasses social systems, ecosystems, animals, trees, human beings, and laws that regulate relationships within the broader ecosystem. All elements of the ecosystem are necessary for the sustenance of life, order, and relationships.

Within this context, Africans have historically referred to land as a place that sustains life, often calling it "mother earth" from which ethical principles emanate (Sibanda, 2017). Moreover, the notion of land as mother earth carries the implication of their identity in the land. There are these autochthonic attachments and "ontological relationship to land," that the [predatory] nation states seek to 'diminish through its social, legal, and cultural practices" (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 15).

Symbolically**,** land becomes a connection to the ancestors who function as intermediaries for the living, facilitating reconciliation, healing, social justice, personal growth, and even advocating sanctions for those who violate human beings, social relations, environmental biodiversity, and indeed the entire ecosystem (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 15). Therefore, land holds both utilitarian and spiritual value for Indigenous peoples. It goes beyond being just viewed solely as a basic asset for sustainable economic development or a personal commodity to be traded, as commonly perceived within the Western worldview. The colonial attitude was recently epitomized by Jarred Kushner, former President Donald Trump's son-in-law. Talking to Harvard professor Tarek Masoud**,** Kushner on the scorched earthed Gaza strip, revealed an attitude reminiscent of that of neoliberal colonialists, which viewed land as real estate, and something to exploit. When asked what he would do with the violence unleashed by the Israelis on the Gaza strip, he callously replied: "It's a little bit of an unfortunate situation there, but from

Israel's perspective, I would do my best to move the people out and then clean it up, [by forcibly] moving" Palestinians from Rafah to Egypt, and then develop Gaza strip into "waterfront property," and "build some sweet condominiums" (Bess Levin, 2024).[13]

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and land is deep and enduring, rather than one of mere valorization. This was poignantly highlighted by Bonaya Katelo, one of the Borana elders (Interview, November 2022) when he stated:

> One significant resource that holds immense importance for our people is land. Land serves as the foundation for our livelihood in multiple ways. It is not only a place where we build our homes but also holds sacred value, akin to a church or mosque. Moreover, land provides us with sustenance, supplying food, clean air, and water for both us and our animals. Recognizing the vital role of land in sustaining life, our customary laws emphasize the necessity of granting every individual access to land. Hence, the allocation of land to every family is considered imperative, as it is deeply ingrained in our customs and traditions, ensuring the well-being and survival of our community.

Similarly, but from a different context Wilson (2003) in her research on the Anishinabek (Odawa and Ojibway) people, argued that land contributes to the mental and spiritual health of Indigenous peoples in two fundamental ways. First, Wilson describes how land serves as the geographical place where Indigenous people live, and their culture and identity are intertwined with it. Second, she emphasized that land also forms the basis for Indigenous people's self-determination, sovereignty, and socioeconomic independence. Gemedo -Dalle (2004) describes land as basic to their survival, recognizing its interconnectedness with their reliance on the environment, particularly trees, which play a crucial role in the lives of the Borana, serving as sources of medicine, food, and materials for constructing their dwellings. The Borana possess remarkable ecological knowledge, understanding the diverse ways in which they depend on

[13] https://www.vanityfair.com/news/jared-kushner-israel-gaza-waterfront-property Macroduck April 4, 2024 at 7:46 pm Off topic – bank accounting tricks during the rate rise: https://www.nber.org/papers/w32293?utm_campaign=Hutchins%20Roundup&utm_medium=email&utm_content=30122

trees, especially those found on their land. Gemedo-Dalle (2004) extensively documented the Indigenous ethnobotanical knowledge of the Borana community. Moreover, Gemedo-Dalle et al. (2005) provide a comprehensive list of plant uses based on information gathered from pastoralists in Southern Ethiopia, including the Borana people who inhabit the Northern part of Kenya close to the border of Ethiopia. Their categorization reveals the various roles of plants as forage, edible, medicinal, hygienic, or perfuming, construction materials, ritual objects, sources of shade, artifacts, gum producers, farming implements, and firewood (Gemedo-Dalle, 2004, p. 45). It comes as no surprise that the Borana hold deep reverence for the land and its constituents, recognizing them as entities deserving respect and possessing inherent social rights.

The concept of land ownership predates European colonialism, but as Sibanda (2017) states, there were stark differences in attitudes between the West and African traditional perspectives**.** While the West practiced individual ownership, Africans, including the Borana people, practiced communal ownership of land. In the Western worldview, land was considered a resource for marketization, a commodity to be traded. In contrast, for Africans, ownership of land formed a connection to spirituality, nature, group belonging, intervention, and social relations with oneself, others, and all elements of the ecosystem (Sibanda, 2017).

To Africans land is an emotive issue that forms an economic, cultural, spiritual, and political base. It forms the very foundation for their livelihood and identity. Reflecting on the importance of land, Judi W. Wakhungu, et. al., (2008, p. 1) wrote,

> Land tenure systems have complex interactions with the social, environmental, economic, legal, and political spheres, and…access to land has emotional and spiritual aspects. Often decision-makers tend to focus solely on the legal aspects, and conceptualise land primarily as an economic resource, leading to major problems related to local 'appropriateness,' legitimacy, and implementation. Due to the importance of land for livelihoods and identity in Africa, governance of land is at the heart of state-society relationship.

As Kameri-Mbote (2018), eloquently put it when she stated that "irrespective of the view one takes, one thing is clear, land remains at the center of the political, social, and economic development Kenya" (p. 34) [which can be said of any African state]. As a result of this strong feeling about land, it has remained one of the major causes of ethnic conflicts not only in colonial and postcolonial Kenya (Peters, 2004), but in all African states across the continent as well.

During the precolonial times Borana people, a sub-ethnic group of the Oromo people lived in three different regions namely, Southern Ethiopia, Somalia, and Northern Kenya, were primarily found in Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya. Before the Borana, which was the biggest and dominant subethnic group of the Oromo people in Southern Ethiopia, moved south to the Northen part of Kenya, they underwent several convulsive transformations because of three different factors. First, the Borana either coopted or incorporated the Gabra, Rendile and Ajuran and other neighboring ethnic groups across their borders (Schlee, 2018). Some of these groups eventually assimilated into the Boran ethnic groups who either used coercion or patronage to either incorporate or assimilate these groups, with these other groups voluntarily taking up the identity[14] of the Borana. The most popular persuasive method used was giving their neighbors access to grazing land and water sources. The largest among these diverse ethnic groups with which the Borana interacted was the Gabra, an ethnic group believed to have come to Southern Ethiopia from Somalia. The change that the Borana underwent because of these

[14] History is fraught with accounts of ethnic groups, individually or collectively, assuming identities of dominant ethnic groups to their advantage. Rational choice theory aptly captures this phenomenon. The theory posits that individuals ultimately make choices that benefit them. In other words, individuals make purposive and conscious choices. Rational Choice theory in a way, helps us understand why the marginalized groups reformulate their identities so they can access opportunities available to the dominant groups.

contacts was that of population expansion. Some of the Gabra people adopted the Borana language and culture with some permanently becoming part of the Borana ethnic group.
The second, but not necessarily in that chronological order came after the Borana conquered the Southern part of Ethiopia as part of the Oromo group. In the 19th century the Oromo swept throughout the Southern part of Ethiopia, conquering well-organized small ethnic groups. From these small groups, the Oromo who primarily had a cattle-based culture and engaged on small scale farming learned organized farming from these ethnic groups they conquered. This information about the Oromo of whom the Borana were part is very important in accounting for the lifestyle of the Borana after their encounter with the British when they became semi-nomadic and were forced to abandon the agricultural mode of production.

The third important event that did not however change them but is important to know is the Borana's resistance against being proselytized by both Christians and Muslims to their respective religions. As well as their nationalism. Most Oromo ethnic groups converted to Christianity in the 18th century. Most of those Oromo had lived as neighbors to the Amhara for centuries and were found in "the modern Ethiopian provinces of Shoa and Wollega". The Oromo supported the imperial Ethiopian government and would later play a huge part in taking over the whole southern part of Ethiopia where the rest of the Oromo people were located. What is important to note in their resistance is that the Borana kept their traditional beliefs intact, and their nationalism was based on their traditional canons. As Bryan McClure (1972, pp. 500-504) observed, "Here among the Oromo-speaking people who call themselves Borana is probably found the purest form of Oromo social organization, lacking much contact with other ethnic entities. Borana nationalist ideals usually [took] the form of identification with Borana itself rather than with all Oromo."

The fourth dramatic change came when the Ethiopian Empire head, Negus Menelek II, organized a predominantly Oromo army, led by his Christian Oromo Generals that captured the Southern Ethiopian region in its entirety. The conquest, in part, accounts for the migration of the Borana, together with the Gabra and Rendille ethnic groups, to the Northern Central part of Kenya. The movement of the Borana from Ethiopia was confirmed by an elder who noted that while it was true that the Borana and Gabra came to the Northen part of Kenya from the Southern part of Ethiopia, he was not sure if the Rendille came from the Southern part of Ethiopia. (W. Godana, Personal Communication, Interview, January 20, 2023). He concluded by saying that there were some people in the community who believed the Rendille came directly from Somalia. In his conclusion he further asserted that be believed some Rendille were in Southern Kenya during the time the Borana moved into Kenya (W. Godana, Personal Communication, Interview, January 20, 2023).

Scholars seem not to have firm information as from where the Rendille originated, when they went to Kenya. The Rendille are important to mention here because, they with the Gabra interacted with the Borana on a frequent basis, exchange rituals, and sometimes borrowed each other's practices (Schlee, 2010).

Moving South to Kenya and A Forced Life in the Wilderness

Because of a plethora of reasons, the Borana, together with the Gabra and Rendille, migrated from Southern Ethiopia into the Northern Central Kenyan District, and settled in Marsabit, which was at that time the largest district in Kenya before it was subdivided twice, the first time in 1995, and the second time in 2007. Those reasons for migration included colonization of their area by Menelik II, draught, the outbreak of smallpox, malaria, interethnic conflict, and rinderpest which killed most of their cattle herds. According to Robinson (1985) rinderpest killed

so many cattle in the 1800s so that cattle carcasses were found everywhere, so much so that a swarm of black flies was seen descending on them. Obviously, their sight was a nuisance to the affected groups. This observation goes to show the severity of the disease, and makes us understand why in part, the Borana's had to move. Up to the time of their migration, the Borana, a people who fiercely guarded their independence, had their cultural heritage and peacebuilding mechanisms relatively intact. Also, they had transitioned from agro-pastoralism to an agricultural mode of production, as their primary means of livelihood, which they had adopted from the Indigenous peoples of Southern Ethiopia centuries ago. This shift to agriculture was further intensified by their immense loss of livestock due to raids, cattle rustling, drought, and the rinderpest pandemic. It is also important to note that the Borana had at this point moved away from agro-pastoralism and were now engaged in the agricultural mode of production, which is contrary to the conventional narrative that suggests they were perpetual nomads (Hazama 2018; Sifuna 1984). Their engagement in agriculture as a means of livelihood was further deepened by the huge loss of their livestock from the rinderpest pandemic. Guyo Halake (Personal Communication, Interview, December 20, 2022) still remembered the reasons his people migrated to the North-Central Kenya from stories his grandfather used to tell him and his siblings. Thus, with a sense of chagrin, and a tinge of bitterness Halake reconstructed the reasons he believed made the Borana people migrate from Southern Ethiopia based on his grandfather's stories. He noted the following in his story:

> Our people migrated to Kenya over the years, it was not a singular event. The causes of their migration were many and varied, and these included disease outbreaks, livestock losses due to pandemics, frequent raids, and conflicts with our neighboring communities. Some individuals, however, relocated in response to invitations extended by our people that were already established in the region.

He continued:

> The most significant factor behind our people's migration was the Abyssinian colonization of our homeland. The Abyssinians subjected our people to suffocating oppression- indeed, tyrannical treatment, they seized their lands and livestock and used violence against those that resisted. This period witness, perhaps the largest migration of our people as they left *en masse* to escape the harsh and unbearable conditions imposed upon them by the Ethiopian colonization.

Life in the Northern Central part of Kenya, besides being characterized by a feature of being marginalized, was marked by imposed nomadic pastoralism, primarily due to three key reasons. First, a large area of Northern Central Kenya was dry and arid, making it susceptible to frequent droughts. This forced the Borana people to regularly move in search of water for themselves and their livestock, as well as fresh pastures for their animals. Second, the migration of the Borana into Kenya was influenced by colonial forces. Two imperial powers played a role in this: the Abyssinians from the North, who had conquered Southern Ethiopia and taken land and livestock from the Borana, and the British from the South, who had colonized Kenya. Interestingly, both imperial entities arrived in the Borana's lives around the same time, in 1897. The Abyssinian imperialists subjected the people of Southern Ethiopia, including the Borana, to harsh treatment through indirect rule. They not only seized Borana lands and livestock but also interfered with their religious practices. For example, they coercively integrated the Borana *Qalu,* (their religious and ritual leader) into their administrative system primarily to collect taxes from their own people. The Abyssinian masters also introduced forced labour (Bizuneh, 2008). However, when the Borana migrated to the Northern part of Kenya, they faced obstacles in gaining access to pasture, and farming land. Although they initially attempted to settle around Mt. Marsabit, where they could have found more suitable land for farming, the British authorities did not permit them to do so. Instead, they pushed the Borana, as well as the Gabra and Rendille communities, away from the area.

The British encouraged smaller ethnic groups, such as the Burji and Wata, to settle around Mt. Marsabit (Roba & Witsenburg 2004; Grasso, 2020; Fratkin & Roth 2005). That marked the beginning of a nomadic and agro-pastoral lifestyle for the Borana, as they continually moved around from one area to another looking for pasture for their domestic animals. This practice was revived after many years of abandonment.[15] Their constant movement was partly driven by the need to find water, as the areas they inhabited often had surface water sources that dried up quickly, necessitating relocation. The third reason for their nomadic lifestyle was the British colonial power's practice of arbitrarily fencing off some of their pasture lands for up to three years, thereby forcing the Borana to become sojourners through the "wilderness."

It can be argued that the British compelled the Borana, especially to remain in constant motion for fear of being challenged. Although the British did not view the Northern Frontier District as possessing any natural resources or agricultural value, they valued it as a buffer between their colony and the Abyssinian power to the North (Roba & Witsenburg, 2004, p. 5). The British held the Borana in high regard for their martial arts and fighting capabilities,

[15] The British colonialists had a tendency of deploying stereotypes in order to manipulate or mask their colonial tendencies. In this case, although it is possible that they knew that the Borana at the time they settled around the Marsabit Mountain, they had already acquired agricultural skills and had been sedentary for some time, they deliberately chose to create the stereotype of a people that were traditionally pastoralists who did not need to engage in agriculture and stay at one place in order to suit their own interests and reserve the well-watered land for themselves. Although these words by Kilusu (1956-1957) citied by Dorothy L. Hodgson in her chapter entailed, Hodgson, D.L. (2001). "Once Intrepid Warriors": Modernity and the Production of Maasai Masculinities. In: Hodgson, D.L. (eds) Gendered Modernities. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-09944-0_5, were made in reference to the Maasai, another so called "traditionally nomadic group, it applies well to the Borana people who colonialists described as unchanging traditionalists. Kilusu asserted, "The most picturesque people of East Africa are those of a "tribe" which has changed little of its ways since the advent of the White Man-the Masai. The tourists, when he spots a Masai herding his beloved cattle, or leaning gracefully on the haft of his long-bladed spear, cannot but feel the spirit of Africa of yesterday ("Kilusu" 1956-1957, p. 135). Hodgson insightful unpacks the meaning of Kilusu's words as follows: As this quotation indicates, such romanticized images of the Maasai, particularly male Maasai, as immutable icons of traditional Africa have been shared by many Westerners, from the first explorers and missionaries in the nineteenth century to the tourists taking their pictures today." Hodgson's article is about the Tanzania Maasi who got separated from the Kenyan Maasai by British colonial state-building.

however, these descriptions depicted treacherous and violent individuals who were to be feared and controlled. In her article on "The Mohawk Warrior," Heather Smyth (2000, p. 59) aptly defines the term by stating, "the stereotype of the warrior rearticulates colonial stereotypes of Native violence, treachery, and savagery." Smyth goes on to point out how the term was used by the colonial state against Indigenous peoples, which was impugning and pejorative. She disapprovingly opined that "the threat of violent confrontation that marks the stereotype of the warrior has enabled the continued use of this stereotype to criminalize and [delegitimize] First Nations political activity, political demands around land title and resource use, and assertions of sovereignty" (Smyth, 2000, p. 59).

Although Smyth describes how the term was applied to the North American Mohawks, it can be argued that the British defined and deployed the term similarly in reference to the Borana to control and undermine their rights and delegitimize their claims to land use and cultural practices. Further, the British sometimes exaggerated the ‘warrior’ image of the Borana to justify their unwarranted attacks, mask colonial atrocities, such as the expropriation of land, and legitimize predatory colonial policies (Straight, 2020; Lamloum, 2022), or to encourage other ethnic groups in the area to fear the Borana and seek protection from the British. This colonial stereotype was strategically used by the British not only to control the Borana but also to manipulate other ethnic groups in the region, who were often perceived as peaceful, and to incite ethnic conflicts through divide and rule tactics.

The British policy of keeping the Borana in constant movement had dire consequences for the latter. To grasp the severity of these implications, one must understand the deep attachment of the Borana to the land, particularly the piece of land they considered their own. Like many African ethnic groups, land held profound ontological significance for the Borana

people. The uncertainty surrounding the permanent ownership of their land caused significant distress and upheaval in their lives. Permanent ownership of land was pivotal for the Borana for two primary reasons. First, besides being an economic source of livelihood that provided them with food and access to medicinal trees learned over generations of settlement, land preservation kept their worldview, understanding of relationships, and ecosystem dynamics intact by connecting them to their ancestors, who, in turn, communicated with *Waqaa* (God). As such, disrupting their worldview made it challenging for the Borana to maintain the vibrancy of their culture and their peacebuilding mechanisms. Scholars have demonstrated that when the Borana were separated from other groups that shared the same culture and land, they lost their culture and identity (Arero, 2017). A notable example is that of the Waso Borana, who initially settled in the northeastern part of Kenya among Somali Muslims, whose culture, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding mechanisms were entirely foreign to them. The Waso Borana would become "Somalized" by the Muslim Somali population and lose their own culture and identity.

For the British, keeping the Borana in constant movement, a practice that persisted until the 1950s, served their interests. The British suspected that a contented Borana population, with access to good land, water, and a thriving culture, might become a formidable force that could resist colonialism. The Marsabit area could have provided such an opportunity for the Borana, as it had fertile land, ample pasture, and water resources. This dependence on nomadic pastoralism for their livelihoods made the Borana particularly vulnerable to disruptions (Boru, 2016). Among the various ethnic groups, the colonialists instead favored the Gabra's due to their perceived loyalty and potential as allies against their rivals, the Borana. The British demonstrated this favoritism by not displacing the Gabra from their land or forcing them to relocate. However, they did weaken the Gabras militarily by confiscating their horses. Instead of expropriating their

lands, the British allocated a large piece of land to the Gabras, which previously belonged to the Rendille. Second, land was significant because the Borana relied on it for cultivating crops, which were used during annual, ritual, and spiritual celebrations. Thus, their connection to the land was deeply rooted in their autochthonous rights (Yadeta, 2013; Huka, 2014).

The pastoral way of life proved unsustainable for the Borana people, contributing to interethnic conflicts as various groups competed for better pastures and land to support their livelihoods. Contrary to the assertions of some scholars who argue that British colonial rule in the Northern Frontier District was "benign," non-interventionist, and uniquely different from the colonial rule experienced by "many other pastoralist communities encountered by the British," until after the 1950s (Robinson, 2007, p. 45), it can be argued that the Borana people had a similarly harsh experience with colonizers, which began, to the contrary, well before the 1950s. This experience included land dispossession, the arbitrary creation of complexities of contested land boundaries within and between different ethnic groups, leading to fierce land disputes and competition, Robinson (2007), which occurred during the tumultuous transitional period. These actions were strongly resented. More resented though were destocking and taxation. As Guyo, (2017, p.13) eloquently noted:

> The introduction of taxes gave greater impetus to the integration of pastoralists and the Borana into the colonial economy. In colonial Kenya, direct taxation of Africans began in 1901. Pastoral societies paid taxes in kind. The *Northern Frontier District Annual* report of 1925 indicates that pastoralists, including the Borana, paid 30 head of cattle and 50 sheep annually. This system was, however, replaced in 1928 by a hut and poll tax in which each man aged 16 and over was required to pay a prescribed tax in cash annually. To meet this requirement, the Borana had to [reluctantly] begun to trade livestock between the north and central Kenya by the 1930s.

The colonial state literally controlled where the Borana, and other 'pastoralists' in the Northern Frontier District, where they graced their and watered their livestock by restricting them from using some pastureland which the state fenced off, sometimes up to three years.

Whenever that happened the colonial state would restrict grazing along ethnic lines and going beyond the assigned boundaries to graze cattle, and for instance, elicited severe punishment. Guyo, (2017, p. 13) poignantly stated:

> A special District Ordinance [which came into effect as a policy in 1934] restricted all pastoralists in northern Kenya to demarcated 'tribal' grazing areas for each ethnic group, and grazing area was considered trespassing, warranting not only a court order but also a seizure of livestock and a monetary fine. For instance, the Borana were restricted to graze their herds only on the northern side of Mount Marsabit, but when in 1936, some of the Borana in Marsabit were found herding their stock in a restricted area, 10% of their 500 sheep alleged to have trespassed were confiscated by the colonial authorities and their owners expelled from the area along with their remaining stock.

As if these intrusive interventions into Borana lives were not enough the colonialists restricted the Borana from running their own businesses, as well as selling their own livestock, instead issuing small business licenses to Indians, Arabs, and other immigrants. Boundaries, favoring one ethnic or racial group over and against the other, for instance offering business licenses to immigrant groups while refusing locals such opportunities, adversely influenced the social, economic, and political dynamics of the Borana and other "pastoralists," and further influenced their development, resource allocation, and indeed identity, and often even contributed to ethnic conflicts in the area.

In addition to turning the Borana into permanent *sojourners*, the British employed two other strategies to isolate pastoralists from external influences. In 1934, the colonial state enacted the Outlying District Ordinance, which restricted movement in and out of the Northern Frontier region. This measure effectively closed off the region from outsiders, including Christian missionaries until 1934 when the Bible Church Missionary Society (BCMS) started its work in Marsabit in 1931 where it operated from a 10-acre compound preaching and providing education and healthcare mainly to the Rendille, while the African Inland Mission (AIM) provided the

same services mainly to the Borana and Burji communities. It is important to note for instance that, although the AIM arrived in Kenya in 1895, because of movement restrictions in and out of Northern Kenya, they would not establish their presence in this region, where they also built their mission in Marsabit, until at least about at least 30 years after their arrival in Kenya. Both missionary movements advocated for equal educational opportunities, particularly for female students, which led to conflicts in the Borana, and other Indigenous patriarchal and hierarchical communities. Scholars are divided on the views of the missionaries on the Borana's nomadic lifestyle, which the colonial state reinforced. Thus, some missionaries clashed with the government's support for a nomadic pastoral lifestyle, which hindered their efforts to preach to these groups, ensure regular school attendance, and provide health services to Indigenous peoples. Despite the power dynamics favoring the colonial state, missionaries sometimes opposed some of the colonial state's practices. Also, the state had little or no concern about gender equality gained through equal educational opportunities. Missionaries came to preach and according to some scholars (Amutabi, 2005; Ndzovu, 2014; Karanja, 2009; Ndangwa, 2012), they would have preferred to have them stay in one place. They are some scholars who were of the view that some missionaries adapted to this new reality and unwittingly supported the government unwritten practice of promoting a life of nomadism on the part of the Borana. The colonial state in Kenya, just like in some other British colonial states elsewhere in Africa, was very suspicious of the church which sometimes stood with the colonized. Over the years scholars, have argued that the historical isolation of Northern Kenya has resulted in its marginalization. Muthoni Nyuguto (2020) is one of those scholars who writing about changes that the 1910 constitution introduced, bemoaned the marginalization of the Northern Kenya region where the Borana live. She noted the following in her abstract on this issue:

> The communities of Marsabit County are still living on the periphery of society. They remain systemically excluded from the nation's mainstream social, political, economic, and cultural activities. Communities living within the North Frontier Districts (as it was known then) and within the Counties of Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Isiolo and Marsabit are still considered 'hostile tribes' by the ruling elite since colonialisation and are treated as such. The colonial government enforced this isolation by enacting a series of Ordinances between the years 1901 to 1933 that systemically isolated and marginalised communities from this geographical area. The Ordinances criminalised the community's main economic activity of pastoralism by allowing arbitral seizure and detainment as well as collective punishment for offences of members of the community. This negative and suspicious perception, systemic exclusion by the laws and policies, condensed economic activities limited to pastoralism, political under-representation, poverty, distance, and inaccessibility have exacerbated the marginalisation of the communities living within Marsabit to date.

The second strategy was to create boundaries between ethnic groups, a practice that generated a great deal of animosity between and among different ethnic groups [16] as it sometimes favored one group. A good example is when the British colonial state allocated a large portion of land that used to belong to the Rendille people to the Gabra, pushing the latter into desert land with harsh living conditions. The reassignment of land benefited the Gabra because it was well watered and fertile, sparking an ethnic conflict and fierce rivalry over the land between the two groups.

Thus, colonialism left Africans with a legacy of socio- political, economic and cultural deprivation and dependence due to the alienation and dispossession of their lands, livestock, and the relationship they had with the ecosystem of which they were a part, by broadly introducing three things. One, although colonialism did not introduce ethnicity, it essentialized it by reifying its boundaries, introducing hard land boundaries, and the privatization of land with titles given to

[16] Borders can be sources of deadly conflicts. Around the world, several borders are contested and serve as focal points for disputes between or among multiple parties. Notable examples include the border in northeastern Sri Lanka, the Inter-Entity Boundary in Bosnia, the Green Line between Israel and Palestine, and the Line of Control in Kashmir.

its owners, leading to what Boas and Dunn (2013, p. 17) accurately termed “the melancholic uncertainty of the modern African condition.” This complete dispossession of land severed Africans from their worldview, and the material possessions that formed the basis of their livelihoods. It also sparked divisions that led to internecine ethnic violence. In Kenya most of the violence occurred in the Northern Frontier District (NFD), which is the site of this study, eliciting the intervention of the state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Conclusion

This chapter scrutinizes the profound impact of colonialism on the Borana traditional way of life, which included the loss of land, livestock, and independence. It also investigated their Gada system, which played a vital role in their culture, jurisprudence, and self-help institutions such as *Busagonofa* and *marro,* shaping their worldview. The narrative briefly touches upon the transformation of the Borana into pastoralists under the influence of the British colonial state, resulting in their having difficulty with sustaining the robustness of their traditional institutions, which were mostly nourished in sedentary settings.

The chapter briefly traced the way how colonialism subverted communal unity, tolerance, and cooperation within and between different ethnic groups by criminalizing their traditional leaders, through an alchemy of lies and truth, as well as undermining, and sometimes inventing customs that further created disunity. It also explored the commodification of African land after the colonialist forcibly expropriated it, and how that hindered Africans, among other things to exercise their ethical stewardship of the environment to sustain human and ecological well-being. A glimmer of hope was kept alive by renegade chiefs who clung to their traditions, despite oppressors trying to enforce obsequious fealty and silent dissent.

Also highlighted was the contested role those traditional chiefs played under the colonial-inspired indirect rule system in their communities, in most cases resulting in their alienation from their communities. As a result of the weakening of traditional ways of living and adjudication, the underlying causes of this violence have not been adequately tackled, allowing them to maintain their potential for further destabilization and violence in the future. Moreover, the equitable distribution of resources is being compromised due to a prevailing elitist mentality within the government, which shows indifference towards traditional peacebuilding methods and exhibits favoritism influenced by the legacies of the colonial system (Mahmoud, 2011; John, 2016). Basically, instead of engaging in what ‘subversive imitation' the postcolonial elites practiced what Fanon (1965) despairingly termed ‘submissive imitation’ by adopting the norms of the colonial state that essentially negated every basic aspect of traditional life.

This layered conflict is further aggravated by an ongoing and intense dispute over arbitrary colonial boundaries that divide different ethnic groups, deepening divisions among communities that had previously collaborated under the Gada and other traditional systems. This situation has perpetuated a cycle of conflict that can only be broken through the implementation of a well-defined alternative strategy and mechanism (Abdi, 2013). The evolving nature of the conflict, combined with past ineffective strategies and mechanisms for preventing, mitigating, and transforming conflicts, has prolonged and intensified tensions among the various ethnic communities residing in Marsabit. The next chapter delves into the history, socio-cultural aspects, economic factors, and thought patterns of the Borana community.

Chapter Two

The Precolonial Social Biography and Worldviews of the Borana

Introduction

My Akko once told me a story that she would retell for years, all throughout my youth and into my adulthood. She said, “Our generation grew up nourished with stories that taught us how to deal with the challenges of the moment, and some of those stories also prepared us to anticipate the good and bad things in the future.” One such story was about a long, black snake, metaphorically representing the road, which stretched from Nairobi to Ethiopia. This snake divided communities and displaced some, disrupting nature in the process. Its existence caused much suffering. Years later, we had tarred roads running from Nairobi to Ethiopia. To build these roads, many people were displaced, and some had to leave the area for good.

The moral of the story was that people who heard it should avoid living along that route or move their homes away from the path of the “long snake.” It also warned that they might be forcibly removed when the road construction occurred. As a university student, I watched the Basil Davidson African Film Series, and in one of the episodes titled “The Bible and the Gun,” Davidson related a story he had heard about King Lobengula, the King of the Amandebele, predicting what would happen to him when war broke out between his people and the colonialists. He also spoke about the deception by what he called “the White man.” King Lobengula began his story with a question to a missionary friend with whom he was visiting. He asked, “Have you ever watched a chameleon catch a fly?”

Without waiting for an answer, he continued with the story, which I will l retell here in not so eloquent terms. “The chameleon slowly closes in on the fly, putting one foot in front of the other, and when it is close enough, it darts its tongue, and the fly disappears. I am that fly, and the White man is the chameleon. When the war comes, no White man is going to touch my bones; I will disappear like a needle in the grass.” With those words, King Lobengula concluded his story. Years later, war broke out between his people and the colonialists.

The two stories share several commonalities. First, they possess predictive power, foretelling the future and the fate of individuals. Second, they are didactic, imparting lessons about the importance of preparedness in life. Third, they express concerns about individual and collective and environmental security, including human rights, among other issues**.**

These stories may appear laughable and are often dismissed as myths, in contrast to biblical stories of talking snakes and donkeys, which are taken seriously without question by many people, especially in the Western literate and non-literate world. However, to a traditional

African, these stories represent their world, conveying profound existential lessons. These two powerful narratives provide insights into the Borana worldview and thought patterns. Like most traditional African communities, the Borana's world revolved around divination, concern for personal and collective security, human rights, and the well-being of the ecosystem, among other things. Thus, this concern included both material and immaterial entities, including spiritual matters.[17]

The Borana and Gada: The Social Ontological Epitome of the Borana and their Peace Modalities

The Gada System serves as the cornerstone of the Borana's worldview and societal customs and traditions. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of its functionality is essential to fully comprehend their approach to conflict resolution. Examining the complexities of the Gada system requires a broader appreciation of culture as a whole — its purpose, composition, and how it fundamentally shapes their way of life. I will not provide a comprehensive account of the Borana's administrative and juridical aspects, as these have been extensively covered by leading scholars in the field, notably Baxter, Legessa, Bassi, and Shongolo. Instead, I will present a

[17] Making organic connections between the spiritual and the material worlds is not unique to the Borana. It is something common across different Indigenous peoples. In her article entitled "Practical application of an Indigenous research framework and two qualitative Indigenous research methods: Sharing Circles and Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8 (1), 21-40. Lavallee, M. (2014). 7: Professional Native Indian artists inc.: Group of Seven: Janvier, Ray, Morriseau, Odjig, Sanchez, Beardy, Cobiness. [Exhibition catalogue]. MacKenzie Art Gallery: Regina, SK. Lawler, the relational nature of Indigenous epistemology acknowledges the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of individuals with all living things and with the earth, the star world, and the universe. Indigenous epistemology is fluid, nonlinear, and relational. Many Indigenous ways of knowing accept both the physical and the nonphysical realms as reality. In accepting the nonphysical, one must accept that reality cannot always be quantified. (Lavallée, 2009, p. 21) Dividing "any of these realities into separate categories, Baskin (2005, p. 32) indicates, "is a dishonour to Aboriginal ways of thinking." Responsibility, or relational accountability, "

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selective account of the Borana's administrative and judicial components in their traditional lives, focusing on aspects that contribute to our understanding of their peacebuilding mechanisms and the people themselves.

The Gada system is a generational set system that dispensed religious, economic, ethical, legal, and socio-cultural values among the Borana, and had a vibrant history and tradition of peace-sustaining, conflict-resolution, and peacemaking. The Gada promoted the principles of reconciliation, reciprocity, neighborliness, and compassion. Thus, the model was relational, fundamentally linking individuals to one another, regulating their behavior, and providing spiritual and moral compass. Presiding over its administrative structure was *Aba Gada*, who led the Council of Elders. The *Aba Gada* and the membership of the Council of Elders were chosen every eight years at a gathering known as *Gumi Gayo* or Assembly. Within the Borana ethnic group, the stratification of institutions based on age and genealogical generations take place every eight years, allowing both groups to transition from one level to the next higher level. The age cohort system is called *Hariya*, whereas the generation cohort system is recognized as Gada. Each group has its function, which involves corresponding duties and rights. The Gada's intergeneration differentiation is responsible for undertaking conflict management, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, both internally and externally. In addition to resolving conflicts among neighboring ethnic groups, the *Aba Gada* (Borana traditional leader) had the responsibility to travel around the Borana territories to ensure his people's economic well-being by securing water resources and grazing land (Tagawa, 2017).

Outside his official role as the traditional leader, the *Aba Gada* normally has similar responsibilities assigned as his age cohort. This reflects the Gada structure's egalitarian nature and the Borana's social relations (Legesse, 1973). Undergirding the Borana's Gada structure is

the concept of *Namumma*, which embodies their way of life and thought patterns and is their philosophical foundation of humanity and human relations under the Borana's Gada structure. *Namumma* is a dynamic and complex concept regarding social relations that influences Oromo peoples, by extension the Borana's behavior and their humanity, as they live together with families, neighbors, communities, and other ethnic groups (Gerbi, 2018). Within the *Namumma* philosophy, individuals have a say in society, as well as the right to participate in the decision-making process, however, they should also act for the common good of the community. *Namumma* focuses on the restoration of justice through reparation rather than punishment. The *Namumma* way of life demands that the society condemns injustice, violence, and harm towards another person (Gerbi, 2018). Consequently, the Borana people have historically promoted peace and harmony with other ethnic groups. Historians and anthropologists who have studied the Gada system of governance have observed how meticulous, efficient, and intricate this model of peacebuilding is for maintaining an egalitarian society (Legesse, 1973). The Gada paradigm is relevant today in community healing, transforming relationships, and restoring order and harmony to the community, because empowers the local population to find solutions that work best for them. For example, the 2020 *Gummi Gayo* conference recognized the importance of gender equality in the economic -socio cultural development of the Borana people and passed a resolution to recognize the role and involvement of women in all decision-making processes (Walter, 2021).[18] The periodic review allowed the Gada system to change and to engage with other peacebuilding practices, as well as contribute or borrow from other peacebuilding models; a unique quality that reinforced its utility and usability (Debisa, 2022).

The Role of Traditional Leaders

Providing leadership to the Borana community was a Council of Elders, led by an *Aba Gada*. The *Aba Gada* was elected among male members of good moral probity, repute, and above all one that could resolve conflict among his people and keep communal harmony. Thus, the *Aba Gada* was expected to be a specialist in ceremonial rites of his people, and judicial matters among many other coveted qualities. The *Aba Gada* was a facilitator and leader, but not an absolute authority whose words could not be challenged. They derived their power from the Council of Elders and could be removed if they led in ways that breached cultural rules. The *Aba Gada*, in consultation with the elders on his council, was also responsible for allocating grazing land among Borana communities and resource sharing with other ethnic groups (Tagawa, 2017). Thus, unlike most Western societies which promoted the phenomenological or [individual] trait approach to leadership, the Borana, like most Indigenous societies, espoused an ensemble kind of leadership, where the Aba Gada's authority was not singular, authoritative, and unchallengeable. Instead, it was collective rather than individual leadership. Scholarly approaches give the impression that any group or ensemble can form this collectivism scholars. However, that is not the case. For a collectivist leadership to qualify for this style of leadership, it must include Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Rosile, et.al, (2018) in their abstract persuasively describe this kind of indigenous leadership style, which they assert has been time-tested.

> First, the ensemble leadership theory casts leadership as a collective phenomenon and privileges the collective rather than the individual. This moves away from the "hero" leadership views and instead, connects with the recent "relationality" and "shared" views of leadership, breaking new ground in collective leadership. Second, the ensemble leadership theory is dynamic rather than static, as revealed using storytelling and "antenarrative" analysis. Third, the ensemble leadership theory assumes a social structure, which is decentered as well as multi-centered and nonhuman centric. Fourth,

> the combination of dynamism and multi-centeredness yields a structure which storytelling scholars call “rhizomatic” and archeologists’ term “heterarchical.”

Although the *Aba Gada* and the membership of the Council of Elders were chosen every eight years at a gathering known as *Gumi Gayo* or Assembly their performance was reviewed after four years of their election to leadership. This review practice ensured that the leadership was kept answerable to the community. Potentially, if any of the members of the council was found in violation of traditional laws at the time of the review, they could be expelled.

The following Figure 1 diagrammatically explains the duties of the Aba Gada and his council.



Duties performed by a traditional Borana Council

Below the *Aba Gada* were the *Jarsa biyaas.* The *Jarsa biyaa* is a community leader who plays the role of mediator to resolve conflicts in the Borana's day-to-day lives (Sedeto & Ahmad, 2018). The leaders are from different age cohorts under the Gada system, namely *Gada Moji*,

Yuba, *Raba*, and *Aba Gada.* In addition to providing traditional leadership in their respective mandate, they also serve as custodians of traditional culture.

It was in this spirit of cultural preservation that the Gada model was understood as the foundation for how the Borana people related to each other, practiced and dispersed justice, and mobilized resources. In a different context, Kathleen Abselon (2011) noted that such an indigenous knowledge system "occupies itself with the past, present and future" (p. 31). The Gada model is not only relational but restorative as well and pervades every facet and aspect of Borana life.

[1] https://ethiopanorama.com/?p=141225

Family, Education, and Peace

The family consisted of the man, his wife/wives, children, and the living dead, as well as God and the intermediaries that constitute the cosmology of the Borana. The traditional Borana family was patriarchal and hierarchical, with males as heads of their families, and the Borana practiced both monogamous and polygynous marriages (Debsu, 2009). In the latter, the senior female spouse wielded more power in the family, and the male spouse could not marry another wife without her permission, or for that matter without the permission of all his wives. Marriage was an extraordinarily complex undertaking which necessitated the involvement of members of the families of those getting married, their relatives, and the community. Thus, not only did marriage bring two families together, but it also increased the size of the extended family, thereby increasing the chances of bringing wider peace to the community (Hussein, 2004).

One of my informants pointed out that marriage can either bring peace to families involved and the wider web of relatives, or that it could create peace where families disagreed.

Gender relations in the home are overly complex and layered. They speak about the ways resources are accessed, allocated, and how social responsibilities and practices are understood and fulfilled (Carou-Jones et al., 2018). More importantly, how conflicts are resolved, and peace is constructed, as well as the proportionality of roles shared between men and their wife or wives, determines who is impacted most. For instance, Ellis (2007) argues that women are confronted with more hurdles than men caring for the elderly and children, and in providing food for them. In the traditional Borana culture, there is a clear division of roles between men and women. Men are responsible for outside jobs while women oversee what happens in the home. For instance, cooking was in the domain of women, while cutting poles to construct the roof of a hut was done by men. However, in the home, the man and his wife were jointly responsible for the security of the home from outside attacks, and hunger. Besides teaching their children how to be materially independent, Borana parents taught them conflict resolution and problem solving, and peacebuilding skills (Sifuna 1984. p. 76).

When it came to children, age and gender played a role in the clear demarcation of duties between boys and girls, especially at puberty. For example, boys between the ages of 10 years and 14 years herded cattle, goats, and later camels, while girls of the same age fetched firewood and water and did domestic work. This division of roles was based on culture/custom. Before puberty, the division of roles among children did not exist (Johannes, 2010).

To ensure that cultural, religious, and social practices continued down to the next generation a Borana family espoused two ways of socializing with their children, namely the rites of passage and traditional education. Galgalo Huka, an elder in the community went into detail about how a family prepared children in the home by instilling living skills in them (Carou-Jones et al., 2016). He asserted the following in his story:

> It was important for the Borana family to teach their children skills of independent living – cultivation of crops, spanning of donkeys, oxen for draft, how to take good care of cattle, goats, and camels. They would teach them respect for other people and themselves, the elderly, brothers, and sisters and how to take care of the environment, and how people are related to it. When they saw them fighting among themselves, a Borana parent would not intervene unless they sensed that one of them was in danger of being hurt by the other. Otherwise, they would leave them to resolve their problems between themselves. That obviously taught them how to resolve conflict and build peace. They also ensured that they went through the rites of passage and received traditional education.

In the Borana community, like in most African societies, Jomo Kenyatta (1938, 1961), the former President of Kenya, an anthropologist in his own right, aptly captured the reason for providing children with formal education in his seminal book, *Facing Mount Kenya*. Although Kenyatta was writing about the reasons Kikuyu children should be given traditional education, these reasons were true for most traditional African societies, including that of the Borana. Because of its comprehensiveness and the substance of his words, it is worth citing him at length. Kenyatta opined:

> Growing boys and girls learn that they have one thing to learn which sums up all the others, and that is the manners and deportment proper to their station in the homestead, their popularity with their playmates, their present comforts and their future prospects depend on knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due….The whole Gikuyu society is graded by age and the prestige which accompanies a status in age-grouping, and this is done in such a way that even small children are aware of it. It is commonplace to say in Gikuyu society social obligations are arranged and differentiated according to the system of agegroupings, but it is worth while to point out that this obtains in lesser as well as in more important matters. It determines the different salutations used, the manners people may adopt in eating certain foods, the different tasks in homestead or garden: it rules habits of dress or demeanour in community; and it explains the rights of different people in judging cases, in exercising authority in the clan or family, in ceremonial or religious proceedings (1961, pp.71-73).

While the home served multiple purposes, one of its most principal functions was as a school where parents modelled ways of living, and more importantly prepared their children for negotiating the twists and turns of life. As Sifuna (1984) noted, education is an "instrument that

served to transmit values and culture from one generation to another" (p.72). Sifuna also observed that indigenous education taught children about the experiences of the family, environment, animals, treatment of animals – how humans related with the environment, with the curriculum being based within their immediate context. (1984, p.72). Sifuna (1984) concluded,

> Traditional education given by parents was strictly utilitarian, it was an immediate into society. For a greater part of their life children were engaged in participatory education through work, ceremonies, rituals, initiations, play, hunting and oral literature. What children learnt was useful: therefore, they did not require motivation to learn since they knew what they were learning was preparing them for their rightful roles in society (p. 73).

Along the same vein, Kenyatta alluded to some of these induction elements of what was key in this traditional education. The epitome of what was magnified in the challenge of instilling a lifelong education was the notion of *Ubuntu*. Through the kind of education that instilled the value of *Ubuntu*, children learned how to practice social justice, relate to others, lead a life of dignity, and show respect for others, including the elderly, peers, and younger individuals. At this stage, children were also taught how to treat nature with respect and a sense of social justice. All these values and practices comprised the cultural foundation of the Borana people.

Ubuntu emphasized the community, where the relationship between the community and the individual was synergistic.

The community shaped the individual, and the individual, in turn, influenced the community. *Ubuntu* posited that an individual derived their identity from the community, and one's identity reflected the community.

Addressing an audience at the University of Winnipeg on October 21, 2022, Professor Kim Sibanda aptly defined *Ubuntu* not only as a philosophy, but also as a way of life and a means of relating to oneself, others, and the ecosystem in which the human species exists. He disagreed with the expression that stated *Ubuntu* could be summed up in the dictum, "we are

because you are," as it attempted to borrow from Descartes' phrase, "I think, therefore I am." Instead, Sibanda asserted that "*Ubuntu* posits that we are aware of our existence and identity because of the community that affirms, validates, and molds it." He further explained that the *Ubuntu* philosophy and way of life "do not erase individuality but rather affirm and shape it – a two-way process." Viewing the community in this manner, he concluded, allows for "the two entities to mutually validate each other."

Similarly, Michael Onyebuchi Eze (2023) states that the core of *Ubuntu* can best be summarized as follows:

> A person is a person through other people strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the "other" becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other…. The "I am" is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance (pp. 190-191).

Ubuntu also served to regulate relationships between and among family members in the home. For example, an interview with Doyo Jilo, (Personal Communication, February 20, 2023) an elder in the Borana community, provided insight into how children were supposed to relate in a polygynous family, based on the notion of *Ubuntu*, and cherish one another as brothers and sisters even when they belonged to different mothers:

> In our culture when a man marries more than one wife, his children from all his wives are considered and see each other as equal brothers and sisters. The idea of a stepsister or stepbrother is foreign to us. Because of this notion of equal brotherhood and sisterhood of all children regardless of their different mothers are all under their first brother of the senior wife.

The bonds that held and regulated the web of relationships between and among family members were strong enough to withstand forces that threatened to tear the family apart. Writing about

the church family, which is true about the African community as well D. G. S. M'Timkulu (1963, pp. 109-110) persuasively asserted that,

> Bonds that tie family could not be easily broken, and further said that was demonstrated at times of tragedy, celebration, births, and marriages when members from extended families gather to either celebrate or moan. He stated that, ""The social ties binding the African to his (sic) extended family and clan have always been stronger than the forces of separation that arise from members of different denominations. The important family occasions like births, marriages, funerals and clan festivals bring together in one place relatives with different confessional backgrounds"

The African idea of a family extends beyond the immediate nuclear family. Family members are related to one another by blood, marriage, or association and lots of emotions are invested in such relationships. A clear understanding of the nature of a family is important because family is the foundation upon which community is constructed. An understanding of community is key to understanding African culture, customs, and institutions.

Borana Religion, Cosmology and Peace

Religion plays a pivotal role in the lives of Africans. For Mbiti, according to Nieder-Heitmann (1981). "Religion is to the Africans an ontological phenomenon which pertains to the question of existence or being. For him, therefore, and for the larger community of which he is part, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama" (p. 76). The utilitarian attitude towards religion was not exclusive to the Borana; many communities worldwide shared this view. For example, Szongi (2017) observed that, "Religion has persistently and significantly been a socio-political and cultural factor, operational in all domains and at all levels of human interaction. Like peace, religion encompasses the interpersonal and international as well as the symbolic, discursive, and economic" (pp.165-180). Religion, in this context, grapples with existential questions about the nature of the cosmos, life, and death.

While I resonate with Mbiti's (2015) views on the significance of religion in African life, I diverge from his assertion that all Africans believe in God. Although religion plays a crucial role in the lives of many Africans, there are some who do not adhere to any religious beliefs. That said, religion does hold an incredibly significant role in traditional African societies. It provided a broader framework within which they defined their lives, existence, and the very existence of things around them. It was within that framework that traditional Africans constructed their norms, values and regulations that guided their moral world and relational ethics to the world around them, including the environment. Put differently, religion served as a moral compass that helped Africans to negotiate ethical dilemmas, make decisions, resolve their conflicts, and build peace in accordance with their traditional religious values. It also promoted and guided practices of compassion, kindness, justice, and honesty, among many virtues. Thus, religion provided spiritual succor, emotional support and often fostered a sense of belonging, especially through gatherings and the performance of rituals. Religious gatherings did offer people opportunities of forming social connections and contributed to social cohesion. Traditional religions did offer such opportunities, especially when traditional societies would meet to observe traditions, rituals, and ceremonies that marked important milestones in the lives of individuals and their communities. These milestones included birth, marriage, and death, and in some communities such as the Borana, they varied a slightly, and in their case the definitive rituals included birth, naming and death. These rituals provided a structure and continuity, and connected individuals to their cultural heritage, and fostered a sense of belonging and shared identity.

As Mbiti (2015) asserted, traditional religion pervaded every aspect and facet of African life, shaped their traditions, cultural values, and norms, influenced their artistic expression, and

assisted in the transmission of ethical teachings from generation to generation. Traditional religion was particularly important for the Borana people as well. It regulated their lives, explained their existence and how they related to themselves, their fellow men and women, children, and the ecosystem. It also served as a foundation for Gada, their system of living, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The Borana believed in a creator called *Waqaa*. Like the Creator in other African traditional religions, *Waqaa* exhorted adherents to be compassionate, kind, just, honest and seek peace among themselves and with other ethnic groups. The Borana's traditional religion taught them to abide by the Gada customary law and its institutions, which they have tenaciously maintained from time immemorial up to the present day.

According to scholars on Borana's traditional religion (Legesse, 1973; Baxter, 1954; Bassi, 2005), the *Aba Muda* was the Borana's traditional religious leader. Though the *Aba Muda* did not have any official authority of ruling, they were regarded as the highest religious figure, and highly respected because of their role as the direct medium contact between *Waqaa* and the Borana. The chronicles of the Ethiopian Emperor in the early 17th century revealed that the Borana or the Oromos from different parts of the present Ethiopia including Wollega, Harar, Wollo and the Borana from present-day Kenya made pilgrimage to the sacred place of the Borana in the southern part of Ethiopia to show respect to the *Aba Muda*, and to get blessings from *Waqaa*.

According to the religious tradition of the Borana, those returning from the pilgrimage are called *Jilas* and receive respect because they are peaceful people who bring blessings to the community. One of the interesting points is that the *Aba Muda* was not only a religious head, but also a guide who exhorted his people in the community to follow Gada, the traditional law of the

Borana. The *Aba Muda's* most sacred duty was to teach his people to lead a peaceful life and to live in peace with each other and the environment.

This has not always been the case about all the Borana communities in Northern Kenya. After the Borana were converted to Islam by the Somali through the process of Somatization rather than Islamification, in the 1920s, and 1930s, some Borana, especially the *Waso Borana,* became alienated from their traditional Gada based values and principles. Later, the urban Borana would follow suit. The conversion to Islam undermined some of the Borana's principles of conflict resolution and shifted the power of community leadership to the Imams. This would be temporary though, since in the postcolonial period starting as early as the 1960s, most of the estranged Borana would re-embrace their traditional Gada system, and observe the *Gadamoji* ritual, a generational ritual held every eight years.

Those communities affected by drought and famine resulting from conflict mediated issues through the *busa gonofa*, a traditional system that promoted humanitarian practices among the Borana, and re-established connections. The urban Borana reconnected with their larger community in Northern Kenya, and the Borana of Southern Ethiopia with their cousins, the Borana who live in Southern Ethiopia, a connection they had lost when they formed alliances with the Somalis and adopted their Islamic religion (Arero, 2007). However, scholars are divided on the question of whether these Borana communities completely lost their cultural traditions, including religion.

There are three major broad views on this issue, some scholars are of the view that the Borana practiced their religion in private and Islam in public. The second group posit that the Borana practiced a syncretic type of religion, a mix of Islam and traditional religion, and the third maintained that the Borana were absolutely converted to Islam. Irrespective of which of the

three positions one espouses, one thing is clear; the Waso Borana lost their powerful sense of belonging to the larger Borana community living in Marsabit and the Southern part of Ethiopia. They assumed the Muslim identity, and in place of their traditional gada peacebuilding mechanisms, they adopted Islamic ways of peacebuilding which were derived from the Quran, and their Aba Gada leadership was replaced with the leadership of *Imams.* This confusion and cognitive dissonance over issues of identity persist to this day across a large section of the Waso Borana.

One of the elders I interviewed noted:

> I grew up in Waso, in a place called Merti, my father was from Moyale, but he moved to Waso a long time ago, I have always been a practicing Muslim and my father as well. However, my uncles who live in Moyale are non-practicing, they are *wakefattaa*, they are neither Christian nor Muslim. Thought we are Muslim there is always a part of us tied to our ancestral land where we come from. I also have relatives on the other side of Moyale Ethiopia. I went to visit Moyale when my father died, and I wanted to meet the rest of the family.
>
> That is when I realized that I had lots of family members both on Moyale Kenya and Moyale Ethiopia. Ever since I feel really lost as if I somehow do not fit anywhere. I do not fit in Waso Borana because I fully do not understand my culture, I am guided by Islamic principles for [the] most part. On the other hand, we Borana have a rich cultural practices and values that I experienced when I visited my family, we are guided by principles of *Borantiit* among ourselves and with our neighbors. I wish my father went back to his roots before he died to reconnect with his place of birth.

He concluded by saying that he had to go back to Moyale to find a spouse because he felt compelled to stay true to his roots:

> As for me, I married in Moyale, my children are there now as I work In Nairobi and sent them money for upkeep. I wanted to get back to my roots, that is why I married from there. My family is practicing Islam with cultural roots to it unlike me who had no cultural roots other than the foreign Islamic roots.

Two factors precipitated the Borana's relapse from Islam and return to their own traditional religion and culture. The first was the loss of their livestock and land to their Muslim Somali neighbors. While the conflict started when the Borana lived in Wajir, it intensified once they got

to Isiolo. The second factor was the deep desire among the Waso Borana to recover their sense of belonging and identity. This desire was in part propelled by their sense of rootlessness, and partly because of their contact with the Borana in Nairobi through the humanitarian organization *Busagonofa* and the Borana in Marsabit and Southern Ethiopia.

Going Back to the 'Moving' Roots

To make a clean break with Islam, the Borana found a new medium to contact their re-embraced *Waqaa*, and a total alternate religious repertoire. Instead of using Arabic as a medium through which they worshipped Allah, who had replaced *Waqaa*, the Borana used their own vernacular language, arguing that God understood many languages, and as such they did not need to approach God in Arabic, or through the Quran. They then introduced their own way of approaching their traditional *Waqaa*. Instead of through the Quran, the Borana had the eagle as the mediator between them and *Waqaa*. How it worked was that the eagle communicated through the *Ayana* (spirit possessed person), who in turn passed the word from *Waqaa* to the community through their own language (Aguilar, 1995).

I have personally witnessed the practice of this religion, narrated by Aquilar (1995), the scholar whose writing spurred my interest in wanting to understand how the Waso Borana practiced traditional religion. I would want to retell my conversation with my *Akko* (grandmother) for its richness, and to correct a minor but critical misunderstanding in Aguilar (1995), otherwise well related in his account of the Borana religion.

Ayyan is not a new concept to me; I grew up around it when my *Akko* had to answer a call from the Eagle although I did not understand the concept then. In September 2023, I traveled to Kenya to be with my family. I wanted to see my Akko, as her health was declining due to old age, so I wanted to make sure that the three weeks were well-utilized. As a child, I loved

listening to my Akko tell stories; she had a story for everything, but within those stories, there were always lessons to learn.

So, I asked about *Ayyana*. In the room were my mother, my Akko, my uncle, and I were. The moment I posed the question, my mother gave me a look – a look that silently said, “Please do not go there.” My Akko’s face lit up; she smiled, and my uncle walked out of the room with a look that said, “You're crazy.” I sat in the corner of the bed, my mother on a chair behind me, facing my Akko. And so, the story began. 'Your mother is Muslim; she won’t like this,' I said “it is okay.” Mom can also learn today and share her Islamic views as well; I was trying to be polite. So, I asked, “Akko, I remember as a child you used to perform and do this ritual; all I remember was coffee, popcorn, lubadiin, smoke, food, and some sort of chicken slaughtered, hymns/songs.” She laughed. “Do you remember?” I said yes and mentioned some of the neighbors who participated, who have now passed on.

There was a bit of silence, and my mother giggled. She said, “You do not forget things, do you? I do not. I might not remember what I did yesterday, missed appointments, but I remember my childhood.'" My Akko, who had been lying in bed, suddenly sat up with the anticipation of a child. All I could think about was Aguilar and the description he provided of *Ayyan*. Now, I wanted to hear it directly from the horse's mouth. I was prepared, so I turned on my phone recorder to ensure I would not miss any details. She began by explaining that *Ayyan* communicates with another spirit through someone else. Before this communication, an Eagle would bring the message, and it could be delivered in a couple of ways. If you see eagles surrounding your home, it signifies that something is about to happen. In such a case, you need to invite the message through a specific process.

Not everyone can receive and interpret messages from the Eagle; only those anointed for it. The ritual involves slaughtering sheep, providing *Bunna*/incense, and through this, the message will be passed down from the Eagle to the chosen individual. The individual will then convey the message by articulating what the Eagle is demanding. The story unfolded with my grandfather's passing in Waso because he refused to heed the Eagle's message. Glancing back to ensure my mother was okay, she gave me a skeptical smile, as if to say, "Do you really believe that?" I turned my attention back to my Akko, not wanting to challenge her beliefs. The Eagle continued to frequent our homestead, and I sensed it was there for a reason. Three days in a row, I saw the Eagle and urged your grandfather to respond to its calls. He dismissed me, telling me to leave the Eagle alone. Other neighbors also saw the Eagle and responded accordingly.

One evening, they slaughtered sheep and called us, but my grandfather refused to go, rejecting the ritual. I warned him that he would regret this decision. I went to the neighbors to hear the Eagle's message. They revealed that the message concerned my husband and that he must slaughter a black sheep. I relayed the message to my husband, who was visibly upset. I did not bring it up again, but I did mention that the outcome would not be favorable. Months later, my grandfather fell seriously ill. I reminded him to fulfill the Eagle's request, but he adamantly refused. Worried, I sought guidance from my neighbor, and the first thing he told me was that the Eagle had returned. We both knew why. If I did not fulfill the Eagle's demand, I might lose him. This time, I was resolute. The message from the Eagle to the anointed one was "we will see." A week later, my grandfather passed away. Looking back, I realized that had he listened to the Eagle, he might still be alive. I checked on my mother again, but she was engrossed in her iPhone 14, watching a political clip.

Aguilar (1995) asserted that everyone that was possessed of the *Ayyana* was invariably a sick person. While this was in some cases true, it is clear from the conversation that I had with my Akko that the creator anointed specific people to receive divine messages through the eagle. The symbolism of the eagle cannot be lost to many. The eagle here unquestionably represented the reclaiming by the Borana of their cultural identity, religion, and their social ways of living.

To ritualize their break from Islam, the Borana held annual *Ayyanna* festivals in which they commemorated the loss of their livestock and land to the Somali Muslims and the recovery of their identity and sense of belonging to the larger Borana communities beyond their borders. The revival of their religion included the reclaiming of their traditional jurisprudence and the replacement of the *Imam* with the *Aba Gada*. Historically, though contested, the reclaiming of religion has been linked with the simultaneous recovery of one's identity, as these two are intricately intertwined (Scott, 2024). In the process of conversion, individuals not only embrace a new faith, but also adopt cultural practices that are typically associated with that religion and its medium, such as food, clothing, attitudes toward social organization, and the structuring of relationships. Thus, by converting to Islam, Borana Waso lost their Borana religion and identity to the new religion and its associated cultural identity. In an earlier publication, Scott (2009) argued that traditional societies tended to revert to their own traditional religious practices, governance systems, and indigenous knowledge systems as part of a broader resistance against what they perceived as an illegitimate state.[19] Thus, by reversing the process, the Borana regained both their religion and identity.

[19] This break was not only cultural, religious, and a claim to identity but also a political one, which even the British colonialist feared, and surveilled

Borana and Peace

Peace means different things to different people based on their culture. It does not have a straight straightforward definition; it carries multiple meanings. To some scholars it means the absence of different forms of cultural and structural violence, in the way the seminal peace educator, Johan Galtung understood negative peace or the absence of direct violence (Galtung, 1969, 2017). Not only does peace have various meanings, but it includes a variety of models. A notable example is the relationship between religion and peace, and how this connection is perceived within diverse cultures. In certain cultures, peace is viewed as an "equivalent of war," suggesting that peace is achieved and maintained through war. For example, in most European cultures, peace justifies wars, based on principles of the just war theory, and in European-based religious circles such as Roman Catholicism, wars were sometimes sanctioned or approved, even if only as a last resort. Historically in Europe, peace was a concept rooted in the interests of the upper and middle classes, and this version differed significantly from that of the lower classes. However, for the Borana, peace does not necessarily imply the presence of war or conflict. The Borana notion of peace, and its relationship to culture and religion, two of the strongest forces driving human existence is ambivalent, and its meanings are subject to debate. It is against this historical backdrop that I will examine what religion meant to the Borana. The Borana conceptualization of peace involves an understanding of the moral attributes that individuals must strive to attain. As was true for most African cultures, the Borana regarded peace as infinitely preferable to violence, ethnic strife, and any form of confrontation. Therefore, it was crucial for them to proactively take steps to avoid situations that could provoke conflict.

As observed earlier, the Borana believed in *Waqaa*, whom they considered the source of life and death, relationships, ethics, and social order. *Waqaa* is also seen as the origin of peace-sustaining

attributes such as compassion, social justice, and kindness. The Borana believed that *Waqaa* organized their social lives through the Gada mechanism which regulated their relationships with the humans and non-humans. Through the Gada system, the *Waqaa* provided principles of reconciliation, reciprocity, neighborliness, and compassion.

Responding to the interviewer to the question about what peace meant to the Borana people, a seventy-one old elder opined:

> Borana's peace-sustaining values emanate from the relationship between the living and nonliving, and *Waqqaa*. Essentially, a reverence for *Waqqaa*, coupled with respect for nature and others, fosters harmonious interactions among Borana people and other entities. To cultivate a sustainable culture of peace, Borana people emphasize the importance of collective wellbeing, viewing peace as an integral aspect of life. Through daily cultural rituals and activities that uphold peace, we perpetuate and preserve everyday tranquility. We foster peace by upholding values rooted in social equality and by cherishing cultural traditions derived from Gada teachings, passed down through generations. Furthermore, this ethos encourages the amicable resolution of conflicts through dialogue**.**

He concluded,

> Thus, a culture of peace, according to our Gada principles and practices, fosters dialogue, cooperation, tolerance, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It advocates for daily peace-sustaining actions that nurture sustainable peace, integrating belief systems, spirituality, values, and traditions.

However, it fell upon elders in the community to oversee the application of these principles. They were entrusted with the responsibility of imparting teachings, conducting rituals, and encouraging community members to adhere to the rules and regulations outlined by Gada. This adherence was essential for maintaining peace within the community and fostering harmonious relations with neighboring ethnic groups and the environment.

Facilitating and organizing Borana communities to ensure that they abided by the regulations and ethics of the Gada system was the *Abb Gada*. The *Aba Gada* facilitated the practice of peace-sustaining activities within his community and helped resolve intra and

interethnic conflicts with the assistance of the elders on the Council. In contrast to other religious leaders whose involvement in religious and political activities is strictly circumscribed, the *Aba Gada* had no such inhibitions, since in the Borana culture, these two roles are inseparably linked. How did the Borana conceive of peace? Where did they locate their definition among these, and other definitions not mentioned here? The Borana conceived of peace not necessarily as the absence of war, violence or conflict as posited by many scholars. Peace to the Borana could be independent of violence or war. Also, their conceptualization of peace, which they called *nagaa,* extended beyond the human world. Peace, according to the Borana's Indigenous knowledge systems, was a result of holding in equilibrium a relationality between *Waqaa*, human beings, the environment, and the cosmos. *Waqaa* was the source of all these relational elements, which if peace was to prevail, were to be equally respectful of each other. A disrespect of one by others resulted in an imbalance (*safu)*, erasing the prevailing *nagaa.* Based on this belief, to the Borana, not only humans had rights. As one of the elders eloquently summed it," The laws of the Borana Gada system are weighty. They make life smooth and better. There was a bill of rights for both humans and animals. Everything had a right." At a human level, it was that 'social homeostasis' that gave birth to *nagaa* and to the notion of cosmological egalitarianism.

Colonialism and the Gutting of Traditional Authority and Custom

As a means of entrenching power, the colonial state attacked the very heart of African metaphysical existence, cultural leadership, and traditions. Colonial administrations undermined the traditional leaders, while at the same time inventing traditions (Ranger & Hobsbawm, 2012). To that end, colonialists retained the leadership of traditional chiefs while leaving them with little or no authority, as has been pointed out elsewhere in the first chapter of this study. The British

felt it was important for all societies to have identifiable leadership for their hegemonic system to function, coopting the leadership and using it to promote practices that were unpopular within the community. To the British, Borana communities were acephalous, so they went ahead and created for them the position of chief, a practice that the British colonial state implemented in every society they considered leaderless. However, what the British did not understand is that communities could efficiently settle their own disputes and manage their own affairs without any identifiable leader (Collins & Burns, 2018).

The invented traditions of the colonizers alienated traditional societies from themselves and their cultural ethos. In 1902, after the enactment of the Native Authority Ordinance, the British imposed chieftaincy in the Borana communities. The impact of this measure on the Borana community was poignantly expressed by Shanguhyia (2023, pp. 163-175) when he commented about the Abaluyia, the counterparts of the Borana:

> [The] traditional role and influence of *maguru* (*Aba/*elder in the Borana situation) was seriously undermined by significant administrative changes introduced by the British among the *Abaluyia* in the early years of colonialism. Installation of chiefs and headmen into new administrative positions marked a long, gradual process of banishing these elders to the backseat of colonial power hierarchies. The administrative changes were formalized through a series of Native Authority Ordinances passed after 1900 that saw headmen replace *maguro* as assistants to the chiefs.

This comment about the *Abaluayia's* situation mirrors that of the Borana who found themselves in the same boat. The replacements lacked both traditional legitimacy and social status. According to Shanguhyia (2023) when describing what happened to the *Abaluyia,* the end was that the changes effected by colonialists were,

> …So dramatic that these elders found themselves being mere witnesses in land cases, whereas they had overseen these cases as chief arbiters before colonial rule. It was partly due to this change that the efficiency and satisfaction with which these judicial duties had

> previously proceeded under the *magur*o disappeared even as the colonial government insisted on a modernized colonial structure.

Thus, with the onset of colonialism, *abba* power, like that of other traditional elders across Kenya, would be significantly altered. Shanghuyia (2023) bemoaned the introduction of colonialism in the late 1890s when he stated, "the establishment of the colonial state…altered the local indigenous power structure, a development that helped to shape colonial relations over land" (pp. 163-175). In effect, the traditional power structure and its conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanism was seriously undermined by the colonial masters, who were keen on appointing chiefs and headmen that legitimized their hegemony and predatory practices.

It is worth noting that most of the chiefs that were appointed by colonialists were corrupt, only answerable to their colonial masters and themselves, and assisted in the distortion of traditional ways of living. To the colonialists these cronies were *sine quo non* to their running of the colony for several reasons:

> Colonial rule was an expensive undertaking, and administrative officials were few and widely scattered for effective administration at the local level. The protectorate could also not afford to employ and maintain an administration fully staffed by white administrators from top to bottom. Moreover, almost all the early administrators knew little of their subjects' culture. That was why chiefs proved to be indispensable since they made colonial rule cheaper as they were poorly remunerated functionaries (Wamagetta, 2016, p. 1).

Even though the colonialists' payments for the chiefs and headmen was small, the latter found the position attractive because that kind of collaboration, besides bestowing power and prestige, gave them an opportunity to fleece their people of land, cattle, and goats. As to be expected, these leaders were highly unpopular in their communities, since they had to collect taxes on behalf of the colonialists and enforce colonial laws that were also widely resented (Wamagetta, 2016).

According to Tefera, et. al. (2016), the power of the *Aba*, and by extension that of the council, was significantly eroded as a function of successive colonial and post-colonial governments' interference, that either ignored or interfered with the authority of their *jaarsa*, and in some other instances, politically marginalized or simply tokenized them, the Borana culture including conflict resolution, and peacebuilding mechanisms remained relevant and alive. It survived through stories, poems, and songs. Commenting on the role of music, stories, and culture, Tari Arero (Interview, December 10, 2022) informed me of the following point:

> We, the Borana people, use diverse art forms as a means of preserving our rich culture and history, ensuring its transmission to future generations. This has proven particularly crucial during the colonial era and even in the post-independence period when governments attempted to suppress our unique heritage. Through songs, storytelling, poetry, and various other artistic expressions, we have successfully conveyed our Indigenous knowledge to our own people.

He continued:

> Music is an integral part of the Borana culture; it permeates our lives and breathes through our being. Its significance lies in its ability to preserve and transmit the rich tapestry of Borana history, traditions, values, and ways of life across generations. Our melodic expressions express the joys of marriage, love, and the miracle of birth, among other things.

Similarly, G. Ibrahim (Interview, December 15, 2022), said about the importance of these artistic forms of expressions, adding that the poet is the one through whom they are communicated to the community:

> Central to the Borana community are the esteemed *Geerarsa*, (poets) who occupy a pivotal role. These gifted individuals recite captivating poems during traditional celebrations, skillfully weaving together genealogies, moral teachings, and captivating narratives. *Gaain*a (poetry), alongside stories and traditional songs, holds a cherished place among the Borana, serving as a powerful medium to communicate and preserve our culture and ancestral heritage.

Ibrahim (2022) further observed that these artistic expressions do not only serve didactic and celebratory purposes, but also as a means of cultural and political protests. These artistic expressions are cultural repositories that serve to ensure that Borana traditions, culture, thought-patterns, wisdom, and Indigenous knowledge are preserved and passed down from one generation to the next.

Land Tenure Among the Borana

Besides a strong cultural identity, and a layered system of social organization with an emphasis on clans, lineages, and age sets, the Borana people have a complex land tenure system, which during the precolonial times occasionally became a source of intra and interethnic conflict. Contrary to the widely held belief that the Borana people adhered to the concept of open access land tenure or that they subscribed to open property regimes, their governance system was traditionally best characterized as a complex mosaic regime with some traits of what Behnke (2018) described as the sovereign pastoral commons. The governance system property regime favors free distribution of land, there are no boundaries, and process of resource distribution is ideally peaceful and is predicated on self-governance. Robinson (2019) points out that where open access to resources prevails, negotiations and force are unnecessary and that in such instances, "there is no need to seek permission for accessing pastures and distribution of herds is based emergent and peaceful self" (p. 25).

As already noted, Borana people believed in a model of complex mosaic regimes. As Robinson (2019) asserts,

> In the complex mosaic, claims and rights overlap, different kinds of rights may be unbundled and allocated to different actors and governance mechanisms, some land may remain open access, and property rights institutions generally play a less prominent role in the governance system than they do in many other contexts. Complex tenure mosaics with overlapping, multi-level allocation of rights….

Thus, traditionally the Borana leadership had the right to include or exclude some people in the distribution of resources, especially during times of scarcity (Robinson, 2019). Although they set boundaries that were mostly porous, they were however firm enough to cause friction within their own ethnic group and with outsiders. They seem to have had strong exclusionary ethnocentric property rights over wells and milk cows, but not over land. In other words, the Borana practiced both a system of governance of open access to resources, and that which was exclusionary. That was best exemplified by their pasture type land tenure, which was broadly divided into two as noted by Robinson (2019) when he observed,

> There were two broad categories of pasture types: the *warra* pastures which were used preferentially for lactating, nursing, and weak animals, but where the "dry" herd could also graze during the dry season, and the fora pastures which were used only by the dry fora herds. Fora pastures were essentially open access, whereas access to *warra* pastures was more restricted.

The use of different systems of land tenure is not unique to the Borana, it in fact is common to see different land tenure systems simultaneously employed by one given group (Robinson, 2019). The ways these systems relate to each other are complex and delicately balanced, with different rights and responsibilities, leading to a mosaic of property rights and land use. Thus, the Borana utilizes a form of communal ownership combined with the complex mosaic regime, as compared to an open property regime.

Now, the complex mosaic regime has become more layered because of external influences such as population growth, government policies and commercial projects (Kamara, McCarthy, & Kirk, 2001). With the intensification of this governance approach comes an increase of intra, and interethnic conflicts among the Borana, as boundaries become more defined and less flexible. This can be seen from how the *warra* pastures, which according to Kamara et al. (2001), although their use was restricted historically, and were assigned to a particular *arda, warra* could

be however opened during times of drought, hardly have any flexibility nowadays. As well, influence from these external actors often lead to more conflict, and sometimes result in the displacement and dispossession, and scattering of the Borana, who normally have, for example, clan-based rights over wells, which require their collective effort to maintain.

Borana Adjudication and Reconciliation Processes

Traditional litigation processes were led by a Council of Elders, who served as advisers to the leadership and decided on community matters. The elders also acted as facilitators and mediators at communal conflict resolution meetings. Their decisions on all passed judicial and litigation matters were final, beyond the Council of Elders, there was no court of appeals. Conflicts were resolved through dialogue and negotiations at such Council of Elders meetings. Commenting on the role of elders among the Borana, Scott-Villiers et al., (2011) stated in a report of their study of peacebuilding among the Borana and Gabra that:

> Elders are spoken of as a bridge between people and law and [it] is they who not only make laws but also oversee their implementation –'exercise the laws' or 'act as custodians'….they make sure the wrongdoers are punished, the wronged compensated, and 'bad blood' avoided in their role they must also keep in place the religious principle of *wort*, blessing, that offers forgiveness.

What was unique with the Borana process of conflict resolution, in fact a practice unique across many African traditional communities, as contrasted with the western models was that it aimed at reconciling the whole community – perpetrator, victim, and the community and environment. The process brought together the disputing parties to present their cases to the Council of Elders to sort out a resolution that was acceptable to all disputants (Scott-Villiers et al., 2011). The conclusion of a successful reconciliation process was the holding of the *Guna* ceremony (reconciliation ceremony), where a traditional drink of *chat* was offered, and a sacrificial animal killed. The ceremony signaled the restoration of harmony and peace in the community. Because

of their strong collective sense of ownership, the Borana often resolve most of their conflicts and achieve durable peace (Scott-Villiers et al., 2011).

The Gada system also played a pivotal role in the Borana's political economic systems. Its economic system is rooted in pastoralism and a mix of communal and complex mosaic land ownership, which normally supports collective ownership of resources, and a strong notion of community. Both the Gada system and the *Gudina* ceremony which are still in practice today were based on principles of reciprocity, social justice, reconciliation, hospitality, and communal responsibility.

It could be correctly said that criminal justice and peace are interconnected, as Scott-Villiers, et. al. (2011, p. 14), noted:

> Criminal justice and peace are intimately linked in the opinions of Borana…elders…. (and how it works is) in most cases once guilt has been admitted and fines and compensation confirmed the guilty party will be pardoned…. This institutional pardon is founded on a spiritual idea of blessing *ebb*. Once a person has accepted responsibility for his or her crime, and the fines and compensation are finalized, a pardon is often given and the complainant, in accepting that the guilty party has expressed contrition, receives in exchange the blessing of the elders and the spiritual leaders.

The Historical Role of Women in the Traditional Borana Society

The role of women and men in society has been a subject of continuous debate and contestation throughout history, coalescing around the question of how societies and families should structure themselves. The prevailing notion has always been that women and men exhibit inherent differences, and as such, any approach to organizing communities, societies, and families must acknowledge and account for these distinctions. Holmes (2008, p. 1) made an insightful observation that succinctly captures the prevailing organization of our world, noting that "We live in a world which is organized around the idea that women and men have different bodies, different capabilities, and [diverse] needs and desires." This perspective goes further to

express wonderment at why the world is so firmly rooted in these gender distinctions. Thus, the roles women play in society offer valuable insights into their way of life, particularly through their everyday responsibilities. These roles often reflect a society's values, influenced by factors such as tradition, religion, social status, geography, or race.

The debate on sex and gender has been further complicated by some scholars, such as Judith Roof (2016), have used the terms "sex" and "gender" interchangeably in reference to sex. This tendency has often obscured the underlying causes of gender inequalities and oppression. It was not until the 1970s, when modern sociologists joined the discourse, that a clear distinction between sex and gender emerged. The term "gender" was newly coined during this period, leading to a better understanding of the differences between these two concepts and how their interplay contributes to gender disparities (Holmes, 2008).

Before this period, classical sociologists introduced the idea that sex differences formed the basis for oppression between women and men. Holmes (2008) discussed one notable figure in this context, Engels (1972), whose traditional Marxist theory influenced feminism. Engels posited that women's oppression was rooted in sexual divisions of labor.

Holmes (2008) also noted how in the 1950s, American sociologist Talcott Parsons introduced a social distinction between the sexes. He presented the concept of gender roles, which he considered to be complementary rather than oppressive. As a functionalist, Parsons viewed these divisions in roles as necessary. In his descriptive work on this subject, he justified them. Holmes (2008) aptly summarized Parsons's position on gender roles when she commented:

> Parsons' views on women and men's 'complementary roles' are often regarded as key statements of functionalist ideas about gender. Writing in the 1950s, Parsons argued that modern social life, particularly the separation of work from home, necessitated that someone stay at home to care for young children and handle early socialization. For reasons associated with the dynamics of social groups, this emotional and 'expressive' role was assigned to women, while the rational, goal-focused role of paid work was

> assigned to men. Therefore, Parsons' theory is sociological in nature, focusing on social groups and social processes like socialization to explain the differing social positions of women and men.

While Talcott Parsons discussion of gender differences helped us to understand the mechanics of gender roles and why they functioned as they did, he, like classic Marxists, did not explain the existence of gender oppression and disparities. This awaited a shift in discourse, where the gender roles debate coalesced around the idea of distinguishing between sex and gender. Sex came to be understood as biologically determined and binary, while gender was considered a socially constructed concept. Something that is socially constructed includes structures, institutions, systems, and ideologies.

This viewpoint was powerfully articulated by Simone de Beauvoir, often recognized by many scholars as one that laid the foundation for our contemporary understanding of gender. In the opening line of Volume II of *The Second Sex* (1949, p. 51), she boldly stated, “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” De Beauvoir continued her argument from the first volume, emphasizing that femininity is a social construct that does not owe its existence to biology, psychology, or economics. The central thesis of her argument is that gender roles are socially constructed, and she implies that this construction favors men. This perspective effectively challenges the notion that gender roles are natural and biologically determined and assigned like sex.

In contrast to structuralists who assert that social structures determine one's way of life, this postmodernist viewpoint, with which I sympathize, sees gender as neither static nor essential. However, it is important to note that gender roles are often based on sex, which is biologically determined. De Beauvoir (1949, p. 51) encapsulated this evolving understanding of gender in her famous adage, “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.'"

In contemporary society, there is a growing push for a “symmetrical family” in which spouses share household responsibilities, a concept at odds with the principles of capitalist patriarchy. In her seminal work, “Theorizing Patriarchy,” Sylvia Walby (1989) provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the workings of the patriarchal system and its interplay with capitalism. However, the enduring challenges of gender division, oppression, and inequality persist. It is within this Western theoretical context that I delve into the examination of women's roles within the Borana society.

Literature Review of Women’s Roles in Pastoral Societies

The literature regarding the role of Borana women in Northern Kenya is indeed sparse, with few comprehensive research works dedicated solely to their historical and contemporary roles. However, by drawing insights from various sources, including literature on Oromo history and culture, as well as literature on pastoralist women in general, we can begin to piece together a more comprehensive understanding of the roles of Borana women within their communities. Thus, an examination of the literature on the historical and contemporary roles and status of Borana women, as well as pastoral women in general, is in order as it will provide valuable insights into our understanding of these roles.

Solway and Hodgson (2001) explore the role of pastoral women as agents of development. However, its most significant contribution lies in the realm of conceptual innovation. Throughout the book, the contributors employ a gender-focused analytical framework. They depart from the traditional understanding of gender prevalent in classic patriarchy, where gender relations are perceived through a binary lens, often characterized by inherent asymmetry and antagonism. In contrast, the authors of this book invite readers to explore gender relations as having the potential for cooperation as well as division. Crucially, the

book distinguishes itself from the classic patriarchy by presenting gender as a nuanced, in flux, and negotiated construct. This perspective resists simplistic binary explanations. To advance their argument beyond binary interpretations, the authors intersect gender with factors such as class, ethnicity, age, wealth, and status. The book sheds light on our understanding of the intricate web of gender relations, emphasizing their nuanced and negotiated nature, their multiple constructions, and their role as a source of power.

In “Colonial and Post-colonial Changes and Impact on Pastoral Women’s Roles and Status,” Fatuma Guyo (2017) investigates the role and status of pastoral women, using Borana women as a case-study, from the colonial to the post-colonial period. The article contends that while the gender role and status asymmetry privileged men over women during the precolonial period, the advent of colonialism, along with the influences of Christianity and Islam, exacerbated the existing gender disparity and eroded the precolonial status and roles that women once enjoyed. The study also illumines the integration of pastoral women into the colonial economy and commerce, revealing the mechanisms by which women were incorporated into the colonial, formal economy.

Zeinab Khalif and Gufu Oba's (2013) study, though not specifically centered on the roles of Borana women, provides broad references to their experiences, especially during times of conflict, such as the Shifta war. This context is crucial for understanding the challenges and adaptations of Borana women during such periods. Fratkin’s (2013) work on the socio-economic and environmental factors impacting pastoralist communities highlights the changing dynamics of women's responsibilities within these societies. This research points to the interplay of factors like sedentarization, government policies, and population growth.

The study conducted by Hertkorn, Roba and Kaufmann (2015) explores the evolving roles of Borana women in livestock management and offers insights into their changing perceptions and practices. The investigation by Anderson et al. (2010) into the transformation of women's roles in response to milk markets underscores the economic forces that have reshaped the contributions of Borana women, particularly in dairy-related activities. Anbacha and Kjosavik (2018) did research into the everchanging livelihood strategies of Borana women, including activities like selling firewood, poultry farming, trade, and livestock care. In contrast, Dahl's (1979) studies provide a nuanced examination of gendered power relations and the impact of colonization and state policies on Borana society, with a focus on women's roles. These works shed light on the historical and socio-economic dimensions of Borana women's experiences. Ebba (2012) provides a unique perspective on the roles of Borana women within the context of the Gada system, a complex Oromo administrative, judicial, social, and political institution. In the exploration of pastoralist societies and the pivotal role of women within these communities, various theses and dissertations have also offered valuable insights. Nori's (2010) work, for instance, examines the transformations and livelihoods impacting northeastern Somali society, and sheds light on the multifaceted roles that women play in the livestock trade, marketing, and other local commercial endeavors. These activities encompass everything from the hotel business to the sale of khat, "a plant stimulant commonly consumed by the male population in northern Kenya" (pp. 696-714). By scrutinizing gender dynamics and the contributions of women to pastoral production, such studies become invaluable resources (Nori, 2010).

A sizable portion of the research in this field has focused on the informal support systems integral to traditional societies. These support networks served as the cornerstone of livelihood support for these communities, underpinned by mutual assistance – principle of reciprocity (Dahl

& Hjort, 1979). For example, Borana women extended support to one another through a social network known *as Marro*, as well as through a broader network, involving men, known as *Busagonofa* (Gudeta el al., 2024; Berhanu, 2009; Tefera el al., 2022). Beyond addressing material needs, these social intra- and inter-community support systems fostered robust relationships within and between communities.

As observed by Scott (1976), the notion of subsistence is tenaciously upheld within peasant societies, through reciprocal practices that are prominently featured in these social networks. Trust, a foundational asset cultivated through network participation, manifested within and between these groups (Newman & Dale, 2005). Furthermore, these networks offered additional advantages, increasing access to resources, and narrowing prevailing gender disparities (Khalif, 2010). The prevalence of social networks was not exclusive to a single ethnic group but extended across various communities residing in Northern Kenya's (North Frontier District). Among these were the Borana. Borana people utilized these networks extensively, particularly during challenging periods (Tiki et al., 2010; Tache & Sjaastad, 2008; Oba, 2001). Despite the exclusion of women in decision-making and leadership, women's role was indispensable for the functioning of the Borana society. As has been pointed out elsewhere in this study, while women did not sit on the *Gumi Gayo*, the General Assembly that made laws for the community and litigated cases where infractions occurred, they did fill a role whose function was primarily to ensure the *Gumi Gayo* operated in ways that did not violate traditional laws.

In the Borana community, the role of women found its most profound expression in the *Siqqee* Institution. The *Siqqee* was exclusively composed of women, and in the precolonial era, it played a multifaceted role. Not only did it function as a vital check and balance institution within the gender power dynamics between women and men, but it also served a broader purpose:

maintaining equilibrium within *Safu,* the power of *Waqaa* that held the universe together, a duty they considered sacred. In that context, women served as a glue that held the community together and protected the environment. However, despite the pivotal role of the *Siqqee* institution, its specific role and functions have been a subject of heated debate among scholars even though its significance remained undeniable.

Many respected scholars have noted that while *Siqqee* is often celebrated for its democratic principles, and commendable job of fighting for women's rights and balance of power, they pointed out that women played a secondary role to the powerful men-only Gada Council, the *Gumi Gayo,* in that women exerted their influence indirectly, primarily through their husbands and the *Siqqee* institution.

The interviews I conducted with individuals holding differing viewpoints did shed light on this debate but also led me to a different conclusion about the role of women. Abdub Tuka's perspective on the power dynamics of the *Siqqee* and its role in relation to the Gada Council, specifically the *Gumi Gayo*, aligns with the views expressed by many of my informants on this matter. When I inquired about the source of the *Siqqee's* authority and its power dynamic with the *Gumi Gayo,* Tuka responded:

> In the precolonial era, *Siqqee* served as a robust institution, ensuring the integrity and balance within *Gumi Gayo*. For instance, when a member of *Gumi Gayo* violated any of its traditional laws, which included infractions against women, children, and the elderly, the *Siqqee* membership had the authority to expel the offending member from the *Gumi Gayo* Assembly. Contrary to some contemporary misconceptions, *Siqqee* held an equivalent level of authority alongside *Gumi Gayo*, deriving its power from *Waqqa.*

Similarly, Duressa (2018, p. 9) explained that:

> The *Siqqee* institution is the weapon by which… women fight for their rights and function side by side with the Gada system. This is an exclusively women's solidarity institution that is legitimatized by tradition and respected by society. It is a sort of union that provides women with channels to participate in village councils and a cultural vehicle to mobilize women against violence and abuse. It is an institution in which

> women organize themselves in group to stand up for their rights and control every movement in the society. The use of *Siiqqee* draws an enormous religious, ritual, and moral authority, and in the pursuit of peace and social harmony.

He continued,

> The authority women have is ending conflict or war between different clans or with other ethnic groups. Whenever there is conflict between parties if women carrying their *Siiqqee* and stand between them they suddenly stop the fighting for the respect of *Siqqe.* On the other hand, if a foreigner comes to fight one country or one region to take their resource, the women will raise their *Siiqqee* and pray to *Waaqa* until they come back peacefully (p. 14).

Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom that asserts that women played a junior role to their male counterparts in the Council of Elders, women in *Siqqee* Sisterhood institutions played an equally significant role in their community of peacebuilding within the Borana community and working for inter-ethnic peace.

However, in practice, women bore and continue to bear a disproportionate burden of household domestic chores. This includes responsibilities such as caring for children and the sick, gathering firewood, fetching water, and participating in house construction. What often remains unpublicized is the crucial role women play in ensuring household food security. Recently, scholars focusing on the region have pivoted their studies towards gender relations and the division of labor between men and women, although most of the same studies remain focused on other aspects (Tache & Sjaastad, 2008; Oba, 2001; Guyo 2017; Anbacha, 2019; Anbacha & Kjosavik, 2018). One noteworthy unsung aspect of Borana women's role is the *Marro* institution, a traditional Borana social network,[20] where women engage in the exchange of essential gifts and cooperate on various tasks vital for household survival. This collaboration extends to activities like providing a 'buddy' system. Reflecting on the significance of the *Marro* organization, 86-

[20] *Marro* is gender specific, consisting of only women, regardless of their economic or social statuses. It was however used mostly by the poor and elderly.

year-old Sire Molu (Personal communication, January 16, 2023) reminisced about her own involvement and shared insights passed down from her mother, as revealed during her interview with the author.

> As a young girl in Yabelo, I used to observe a group of women who would come to assist my mother with tasks like hoeing or tilling the crops, and occasionally helping with the thatching of our huts. Similarly, my mother would join other women in performing these tasks for our neighbors. One day, I asked her why she participated in these mutual help groups. She explained that it was a way to express the spirit of being helpful to others, especially those in need and the elderly. She then informed me that this traditional organization was known as *Marro*. I came to understand that *Marro* was a means for women to support each other during times of transition, helping in terms of labor and finances. It was a way of fostering sisterhood, and through this network, the community came together to provide mutual support.

She continued,

> As an adult, I came to fully understand the purpose of *Marro* beyond being a network through which we, as women, supported each other and provided for our own Borana communities. By establishing trust within our groups, we laid the foundation for building peace among ourselves as Borana women and women from other ethnic groups. Through the *Marro* network, we also reached out to women from other ethnic groups besides our own, such as the Gabra, Rendile, and Sakuye, among others. Networking with people from other ethnic groups became invaluable when conflicts arose between us and them.

When the interviewer asked Sire Molu if *Marro* was only practiced by the Borana, she informed me that *Marro* was practiced by several ethnic groups in the Northern Frontier District, such as the Gabra, Sekuye, and Rendile, among others. Molu went on to point out that many African ethnic groups in Kenya and outside of Kenya, practiced some form of mutual help among themselves and with their neighboring ethnic groups as a way of assisting each other, especially when the other group was experiencing some hardship (Sire Molu, Personal communication, January 16, 2023).

The *Marro* institution enhanced the principle of reciprocity among the Borana, a nation known for its close-knit ties. Despite their invisible roles in public life, and lack of representation on the traditional legislative assembly, in addition to the pivotal role they played through the

siqqee institution, women also played a significant role in responding to social crises through the *Busagonfa* institution through which the Borana responded to economic problems among their own ethnic members. The Borana popular sayings, *wanti Borani qabu kan borana hundati*, (what one Borana owns belongs to all Borana) and (*Olla fi dudan dhabatu*, meaning villagers are the backbone of the community that makes it viable by their supportive actions of one another. The import of the saying is that villagers have a duty to assist each other) historically found meaning in Borana women's sharing, reciprocal, collective and cooperative responsibility, the pillars from which Borana social justice principles are rooted. Agrawal et al. (2009; Devereux and Getu 2013) have correctly pointed out that despite the significance of the role played by Borana women in ensuring household food security and shelter, their work remains invisible in program and project policies. It can be argued that food and shelter (housing) are basic human rights (Clapham, 2015).

However, in practice, women bore and continue to bear a disproportionate burden of household domestic chores. This includes responsibilities such as caring for children and the sick, gathering firewood, fetching water, and participating in house construction. Although power relations of authority and power are socially constructed, they are real and do shape men and women's power and authority relations. Historically, indigenous patriarchy disempowered women, despite structures that presented men and women as equals, and gender asymmetry would continue into the post-colonial era (Chinyowa, 2002). Songs, drama, and dance are used to perpetuate the rule of men over women. Women who refused to submit to the authority of men were considered social deviants, shunned, ridiculed, and sometimes punished. In an interview with the researcher the 86-year-old Sire Molu, reflected on how men used to lay down on their backs while women cooked and served them, despite the fact they both would be coming from

working in the fields. She opined, “It was totally unfair for women to come from the fields, where both would have worked from dawn to noon. Upon returning home, the man would often lie down, expecting the woman to cook and serve them, without offering any help with chores around the house."

She continued,

> Some women commanded universal respect from men due to their connection with the *Ayana*. Their influence transcended patriarchal norms and authority, as they were seen as intermediaries between the ecosystem, human beings included, and *Waqa,* often communicating through the eagle. This unique status granted them authority in spiritual and moral matters over men. Another instance of women exerting power over men was within the *Siqqe*e sisterhood. *Siqqee* women held sway over males in the *Gumi Gayo*, possessing the ability to expel them from the council if they determined that an individual was violating traditional laws.

While it is often stated that women enjoyed equality with men in Indigenous cultures, the reality was more complex. Despite the semblance of equality, women were often subjected to demeaning treatment and sometimes faced ostracism when they challenged the authority of males. Nevertheless, Indigenous cultures boasted precepts and practices that were admirable, as recalled by many elders. In my perspective, Indigenous culture resembles a promissory document; it holds the seeds of liberation that the precolonial African community endeavored to uphold. Like the pursuit of the Weberian Ideal Type, which is never fully attainable but serves as a guiding principle for progress, Indigenous culture is in a constant state of evolution. It is a dynamic force, continuously becoming and evolving rather than remaining static.

By urging today's community to embrace precolonial Indigenous culture, I am not suggesting that Indigenous culture is static and easily unearthed. Instead, I am making a call to explore its spiritual, moral, and historical values as they are remembered whether real or perceived. These are the values that enabled African communities to embrace justice, peacefully

resolve disputes, and foster sustainable peace. Too often, scholars engage in discursive theorizing about Indigenous culture, characterizing it as static and premodern, devoid of any redeeming power. Recognizing the efficacy of Indigenous culture means embracing its potential for liberation, problem-solving, and the array of skills that sustained vibrant communities. It is through this lens that we can understand both gender equality and inequality within precolonial African societies.

Borana and their Conceptualization of Peace

The Borana approach to peace appears to share similarities with Mac Ginty's (2014) conceptualization of everyday peace. According to Mac Ginty (2014), "Everyday peace refers to the practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intra-group levels" (p. 553). In providing a comprehensive explanation of everyday peace, Mac Ginty (2014) elucidated:

> Everyday peace refers to the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence in addition to chronic or structural violence. It involves coping mechanisms such as the avoidance of contentious subjects in [religiously] or ethnically mixed company or a constructive ambiguity whereby people conceal their identity or opinion lest they draw attention to themselves…. [E]veryday peace can …go beyond coping mechanisms to encompass more ambitious activities that can challenge the fixity of conflicts.

However, two key distinctions sharply set apart the Borana definition of peace, centered around sustaining daily activities, from Mac Ginty's (2014) concept of everyday peace, even though both broadly advocate for an organically grown, bottom-up, and 'local turn' approach to peace. The first distinction lies in the contextual aspect. Mac Ginty's (2014) everyday peace operates within a society characterized by deep divisions, which he defines as:

> A society in which there is a significant cleavage that goes beyond the political] institutions and party politics…[and] manifest itself in residential segregation media and cultural consumption language and access to public goods. It may sometimes involve direct violence and will certainly contain a good deal of indirect violence in the form of threats or identity- based discrimination (p. 549).

Second, Mac Ginty's (2014) perspective suggests that conflict is a necessary condition for engaging in everyday peace practices. In contrast, for the Borana people, everyday peace precedes peacebuilding intervention strategies that accompany peacebuilding after during and after conflict. Unlike Mac Ginty's view, the Borana's position is that sustaining peace is necessary even among societies where peace prevails. Conflict is not the starting point of such activity but context-specific peace buttressing activities. Mahmoud and Makoond (2017) aptly expressed how the Borana conceptualize sustaining peace when they observed:

> Sustaining peace attempts to broaden the peace agenda to include proactive measures aimed at building on peace where it already exists by reinforcing the structures, attitudes, and institutions that underpin it… sustaining peace begins with identifying those attributes and assets that have sustained social cohesion.

While acknowledging the valuable and nuanced contribution of Zondi's (2022) intervention, it is important to emphasize that peace is an ongoing project requiring the collective efforts of all societies. This holds true even in the absence of war, violence, and conflict.

It is important to note that the introduction to this section should not be perceived as a diversion from a direct discussion of the Borana peace-sustaining activities. The introduction aims to highlight the complexity introduced by daily peace-sustaining activities, challenging widely known and supported modalities of peace-making. Additionally, the proximity in meaning between these activities and McGinty's (2014) notion of everyday peace necessitates a clear distinction from the outset. This clarification becomes instrumental in elucidating the shift from both modern and dominant peace paradigms to an Indigenous African understanding of peace, which I argue is generic across many African societies.

Notable peace sustaining activities among the Borana include activities from other institutions other that *Siiqqee*, namely *Marro* and *Busa Gonof*a and *Gada Moji*, and other activities that regularly bring people together for such events as naming and birth ceremonies, weddings ceremonies, and death wakes. Some everyday life activities appear mundane, and marginal to sustaining peace– conversation women have as they take their turns in drawing water from the well, *siqqee* sisterhood assisting in the construction of huts, men carrying out conversations as they watered their livestock, sink wells and in social events. However, all were key in building social solidarity whose centerpiece is relations of reciprocity and peace sustaining.

In my interviews with several elders about if they were any commonalities joining all these traditional institutions – *Busa Gonofa, Marro*, *Gada Moji* and *Siqqee,* they invariably informed me that they had these attributes in common, which they concluded contributed to peace-sustaining, equitable sharing, volunteerism, reciprocity, and humanitarianism. What enables these groups to implement the notion of sustaining peace is their shared vision compassion, humanitarian actions, and as sense of equitable distribution of resources and promotion of social cohesion (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016).

Thus, among the Borana, peace is practiced at both the Intra and Interpersonal levels, with each level requiring specific behaviors. Intrapersonal peace requires that everyone within the Borana community find peace personal peace before they sought peace with others. This entails engaging in non-violence, tolerance, and harmonious living. Interpersonal peace, on the other hand, calls for cooperation among members, resolving conflicts through non-violent means such as discussion and dialogue. The Borana's culture upholds principles of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, making peacebuilding the responsibility of every member.

This commitment embarrasses “philosophies, values, beliefs,’ and cultural practices that ‘shone violence” and instead “promote peace, tolerance,” cooperation, and “conflict resolution mechanisms” aimed at restoring “and” maintaining “peace”. Consequently, Borana culture stands as a testament to” a peaceful society with” a firmly “established culture of peace” (Aliye, 2019).

Conclusion

The chapter explored the history of the Borana people from the time they lived in the Southern part of Ethiopia to the time they migrated to the Northern Frontier District of Kenya. It investigated their robust traditional peacemaking mechanisms, and their cultural and administrative ethos. The chapter further explores the impacts of colonialism on the Borana traditional way of life, including loss of land, livestock, and independence, and the erosion of their Gada system, which was central to their culture, jurisprudence, and self-help institutions, and indeed their world view. This chapter also briefly touched on how the Borana were transformed into pastoralists by the British colonial state, which further weakened their traditional institutions.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Introduction

Literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa is growing fast, and more recently it has significantly changed its focus with the founding of the African Union (AU) (Zondi, 2017) At the founding of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), the literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding mostly focused on inter-ethnic conflicts and wars of decolonization. The states that had won independence, continued to struggle with the legacies of imperialism and colonization, which had over the years succeeded to penetrate and reorganize every aspect and forms of African communities to the distortion or marginalization of African models of conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Ndlovu, 2018; Zondo, 2017; Mazrui, 2002; Davidson, 2014). The colonial state, as Fanon (1965), observed, used violence to impose itself on the locals, and violence and (war) to maintain itself. The African countries that were still under colonialism – Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, and South Africa mostly experienced violence and war as a way of resolving conflicts and peacebuilding. Thus, the literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the postcolonial state immediately found itself faced up with continuities of a colonial state whose method of resolving conflict was mostly violence and war in favor of the colonial population, and the coopted African elites, like traditional chiefs. With the divide and rule tactics, the colonial state pitted one ethnic group against the other – Shona v Ndebele, and Kukuyu v Luo. The post-colonial state tried to follow models that were atavistic (Negritude) – narrow and therefore inadequate in addressing the needs of the local populations, in some cases their success was limited by neo-colonialist forces (Zondi, 2017). So, the literature concentrated mostly on these interethnic conflicts in the post-colonial state, for the most part in the years of

Africa's independence (1960s-early 1970s). While scholars acknowledged the importance of such philosophies as Negritude in instilling self-esteem in Africans so that they could fight the colonial forces that had dehumanized them for years, they overtime realized these models did not address their realities, development and needs for peace. Soon the OAU responded with introducing a new peacebuilding agenda meant to assist the post-colonial state transition to a model that would address Africa's needs for conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and development known as The African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Framework (NEPAD) (Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, an economist himself by training was one of the key persons who spearheaded the organization). This model was mostly elitist in that it didn't consult the general population in building the NEPAD model. When the AU replaced the OAU in 2002, it complemented NEPAD with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) for essentially two reasons:

1. A Unit/Department within the AU was needed to lead in the rebuilding for traditional models of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, (that resulted in the formation of the Panel of the Wise)

2. It was realized that while there was need to decolonize the crippling legacies of imperialism and colonialism, for any model to be effective it must necessarily engage forces of prevailing in a globalizing world. (What Sabelo called "decolonizing peace.")

Instead of calling for isolation, and instead of denigrating and totally debunking Western models of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, scholars, especially after the formation of APSA started to write more about the creation of a new and distinctive intellectual culture rooted in Indigenous local cultures and western sources (Murithi, 2005; Ndlovu, 2018; Zeleza, 2019; Lotze, 2020; Mazrui, 2002 and to a lesser extent Mac Ginty, 2008). The model included Christian and

Islamic models (Mazrui with his Africa: A Triple Heritage (Christianity, Islam, and African Culture,) and Archbishop Desmond Tutu on African Culture, Christianity, and Western models. Thus, as mentioned above favoring models that are holistic, integrated, dynamic and hybrid institutions, and based on the African reality and needs, while borrowing from other models outside the continent to the extent that what they borrow promotes peacebuilding and material development. Local, Indigenous values and priorities help guide the processes of peace while keeping themselves to critique and cross-fertilize ideas. That literature argues that holistic African models of conflict resolution and peacebuilding must necessarily have multiple cultural, political, socio-economic, and socio-legal features that fundamentally transform an African post-colonial state and community by grounding it in current local needs and taking account of models advanced by states interacting with it, regionally and beyond (Murithi, 2008).

When APSA was evaluated in 2010, it was concluded that the Panel of the Wise, the group that had been charged with, among other things, developing holistic and integrated models of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, had not done as well as, for instance the rapid response military team and those that raised earlier warnings of trouble spots. Scholars from that time on focused their writings on four main paradigms from which they have drawn common features of mutuality – Ubuntu, Gacaca, and Gada systems, (philosophy and way of living) and combined these with other models outside Africa in their writing (Murithi, 2012).

These models while being used extensively in their local Indigenous populations, are now implemented in various forms across Africa. This is how it worked. In a gathering that involved the community, the narrative victim narrates her/his story, or families do so on behalf of the perpetrator. Then what follows: The *Inkundla* after hearing both victim and perpetrator would encourage the perpetrator to acknowledge responsibility or guilt, show genuine remorse, and demonstrate it, ask for forgiveness, pay a fine or reparations and repair relationships. Sometimes Amnesty is granted but not impunity (Murithi, 2006).

Causes of Ethnic Conflicts

Much has been written on ethnic conflicts. A significant portion of the literature focuses on the origins of ethnic identity (Smith, 1993; Connor, 1994; Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Etefa, & Laddusaw, 2019; Senehi et al., 2022) or the sources of conflict (Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Byrne, 2008; Ross, 2007; Taras, & Ganguly, 2015). Much less attention has been given to the international role in the diffusion and escalation of ethnic conflict, which is often perceived as an internal phenomenon. However, some scholars have noted that international interventions tend to exacerbate the diffusion and escalation of ethnic conflict (Lobell, & Mauceri, 2004).

In my master's degree thesis, I extensively covered the root causes of ethnic conflict. My thesis presented a theoretical examination of the primordial, perennial, instrumental, and constructivist understandings of ethnicity. I explored the nexus between ethnic politics and ethnic conflict, concluding that there is a causal correlation between ethnic politics and ethnic conflict. Ethnic politics tends to exacerbate and generate a cycle of conflicts (Kim & Conceicao, 2010). I also discussed the internationalization of ethnic conflict through intervention by international players, motivated by a variety of reasons, some ostensibly humanitarian and others purely nefarious.

The preceding discussion, including the examination of my own M.A. thesis, is intended to emphasize this point. It underscores that a considerable amount of literature exists on the origins of ethnic conflict, rendering it unnecessary to reiterate this information. Instead, my work will provide sufficient information in this area to establish a basic understanding of how ethnicity could either serve as a source of peace or discord.

Due to modernizing forces, such as evolving conflict patterns, African scholars and practitioners are increasingly turning to hybrid partnership models to address peacebuilding

issues. However, many of these models either have been poorly developed or not been institutionalized at the state or organizational level (Ndlovu, 2018).

To better understand the complexities of Borana intra and interethnic conflicts and to address them more effectively, the following theories are adopted. The definition of liberalism and its early developmental stages and practices, liberal peacebuilding, Indigenous peacemaking, and hybrid peacebuilding.

These theoretical frameworks can help create a peace model that works well and lasts long for solving ethnic conflicts and building peace in Marsabit and other places. To build peace effectively, it is important to remember that every ethnic group in conflict has its own history, culture, and ways of resolving disputes. The same theory cannot apply to every situation, and the diversity and uniqueness of each group must be respected.

Conflict is a term that has different meanings in different fields, such as international relations and political science. Thus, studying ethnic conflicts requires defining what conflict means and what causes it. One definition of conflict is that it is a struggle between parties who have different values, goals, and interests, and who want to harm or defeat their opponents (Coser, 1956; Galtung, 2009). Conflict can also happen when people have different identities and beliefs that are shaped by their culture (Lebaron & Pillay, 2006). When these identities and beliefs are challenged or threatened by others, people may feel the need to protect them or fight for them (Lebaron, 2003).

Understanding ethnic conflicts necessitates bringing conceptual clarity to the key concepts of conflict and identifying their underlying factors. Various definitions of conflict have been proposed across fields such as sociology, international relations, and political science. For instance, Coser (1956) argues, “conflict is the perceived struggle among parties over values and

claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponent are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals" (p. 8). Conflict signifies the presence of differences within an individual or between two or more individuals. These differences, which are inherent within and between others and us, comprise our identities and fundamental ideas that reflect our culture (Lebaron & Pillay, 2006). When these identities and ideas are threatened by the actions and assertions of others, conflict becomes inevitable (Lebaron, 2003).

Elaborating on the definition of conflict provided above, ethnic conflict is regarded as a type of conflict wherein the objectives of "at least one of the parties are defined in ethnic terms, and the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinction" (Cordell & Wolff, 2011, p. 4). Consequently, one or all parties involved in ethnic conflict tend to attribute the conflict to ethnic considerations. They attribute the discrimination, oppression, and violence they experience to their ethnic identity or ethnicity. Thus, ethnic conflict can be characterized as a "type of group conflict in which at least one of the involved parties interprets the conflict, its causes, and potential solutions along an existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide" (Cordell & Wolff, 2011, p. 4). Ethnic conflicts are an inherent aspect of human society and are likely to persist in the continuity of societal dynamics. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate and comprehend these conflicts, particularly the factors contributing to their occurrence.

Ethnic conflicts pose a significant threat to international peace and security, resulting not only in loss of lives but also fostering an environment conducive to the proliferation of armed insurgents, and illicit activities such as arms and drug trading. Moreover, ethnic conflicts are notoriously challenging to resolve and can endure for prolonged periods (Blin, 2011).

Unchecked ethnic conflicts destabilize their environments, endanger neighboring states or communities due to spillover effects like refugees and insurgent groups, and serve as fertile

ground for organized crime and terrorism. Quantitative data indicates that unchecked ethnic conflicts can destabilize all aspects of society for centuries (Coakley, 2013). In Africa alone, ethnic conflicts have resulted in the loss of millions of lives, a figure excluding the 800,000 fatalities in the 1994 Rwanda genocide. For example, approximately 70,000 individuals were killed, and 2.6 million were displaced during Sierra Leone's civil war Similarly, the Liberian Civil War from 1989 to 2003 claimed the lives of 100,000 people (Karbo & Virk, 2018). Current situations of conflicts for example in Sudan, involving Ukrainian mercenaries and elsewhere in Africa involving Russians, Americans, British, French, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia further complicates ethnic conflict in the continent. Further, ethnic divisions in Cote d'Ivoire between the North and the South led to political violence in 2011 following disputed election results by then-incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo. The ethnopolitical violence in Cote d'Ivoire resulted in political turmoil, loss of life, and property destruction (Piccolino, 2019).

Similarly, ethnic and clan conflicts have left Somalia without a functioning government, resulting in a feeble state. "Terrorist" groups such as Al-Shabaab have taken advantage of the volatile situation in Somalia and have launched attacks on neighboring countries like Kenya (Kanyinga & Long, 2012). In Yemen, Southern Thailand, the Aceh Province of Indonesia, and Mindanao in the Philippines, "terrorist" groups have exploited ethnic tensions to establish operational bases and safe havens. In Kenya, ethnic rivalries among dominant ethnic groups have significantly influenced the democratic processes initiated in the country. Political elites have leveraged ethnic divisions to safeguard their political careers, leading to the polarization of Kenya along ethnic lines (Dercon & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2011).

The outcome of an ethnically polarized society was the 2013 violent conflict in Marsabit between the Borana and Gabra, which lasted until February 2014.

> The legacy of the violence has been the hardening of attitudes and [increased] hatred [and mistrust between] the [two ethnic groups, affecting] every aspect of the social and economic lives of people in Marsabit. [The breakdown] in social relations and the increased animosity and mistrust between [these communities] is so acute that members of the respective communities reported expectations on them to publicly demonstrate loyalty to their ethnic community regardless of their feelings about the violent conflict.[21]

Ethnic conflicts are deep-rooted and always difficult to resolve. The few examples presented above illustrate the enormous effects of ethnic conflicts not only on the countries in which they occur, but also on security in an entire region. These examples draw our attention to the fact that there is the need for a more alternative peacemaking approach.

Theorizing Liberalism and the Turns

Liberalism is a key concept for understanding peace processes, such as peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. An appraisal of this approach requires of the strengths and weaknesses of these processes requires knowing what liberalism means and how it is applied. Many scholars have written about liberalism, but this study will only focus on the aspects that are relevant for peace mechanisms. Liberalism has been promoted by its supporters, from developed countries, to end violence in the world. Tatum (2021) offers two definitions of liberalism that can help us grasp this ideology and its implementation. Citing Charles Mills definition of liberalism, Tatum (2021) writes,

> Liberalism" [. . .] refers broadly to the anti-feudal ideology of individualism, equal rights, and moral egalitarianism that arises in Western Europe in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries to challenge the ideas and values inherited from the old medieval order, and which is subsequently taken up and developed by others elsewhere.

[21] http://www.safeworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/marsabit-conflict-analysis.pdf

Tatum (2021) presents his understanding of Charles Mill's definition, which shows themes that will assist in the understanding of indigenous ways of peacebuilding by contrasts. Because of its clarity of themes he includes in his definition, it deserves citing at length.

Tatum (2021) goes on to assert that,

> Liberalism, in this formulation, is based upon modern understandings of individualism—that ethics and politics should center on the welfare, liberty, and development of the individual. Furthermore, equality in terms of rights, privileges, and participation are cornerstones of liberal ideology. In world politics, this extends beyond the bounds of political communities into formulations that are often cosmopolitan in orientation. Liberalism, in short, is an ideology that expresses the desirability of a world that is fair and equal, with individual welfare as the primary thematic focus.

Tatum (2021) points out that the second dimension of the concept of liberalism [provides a rationale for] "this ideology in relation to its contexts and histories." He makes a particularly important observation, which echoes what Herbert Spencer terms as instances of re-barbarization, something that is counter to its triumphalist narratives.

Tatum (2021) insightfully observes,

> Liberalism does not always live up to its lofty promises, and, in fact, liberal thinkers often develop a logic of exclusion, racism, and violence within the historical, social, and political contexts it operates. Thus, liberalism sometimes justifies "illiberal" action, and other times has exclusions and violence built in. Duncan Bell has pointed out that perhaps the most useful way to think about liberalism is through this contextual lens: "liberalism" is work written by people who have considered themselves "liberals."

This conception gives us leverage for understanding the content of "liberalism" as a political and ideological program. In the 18th century, Immanuel Kant, a prominent philosopher, and theorist, asserted that peace could only be realized through the establishment of a democratic republican government and the recognition of private property rights. Kant advocated for sovereignty based on national identity rather than nation-states, a notion that receives criticism in contemporary discourse. He envisioned perpetual peace emerging from nations governed by republican

constitutions and believed that peace was achievable only among trading nations. Kant's assertion that countries engaged in trade were less likely to go to war reflects his optimism regarding the pacifying influence of commerce, Kant (1970).

In the main though, Liberalism exuded a lot of optimism based on the Kantian notion that democratic nations that traded with each other could not go to war against one another, thereby establishing perpetual peace among themselves. Out of the multiple and diverse definitions of the term peace, with the most prevalent one characterizing peace as the absence of war or physical violence, Immanuel Kant's understanding of peace laid the foundation for the modern concept of liberal definition of peace and peacebuilding.

Similarly, Herbert Spencer (1916) argued that industrialized states tended to avoid conflicts with each other, and that liberalism and internationalized capitalism are a sufficient basis for sustainable peace. However, he acknowledged exceptions to this trend, such as England's involvement in colonial wars during his lifetime. Spencer emphasized the necessity of embracing liberalism as a pathway to perpetual peace, albeit acknowledging the complexities and contradictions inherent in its application, as evidenced by not so common lapses into "rebarbarism."Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises (2003,), while Kantian in his conceptualization of peace, employs a Spencerian framework to suggest that liberal capitalistic states occasionally relapsed into re-barbarization, which he termed "transient atavistic impulses towards plunder and violence."

The liberalism of the 18th century, despite its noble intentions, often led to the promotion of force, violence, and intervention under the guise of championing freedom, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and free markets. As the 19th century commenced, Western powers exported their brand of international liberalism, often in the form of colonialism, resulting in

widespread violence against Indigenous populations, all in the name of "civilizing" them and establishing peace. Scholars, mostly from the marginalized groups, deemed this pursuit of "perpetual peace" through liberal democracy as highly problematic (Raico, 1991).

In the 20th century, particularly in its final decade, liberal states increasingly resorted to violent interventions in the name of freedom, peace, human rights, and market expansion. Examples include interventions in Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, and Bosnia, (Wai, 2014). More recently, liberal states have engaged in military actions such as bombing Yemen and maintaining a naval presence in the Red Sea, all justified in the name of promoting peace, free trade, and markets (Notteboom et al., 2024).

Tatum (2021) has aptly labeled this strain of liberal ideology as "emancipatory liberalism." According to Tatum, emancipatory liberalism not only seeks to liberate individuals from oppression, but also tends to be interventionist, violent, and illiberal. The connection between violence, force, and dogmatic solutions with emancipatory liberalism, as propagated by the West, is evident. All these actions are justified under the pretext of maintaining law, order, and peace.

The expression of this phenomenon is seen in the liberal state's internationalization of emancipatory liberalism, wherein Western solutions are imposed on Indigenous populations, often at the expense of their traditional institutions of governance and way of life. As Tatum (2021, p. 137) noted, liberalism has facilitated collective action, cooperation, and community building on a global scale. However, it has also perpetuated patterns of conflict, violence, and repeated cycles of intervention.

In summary, the discourse on peace encompasses a spectrum of perspectives, from Kant's vision of a harmonious republic to Spencer's advocacy for liberal principles.

While these ideas inform our understanding of peace, they also highlight the complexities inherent in its realization.

The Turns and Implications for Peace Processes

The end of the Cold War energized the United Nations to seek out strategies to end armed conflict. For a brief period in the early 1990s, exuberance and hopes were high, since many believed this meant the cessation of all wars and the introduction of a peaceable, fair and just world. One memorable example of this exuberance was seen in 1992, when Francis Fukuyama boldly, if a bit prematurely, declared" the end of History," by which he meant the inevitable globalization of Western liberal democracy (Berggruen & Gardels, 2013). These hopes did not last long, as the United Nations (UN) was soon confronted with challenges of violence in such places as Somalia and the Balkans. After a dismal failure to stop the new conflicts by strategies such as diplomacy, peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, the UN introduced a policy document that was known as the UN Agenda for Peace in 1992 (Paris, 2005; Boutros-Ghali, 1992; Ryan, 2013; Chandler & Zogg, 2017) which became a dominant policy document that shaped the conceptualization of peace. The document viewed peace as "outside intervention in support of national peace processes in conflict countries, with the objective of ending violence and rebuilding peace after the war" (Paffenholz, 2015, p. 858; also see Ryan, 2013). This definition presents peacebuilding as a post-conflict activity that seeks to consolidate peace in societies that have emerged from violent conflict. Defined from a post-conflict perspective, peacebuilding includes the following activities: "rebuilding of institutions and infrastructure of nations torn by civil wars and strife; monitoring elections, disarmament, promoting political participation; addressing the root causes of conflict such as economic despair, social injustice, and political oppression" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Consequently, the UN multidimensional peace

support operations in the early and mid-1990s in Somalia, Angola, El Salvador, Cambodia, Namibia, Haiti, and other nations were shaped by the above conceptualization of peacebuilding (Tom, 2017; Ryan, 2013).

As a result of the limitations of the definition outlined in the 1992 Agenda for Peace, Boutros-Ghali in another UN policy document, the *Agenda for Development*, broadened the concept of peacebuilding to include economic and social development (Ryan, 2013). Also, in the supplement to the *Agenda for Peace - An Agenda for Peace 1995* - the concept of peacebuilding and its goals was expanded and revised to include the "creation of structures for the institutionalization of peace" (Boutros-Ghali, 1995, p. 27). Thus, the concept of peacebuilding has seen a systematic revision in response to the growing challenges over the last decade of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century, and a new understanding and development of peacebuilding emerged within the UN, academia, leading states, and non-governmental and bilateral organizations (Call & Cousens, 2008). The consequence was the expansion of the concept to include other terms such as conflict prevention, conflict management, peace enforcement, and post-conflict reconstruction. For instance, Kofi Annan conceptualized peacebuilding as promoting democracy, development, and human security (Tom, 2017). Upon the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the concept has been defined and operationalized to include among other things "strengthening the rule of law, enhancing development, promoting justice, building democracies, ending overt violence, reconciliation and stability, among others, aimed at strengthening and solidifying peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Tom, 2017, p. 48).

Although the UN made efforts in its numerous policy documents to bring clarity to the concept of peacebuilding, there still exists some debate among scholars and policy makers on

what the concept means and how it can be practiced. Within academic circles, there are scholars who define peacebuilding from a minimalist perspective. For these scholars, peacebuilding is aimed at ending physical violence. The minimalist's perspective is security-oriented and prioritizes the prevention of a return to violent conflict. The aim is to promote stability and order. On the other hand, some scholars define peacebuilding from a maximalist perspective. For these scholars, peacebuilding should focus on addressing the critical causes of conflict and structural violence (Newman, 2011). This perspective is social-oriented and prioritizes addressing the root causes of conflict such as social injustice and poverty (Call, 2008). The maximalist perspective includes, among other priorities, "democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, eradicating poverty, social justice, welfare, non-violent action, reconciliation, development, eliminating corruption and good governance" (Tom, 2017, p. 49).

Liberal Approaches to Peacebuilding

Thus, the emergence of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm can be traced to the failure of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping strategy to address the new challenges and security concerns of the new intrastate conflicts that coincided with the end of the Cold War (Paris, 2014). The practice of peacebuilding was then expanded to go beyond the traditional peacekeeping model that separated warring factions and included development. The UN became the lead actor in peacebuilding in countries devastated by violent conflicts, guided largely by the *1992 Agenda for Peace* discussed in the beginning of the chapter in hand (Paffenholz, 2015). With support from other multilateral institutions (International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, UNDP), bilateral agencies (DFID and USAID), and regional organizations (African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD), the United Nations embarked on peacebuilding efforts that were premised on liberal and

neoliberal principles of democracy and market economies (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Paris, 2011).

The understanding of peace that emerged from the UN document was based on liberal ideals of marketization and democracy. The document's approach to peace was doctrinaire and unilineal in its understanding of what caused conflicts and their impacts. Thus, failure to appreciate the need to account for complexities inherent in each conflict state, led the UN to impose one type of solution to every conflict across states, irrespective of differences in context. Invariably the UN tried to stop emerging challenges by endeavoring to transform states experiences internal conflicts into liberal democracies with its attendant market economies (Selby, 2013).

The implementation of the UN's interventionist strategies in war-torn areas resulted in multiple challenges, including frozen conflicts, local resistance, and exogamous state-building strategies that did not serve the interests of the affected locals (Valenca 2011; Kappler 2013; Lemay-Hebert 2014). These interventions also utilized transitional justice mechanisms that disrupted African traditional jurisprudence, which had worked effectively in pre-colonial times. As discussed earlier in this thesis, traditional societies and their institutions were viewed as irreconcilable with liberalism or modernity, and as such, their methods of governance and peace processes were considered problematic by the leading liberal institutions, the UN, and institutions under its auspices.

The post-colonial critique of liberal peace processes problematized this dominant approach from many views, inspired by the perspective that challenged the distinction between the liberal and non-liberal other, the international and the local, which led to the imperialist interpretations of peacebuilding (Charbonneau, 2014, p. 629). As a result of that criticism, a new

approach, the ‘local turn’ emerged and robustly evolved in the 1990s as a counterweight to the failed UN peace missions, in such places as Somalia, Rwanda, and the Balkans. However, Brauchler (2017) attributed the shift in approach which he saw as a shift to set as a focus identity and culture, to something different. Brauchler argued that the shift to the local in the 1990s was a result of the post-Cold War thinking that attributed the causes of conflict/war to ethnicity and religion.

The local turn emphasized and stressed the centrality of local players and ownership above the externally designed and implemented peace initiatives. The rationale was that effective peacebuilding strategies are achieved best by working through the local communities affected by the conflict. The second local turn, in my view, third local turn, would elaborate on this by elaborating on a peace architecture that hybridized the international with the local, however with the former, dominating.

Thus, running parallel to the UN peacebuilding efforts were alternative initiatives by scholars critical of the UN’s international interventionist methods. These scholars noted how those interventions had completely failed to engage with local populations, as the UN tenaciously held to its hegemonic practices and modernist framing of questions around peace processes. Meanwhile, the critics of the UN approach advocated for greater local agency, as well as context-specific solutions, and the building of local capacity and ownership. This was the beginning of what came to be known as the second ‘local turn,’ which emerged in the early 1990s to center silenced narratives of marginalized populations by empowering local communities and ‘disrupting” liberal peace. A “turn” in the Social Sciences is a metaphor for a significant metaphysical, ontological, and axiological transformation. In peacebuilding literature, the meaning is the same.

For example, Ljungkvist and Jarstad (2021) stated:

> The metaphor of 'turns' in social sciences, including in peacebuilding literature, has often been used to call attention to some important theoretical development that is on the rise (e.g., the practice turn, the material truth). One of the most significant turns in the peacebuilding literature has been the 'local turn," stemming from the criticism of the liberal peace project and the emphasized role of local communities, local actors, and civil societies in peacebuilding and democratization efforts in conflict-affected societies**.**

Despite the lucid definition of "local turn" provided by Ljungkvist and Jarstad (2021), the meaning of the term "local turn" continues to be contested, although much has been written about its imprecise meanings. However, there seems to be a broad consensus among scholars that the term refers to local populations affected by peace decisions, local ownership, and capacity as well as local agency.

Among the leading scholars of the second local turn of the early 1990s was John Paul Lederach (1997), who became the conflict-transformation school's eminent representative. Lederach (1997) advocated for the empowerment of the local people, a position that undermined the orthodox liberal peace paradigm approach by reversing the latter's top-bottom approach. The 'turn' in peacebuilding was the statist approach which had a diametrically different orientation to that proposed by Lederach and the conflict-transformation school, poignantly seen, for example, on how the state viewed human rights, whose protection is indispensable to peacebuilding. While Lederach's position on human rights would include a pivotal role played by individuals, the statist approach focused only on the state as both violator and promoter.

The abstract of the article by Lippert-Rasmussen (2014) defines the statist approach to human rights as follows,

> On standard liberal interpretations, human rights are such that, logically, they can be violated only by states, not private individuals. An individual who tortures someone

> commits a moral wrong but does not violate the victim's human rights. For this reason, the crime is less problematic than it would have been had a police officer done it on behalf of the state. To this extent, the standard liberal understanding of human rights is statist.

Lippert-Rasmussen's (2014) interpretation of human rights and the statist approach is crucial in the understanding of the top-down approach, and the exclusion of local populations who were seen as having no agency. Lederach (1997) could be said to be one of the stringent canvassers against the statist view of human rights and peacebuilding who was one of the first advocates of the notion of "peace from below. I will not go into the fine details of these four turns here, aside from elucidating the variance between the initial 'turn' and the subsequent ones, advocated notably by Lederach, and the third, spearheaded by Mac Ginty, among others (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013), and the Local Turn to indigeneity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

Although Lederach (1997) advocated for a locally centered approach, his method was structured around the hierarchization of local social structures. He believed that peacebuilding could be facilitated through the middle class, asserting that their position between the upper and lower classes enabled them to effectively engage with both. It is crucial to note that Lederach was not the sole proponent of viewing the middle class as agents of change during that era. Max Stackhouse, a US theologian, and universalist, who wrote both before and contemporaneously with Lederach, and a proponent of liberalism (including capitalism and multinational corporations), also argued for the middle class as agents of change (Stackhouse, 1971, 1972, 1984, 1987).

Lederach (1997) argued that sustainable peace could only be achieved when locals took the lead in the peacebuilding process. Paffenholz (2015) observed that "Lederach and the conflict transformation school [was] built on Galtung's theory of structural violence and peacebuilding"

Lederach's peacebuilding model focused on repairing structures as well as relationships within specific societies. As Paffenholz noted, the restoration of frayed relationships was accomplished through "establishing infrastructures and processes, and through the training of people (human capital building) within a generation-long timeframe"(p. 859). Although I agree with Paffenholz (2015) on that Lederach work was influenced by Galtung and Freire's works, I do not agree with her evaluation that the latter's work was bereft of power analysis. For example, if indeed he had been included by Freire, Freire (1970), like Marx, believed that the only relationship that existed between an oppressor and the oppressed was that of conflict. He after all had great influence over the Marxist liberation theologians[22] who championed the plight of the poor through their preferential option for the poor. A close reading of both Galtung and Lederach would show the two scholars keenly understood the role power played in relationships.

While Lederach's model emphasized the leading role of locals in their own peace processes, it did not entirely exclude the involvement of outsiders. Instead, it relegated their role to that of supporters. The Lederach model of peacebuilding dominated the peace landscape as an alternative to the UN Peace Agenda until 2010, when Richmond and Mac Ginty introduced what came to be known as the second Local Turn or the third Local.

From my perspective, the initial local Turn emerged when the UN embraced a statist approach, promoting the involvement of the local populace through representation and conflict resolution by means of dialogue. This was perceived as a means of addressing local socio-

[22] Theologians that were influenced by Freire's work: Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History, Selected Writings*, translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr, New York: Orbis Books, 1979; Alfredo Fierro, *The Militant Gospel, A Critical Introduction to Political Theologies*, Translated by John Drury, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977; Caanan Banana, The Gospel According to the Ghetto.

economic and political power dynamics and improving services to the local population by the state (United Nations, 2012). Subsequent iterations of this turn were pioneered by Lederach, followed by contributions from Marc Ginty and Richmond. This third Local Turn aimed to challenge the hierarchization of local peace agents by advocating for the reversal of the top-down approach and emphasizing the crucial role of common people beyond the middle class. However well-intentioned Mac Ginty and his colleagues provided some useful insights that contributed to the understanding of the asymmetrical power distribution between the local and non-local, yet they still find themselves trapped in the binary they condemn. Roger Mac Ginty and his critical colleagues still talk of the Global North and the South and stop short of showing what the hybrid peacebuilding model would look like. Also, they seem to privilege the local without clearly defining what the local is, which they imply is a monolithic entity. Providing criteria on how the local could be identified, especially given the fact that there are always two or more competing organized in almost all given localities (Paffenholz, 2015). Mac Ginty is aware of the problem with defining what the local means and joins other scholars that are finding failure in defining local one of the weaknesses of the local turn proposition. He, however, like his predecessors, finds himself unwittingly embedded within the confines of Neoliberalism, which promotes orthodox approaches to peacebuilding as he fails to break out of its mold. Perhaps, engaging the traditional peace processes with full throated analytical purchase may have yielded better results as he would have extricated himself from presentism to deal with the Indigenous life that predates the "context-specific" as referring to the prevailing conditions at the time which, would mean going beyond to consider the historical of Indigenous culture and its epistemological production. To understand the meaning of indigenous knowledge, which embraces African culture and history one must engage in indigenous research.

The meaning of Indigenous research is contested, fluid, and ever evolving. Despite numerous attempts by scholars to craft a universally applicable definition, many have fallen short. The failure of these endeavors can often be attributed to a deficit in understanding cultural nuances. Among the various perspectives I have encountered, I find the composite definition offered by George J. Dei (2011), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2017) Oweywumi (1997), and Zondi (2017) to be particularly insightful for my study. These scholars conceptualize Indigenous research as decolonized and subversive of the "imperial-colonial project," rooted in the cosmology or worldview of Indigenous peoples. They emphasize the importance of privileging Indigenous peoples' subjectivities and their situated knowledge.

In contrast, while Mac Ginty has made significant contributions to peace studies, there is a notable gap in his critique of African Indigenous peacemaking processes evidenced by his merely offering a view that Indigenous peace mechanisms might suffer from romanticism without offering any context within which his assertion could be debated. This hindered him from offering a robust, and critical expose of the Indigenous peace mechanism, as the understanding of their cosmologies, would have accorded him access to their epistemological, ontological, and axiological worlds something that he needed to understand their peace mechanisms.

Adrian Grenier (1998) offers a list of attributes of Indigenous knowledge that are foundational in our understanding of Indigenous research. Greiner lists the following characteristics,

1. Indigenous knowledge is accumulative and represents generations of experiences, careful observations, and trial and error experiments.
2. It is dynamic, with new knowledge continuously added and external knowledge adapted to suit local situations.

3. All members of the community, that is, elders, women, men, and children, have Indigenous knowledge.

A key danger of this, and the preceding turns is that they do not address issues around coloniality, which leads to decolonial peace as advocated by African scholars like Ndlovu, 2019; Zondi 2016; Murithi 2005. The approach utilized by the local turn is not rooted in the Indigenous context in which Indigenous knowledge is central. As such, it does not effectively address local issues of peace which call for the decolonization of the current local peace mechanisms. Thus, the objective of my thesis is to go beyond the present context to invoke principles and precepts from the precolonial traditional structures, which I am aware have evolved parallel to the orthodox peace models.

Alternatives to the Liberal Peacebuilding Projects

This section seeks to contribute to this discussion through a reflection of the liberal peacebuilding and Indigenous peacemaking approaches. Peacebuilding and peacemaking concepts are worth clarifying, since they are often used interchangeably, and it is imperative that clarity is established to properly contextualize this discussion.

In this section, we review two of these alternative approaches: the Indigenous approach, and the liberal peacebuilding approach. These approaches aim to strengthen and transform the local structures based on their own cultures and traditions (Nganje, 2021).

Indigenous Peacebuilding

For one to understand traditional ways of peace mechanisms and conflict resolution it is imperative that they understand Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous research, upon which Indigenous communities anchor their peace and conflict resolution modalities.

Several scholars have made significant contributions to indigenous ways of knowing and social organization. Notable among them are (Makaulule, 2023). a traditional healer and environmentalist, whose work centers on knowledge systems related to biodiversity, water resource management, and agriculture. Similarly, (Mawere,2013) and (Maathai,2003). focused on integrating indigenous knowledge with modern environmentalism, emphasizing the relevance of African ecological wisdom. John Mbiti documented African spiritual and cosmological beliefs, highlighting their ethical and philosophical dimensions. He challenged the individualism central to Western social organization, arguing that African cosmologies provide a rich, underappreciated philosophical foundation in global discourse. His scholarship emphasizes the need to recognize and validate African spiritual systems as crucial in understanding and implementing peace processes, environmental management, and ethics. Mbiti's work also underscored the importance of communal well-being and the interconnectedness of values deeply embedded in African religious systems.

Desmond Tutu emphasized Ubuntu not only as an indigenous philosophy but as a way of living, underlining the necessity of forgiveness for a community's future. Along similar lines, Ali Mazrui, especially in his work *The Triple Heritage*, (2002) examined the interactions between African, Islamic, and Western influences, offering a nuanced view of African identity. Mazrui's work reflects the complexities of cultural synthesis, resonating with the challenges of identity in postcolonial societies. Collectively, they are part of a broader movement I describe as the 'fourth local turn,' which seeks to decolonize knowledge and reassert African epistemologies by drawing on precolonial principles that shaped traditional African life. This movement emphasizes values such as relationship-building, reciprocity, trust, forgiveness, equity, social justice, and equality, all of which were central to how traditional African communities organized their social lives.

But before directly tackling the subject of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), it is crucial for one to understand how research is conducted in Indigenous communities to discover IK principles.

What is Indigenous research and how does it work? Indigenous research is an inclusive term, and it casts a wide net (Kovach, 2021 p. 1). For any methodology to be correctly considered, as an Indigenous methodology, it must be anchored in Indigenous epistemology, theory, story, and community. This is not always the case in Indigenous research. Indigenous methodologies and Western research methodologies can both fall under the umbrella of Indigenous research but are methodologically distinct from each other (Kovach, 2021 p. 1) There are key ingredients which one must recognize when doing Indigenous research. First, it is important for the researcher to recognize that there is diversity of indigeneity with Indigenous methodologies before conducting research in Indigenous communities. The groups are not monolithic and their living strategies, although broadly similar, are heterogenous. Second, the research must be informed and anchored on the fours Rs (respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility) and on respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Pidgeon & Riley, 2021, p. 3). As such, just as eloquently noted by George Sefa Dei (2013), "Indigenous research challenges existing ways of knowing through cultivating multicentric perspectives and methodological approaches to pursuing knowledge, and it furthermore must seek to restore the humanity of indigenous peoples" Some scholars have argued that Indigenous research is a project of decolonization which challenges the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological Eurocentric normative approaches, as observed by Elizabeth Sumida Huaman, et. al. (2020) who further aptly summed it up in the following way,

> It is research which challenges the Euro-academy's epistemic and methodological surveillance, through which it embarks on knowledge production to ensure the universality of Western science knowledge, and further must seek to restore the humanity of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous research as a project of decolonization brings significant ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological (ethical) challenges for learners in the pursuit of knowledge (Sumida Huaman & Martin, 2020, pp. xiv-xv).

As noted in other writings (Dei, 2013, 2015), Indigenous research is seen as a complex decolonized approach of producing. interrogating, validating, and disseminating knowledge based on indigenous people's cosmology/worldview or "world sense "(Oyewumi, 1997, p. xvi cited in Sumida Huaman & Martin, 2020, p. 1).

Indigenous knowledge is a widely used term globally today, its prominence in the 21st century stems from the inadequacies of the prevailing Western ways of understanding, imagining, and perceiving the world, which have proven insufficient in addressing numerous global challenges, including financial crises, conflicts, and climate change (Ndlovu, 2014, pp. 84-98). Despite its acknowledgment as a fount of valuable insights, the term "Indigenous knowledge" is subject to intense debate regarding its application, as noted by J. Mistry (2009, pp. 371-376). Furthermore, it lacks protection under international law, potentially rendering it vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization.

Theorizing Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

Indigenous peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms derive from IK. IK is foundational to people's culture, identities, and values, and institutions (Turbull, 2009). It therefore follows that to get a full grasp of what are Indigenous people's peace processes, one must understand their IK systems by theorizing them, as these systems represent their total worldview.

Indigenous knowledge is a widely used term globally today (Sillitoe, 1998). Its prominence in the 21st century springs from the inadequacies of the prevailing Western ways of understanding, imagining, and perceiving the world, which have proven insufficient in addressing numerous global challenges, including “financial crises, conflicts, and climate change” (Ndlovu, 2014, pp 84-98). Despite its acknowledgment as a treasure trove of valuable insights, the term "Indigenous knowledge" is subject to intense debate regarding its application and meaning. For instance, Sillitoe and Marzano (2009, p. 14) observe that IK “varies within and between societies, comes from a range of sources and is a dynamic mix of past tradition and present innovation. It is heterogeneous and complicated which is an inconvenience for development.” Antweiler (2004) also identifies more than twenty-two similar terms, in which IK is defined, such as “local knowledge” and “folk knowledge.” Mistry (2009, pp. 371-376) states that, perhaps based on its multiple definitions, it lacks protection under international law, potentially rendering it vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization.

Definitions of IK have been offered, with most of them sharing two common expressions: knowledge that is orally communicated and it is homegrown. For example, Hao Zhang and Hajime Nakagawa (2018) provide a broad and generic definition of IK. Moreover, Hiwasaki et al., (2014a, state that, “Indigenous knowledge refers to understandings, skills, and philosophies developed by local communities with long histories and experiences of interaction with their natural surroundings according to UNESCO’s programme on Local and [IK].” In addition, Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) define IK as knowledge that is developed over time by Indigenous people in specific geographical areas, passed down from generation to generation. Warren (1991) also states that IK is the knowledge used by local communities to sustain

livelihoods in their specific environments. According to Mistry (2009), IK is "knowledge which is spatially and/or culturally context-specific, collective, holistic, and adaptive"

Similarly, Adams Ovie Iyola et al. (2024) suggest that IK "can be understood as traditional or local knowledge passed down orally rather than through written tradition within a particular community or area." At the same time, however, Battiste (2005) asserts that IK is a dynamic system that is based on skills and problem-solving techniques that evolve over time. Everisto Mapedza, et. al. (2024) also defined IK as the institutionalization of local knowledge. What is the best definition of Indigenous Knowledge? Indigenous knowledge refers to understandings, skills, and philosophies developed by local communities with long histories and experiences of interaction with their natural surroundings according to UNESCO's programme on Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) (Hiwasaki et al., 2014a). Not only did IK provide theoretical underpinning of Indigenous people’s activities, but it also had a repertoire of technical skills as well, which fell under the term, Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK). According to Douglas (2015), IK consists of technical practices that a given community has been implementing over a period of time. Both IK and ITK include among other skills, such practices as medicine, agricultural technologies, and midwifery (Aasima). Nowadays IK and ITK are part of the decision-making process on issues regarding, food security, managing educational resources, controlling human, livestock, and plants pests, among others (Anjali Sharma, et. al. 2024, pp.75-82; also see E. Sibanda (2018), mixed cropping which keeps the soil healthy for the tillage, and restoration of soil fertility soil (Mwaura, 2008).

In a more poignant way, which shines light on the definition of IK, Dewalt (1994), cited in Desta and Smithson (2010), defined IK by listing its features within the context of Natural Resource Management (NRM). They enumerated that the features are:

- *Locally appropriate*: IK represents a way of life that has evolved with the local environment.
- *Provides restraint in resource exploitation*: production is for subsistence needs only.
- *Including diversified production systems*: there is no overexploitation of a single resource.
- *Showing respect for nature:* a "conservation ethic" often exists. The land is considered sacred, and Humans are dependent on nature for survival; all species are interconnected.
- *Flexible*: IK can adapt to new conditions and incorporate outside knowledge.
- *Socially responsible*: there are strong family and community ties, and with them feelings. of obligation and responsibility to preserve the land for future generations.

Further, Grenier (1998), cited in Desta Smithson (2010), points out that IK:

- Is usually parochial, confined to a small area, and limited to what rural people can sense, observe, and comprehend using their own terms and concepts.
- Is not uniformly spread. Individuals vary in their aptitude for learning, storing, and generating knowledge. Specialized knowledge often belongs to certain groups or individuals; for example, male elders, midwives, and traditional healers (Eythorsson, 2000)
- Includes both explicit and implicit knowledge, some of it intuitively practiced through cultural rituals or revealed through stories and legends.
- Is embedded in culture.
- Can be complex. Attempts to "scientize" IK by removing it from its owners will tend to compromise the subtle nuances of this knowledge (Thrupp, 1989).

Unclear definitions of IK have led to its marginalization and lack of protection for Indigenous peoples under international law. Additionally, the depiction of IK as merely "intuitive," "revealed through cultural rituals," and "legends" communicated through "myths and rites," despite the recognition by leading African scholars such as George Dei of spirituality as valid components of credible epistemology, has prompted many Western scholars to overlook its significance beyond rhetoric. Thus, many scholars remain hesitant to openly acknowledge its utility because, perhaps unwittingly, they cannot reconcile an epistemology originating from indigeneity as rational by Enlightenment standards. The Victorian European rationale, emerging from the so-called Age of Reason, prioritized reason over religious practices. As they do to all other Indigenous peoples who base their livelihood and treat their ontological relationship to the ecosystems as sacred,

these scholars regard African IK in a manner like how the population of the Renaissance viewed the Middle Ages. In the words of Dickson Mungazi (1992, pp. 1-2), they perceive it as "intellectually stagnant" and characterized by “superstition and religious values”. Conversely, people of the Enlightenment considered the Renaissance as an era when human reason was grounded in scientific knowledge (Mungezi, 1992, pp. 1-2).

However, contemporary attitudes are more subtle and nuanced. It is crucial to address this before delving into the various definitions of IK, to comprehend why there persists such strong reluctance to acknowledge IK's potential in addressing humanity's challenges. In my opinion, its popularity among these scholars is based more on commercial interests than genuine recognition of its value.

Power dynamics seem to be inherent in any discussion where epistemological systems are compared. Byran (2009, p. 24) observes that “the very concepts used to identify certain kinds of knowledge as indigenous remain steeped in colonial power relations.” Charles Taylor supported this position. He argued that Western technological superiority demonstrated the superiority of western epistemological superiority of western science over Indigenous knowledges (Taylor, year cited in James Maffie 2009). The dominance of the Western epistemes over those of the South best illustrates this reality. However, there has been a big push back by scholars from the Global South against what they consider the to be the inferiorization or delegitimization of Indigenous Knowledges. In his three books: *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018), *Epistemologies of the South Justice Against Epistemicide*, (2014), and his edited volume, *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon*, Vol 1 of *Reinventing Social Emancipation. Toward New Manifestos,*(2005), Boaventura de Sousa Santos, critiques the dominance of the Western hegemonic epistemes. He

argues for an epistemological shift that promotes what he calls cognitive justice where all cultures are considered as equal. He points out that the West has dominated and unfairly marginalized the knowledge which had existed and guided the lives and organization of the people of the Global South before Western hegemony occurred through colonization and imperialism. Santos contends that without global cognitive justice there can be no global social justice. He then calls for the recovery of diverse epistemologies of the world, a cry of cognitive justice. The new bottom-up cosmopolitanism is characterized by solidarity, conviviality and stands in contradistinction to the logic of market-constructed individualism. He outlines a theoretical and pedagogical framework which he utilizes to challenge the dominance of the Eurocentric epistemology and thought. These forms of knowledge are generally discredited, erased, or marginalized by the dominant epistemologies of the West, culminating in the cultural "*epistemicide."*

Consequently, James Maffie, (2009, p. 56) a northerner and professor of Indigenous studies, joined voices from the South, and argued that, contrary to John Taylor's view, "Indigenous knowledges have been defeated, and not disproven by Western technology." Santos and Maffie are also joined by an IK seminal thinker Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and their critiques of the dominant Western epistemology. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (cited in M. Paterson & Luescher, 2022; also see S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2022, 2018, 2013) denounces the "processes of colonization and neoliberalism for undermining Indigenous knowledge systems". Ndlovu-Gatsheni highlighted the self-serving privilege of epistemologies of the West and opined,

> This process of delegitimisation was also accompanied by the theft of local knowledges which were then presented as aspects of the new, dominant knowledge system – as if these knowledges were an endogenous creation of colonisers and, therefore, a gift to the rest of the world population from Europeans and North Americans.

He further points out that to achieve "epistemic freedom" it is important,

> To oppose the idea that European knowledge is more absolute than other ways of knowing….In this regard, the terms of the debate seem to be that there are those academics who engage in objective non-political, non-situated, truthful, universal knowledge, and others who are caricatured as political, ideological and subjective in their thinking…..Instead, it should be acknowledged that all knowledges are Indigenous to somewhere….There is no single knowledge which is universal, while all the others are Indigenous and local. In this regard, all humans are born into a particular valid and legitimate knowledge system.

A theorization of IK helps, as stated at the beginning of this section, pave a way of a fulsome understanding of peace processes by highlighting, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Santos did, that Indigenous communities had their own effective ways for dealing with conflicts and sustaining peace. Many scholars remain hesitant to openly acknowledge its utility because, perhaps unwittingly, they cannot reconcile an epistemology originating from indigeneity as rational by Enlightenment standards. The Victorian European rationale, emerging from the so-called Age of Reason, prioritized reason over religious practice. Like how other Indigenous communities prioritize their livelihoods and perceive their ontological relationship with the sacred, these scholars regard African Indigenous knowledge in a manner akin to how the population of the Renaissance viewed the Middle Ages. In the words of Dickson Mungazi (1992, pp. 1-2), they perceive it as "intellectually stagnant" and characterized by superstition and religious values. Conversely, people of the Enlightenment considered the Renaissance as an era when human reason was grounded in scientific knowledge (Mungezi, 1992, pp. 1-2,).

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) define IK as knowledge that is developed over time by Indigenous people in specific geographical areas, passed down from generation to generation. Warren (1991) states that IK is the knowledge used by local communities to sustain livelihoods in their specific environments. According to J. Mistry (2009, pp. 371-376), IK is "knowledge which is spatially and/or culturally context-specific, collective, holistic, and adaptive." Similarly,

Adams Ovie Iyola et al. (2024, pp. 287-300) suggests that IK "can be understood as traditional or local knowledge passed down orally rather than through written tradition within a particular community or area." This kind of peacebuilding is rooted in the conflict population, and it is owned and processed by the local grassroots in local Indigenous approaches. Indigenous and traditional approaches to peacemaking have over the years encountered Western models. The consequence of this interaction is the dismantling of traditional and Indigenous peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace broker resources and roles. Now, these roles have been assumed by states, international organizations, and coalitions of states (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

However, there has been something of a rediscovery of the local arena, where the local arena is regarded as being potentially useful in helping the implementation of the peacebuilding, stabilization, and development tasks (Annan, 2020). The shift to the local arena in peacebuilding was in keeping with the advances in peace theory that recognized the limits of institution-focused conflict resolution as well as the potential of the more people-focused conflict transformation (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

In other words, in local peacebuilding, the local is a sphere of activity that is constantly being made and remade, sometimes with replication and sometimes with change. It is formed, reformed, and renegotiated through the routine activities of its inhabitants, as well as those of outside the community as well as institutional actors. In this way, the broader concept of the local can liberate people from the confines of International Relations as a discipline, and from the restrictions placed on the state and its institutions (Mac Ginty, 2018). When compared to the liberal peacebuilding model, Indigenous or local turn approaches encourage consensus decision-making, restores the human-resource balance, and promotes relationship building and harmonious relations through gift sharing and exchange (Mac Ginty, 2008). When Indigenous

methods are applied in the resolution of conflict, there is a sense of ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability in the process. Local partnership and ownership are vital for sustaining peace and building legitimacy when communities are working to overcome violent conflict. Indigenous methods relying on local structures, techniques, institutions, and resources do have the potential to generate some amount of enthusiasm in the peacebuilding processes, which is usually lacking in the liberal peacebuilding model (Funk, 2012).

Indigenous peacebuilding is a term that refers to the use of local, traditional, customary, or culturally appropriate methods of resolving conflicts and promoting reconciliation among different groups of people. Indigenous peacebuilding is often contrasted with the liberal peace, which is a top-down, internationally driven, and universalistic approach to peacebuilding that relies on liberal values and institutions (Mac Ginty 2011). Indigenous peace processes challenge the dominant political orders that have marginalized and oppressed Indigenous peoples and their cultures. Indigenous peace processes also offer insights and contributions to peace and conflict studies scholarship and practice that can benefit all peoples. Indigenous peacebuilding can be seen as a way of respecting the rights, interests, and the identities of Indigenous peoples, who have historically faced marginalization, oppression, and dispossession by colonial and post-colonial powers (Mattson, 2020). Indigenous peacebuilding can also be seen as a way of enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts, by drawing on the wisdom, experience, and legitimacy of local actors and practices (Boege, 2011).

Indigenous peacebuilding can take various forms depending on the context, culture, and preferences of the people involved. Some common features of Indigenous peacebuilding include: an emphasis on restoring relationships and balance among the parties and the community; a recognition of the collective nature of Indigenous rights and self-determination; a reliance on

elders, leaders, or other respected third-party mediators; a use of rituals, ceremonies, symbols, and narratives to reinforce peace; and a promotion of common identities and interconnections among different groups. Indigenous peacebuilding can also involve elements such as conflict, women's roles, traditional justice systems, and reconciliation ceremonies (John, 2013).

Werner (2010) analyzes how Indigenous peacebuilding techniques have been applied in three African countries that experienced violent conflicts: Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda. She focuses on the following aspects: reconciliation, justice, and healing. She provides examples of how Indigenous mechanisms such as gacaca courts, ubuntu philosophy, and *mato Oput* ceremonies have facilitated dialogue, forgiveness, accountability, and restoration among former enemies. She also discusses the challenges and limitations of these methods, such as their compatibility with human rights norms, their inclusiveness of marginalized groups, and their adaptation to changing contexts.

She concludes that Indigenous peacebuilding techniques offer valuable insights and lessons for building lasting peace in post-conflict societies. She suggests that they should be recognized, supported, and integrated into broader peacebuilding frameworks. She also calls for more research and dialogue on the potential and challenges of Indigenous peacebuilding in different settings. She states that "Indigenous peacebuilding is not a panacea for all conflicts, but rather a complementary approach that can enrich and diversify the peacebuilding field" (Werner, 2010, p. 22). Others conceptualize Indigenous practices and methods, as the application of local cultural technologies, resources, institutions, histories, and structures in the mediation and resolution of conflicts (Lederach, 1995; Oyenyi, 2017). Indigenous peacebuilding also requires dialogue and collaboration with other actors and approaches to achieve a hybrid or complementary peace that respects diversity and addresses structural issues (Springer 2016).

Scholars who write on the African Indigenous peacemaking paradigms have largely focused on the Ubuntu, Gacaca, Acholi, Michu and the Gada systems. These have drawn on common features of mutuality, which is an Ubuntu philosophy and way of living, and these are combined in their writings with other models outside Africa (Murithi, 2008). The models used extensively among local Indigenous populations are also now implemented in various forms across Africa. For example, in Rwanda, the Gacaca courts were instrumental in the truth and reconciliation process following the 1994 genocide that cost a million Rwandese lives. The truth and reconciliation process promoted in South Africa by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others following the collapse of the apartheid regime in the mid-1990s also incorporated some traditional conflict resolution features.

Indigenous peacebuilding is a bottom-up approach that uses local, traditional, and customary forms of dispute resolution and reconciliation to restore order and relationship during or after conflicts (Werner, 2010; John, 2013; Kiyala, 2024; Mac Ginty, (2008). It is based on the context and values of the communities involved, and it aims for restorative justice, forgiveness, and peaceful coexistence (Omona, 2023). In contrast, Zondi (2014, 2017) proposes a decolonial approach to peacebuilding that challenges the Eurocentric assumptions and practices of liberal peacebuilding. He suggests that hybrid peacebuilding can foster pluralism, diversity, and intercultural dialogue among different epistemologies and ontologies of peace.

Zondi's theory of hybrid peacebuilding is based on the idea that peacebuilding in Africa should be a decolonial process that challenges the neo-colonial conditions and the inherited post-colonial state, society, and politics. Zondi argues that the AU approach to state building/peacebuilding is comprehensive and holistic, but requires the existence of a legitimate government, a functional society, and domestic parties for dialogue to begin. Without these

conditions, the AU approach leads to extended peace enforcement rather than peacebuilding. Zondi also suggests that peacebuilding in Africa should involve the devolution of responsibilities to regional organizations and local actors, who can respond swiftly and effectively to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. Zondi's theory of hybrid peacebuilding is thus an attempt to create a decolonial peace paradigm that hinges on the continued decolonization of the African state and society.

By decolonial peace we imply the pursuit of peace in a manner that deals with the colonial continuities and the nature of the inherited state, with its underlying paradigm of war and violence, its colonizer models of the world and its colonial political economy. These continue to haunt post-colonial African societies (Zondi, 2013, p. 107).

The Ubuntu, Gacaca, Acholi, Michu and Gada traditions are examples of Indigenous methods of conflict resolution that have developed over centuries in different parts of Africa. They share some common values and peacebuilding philosophies, such as: The interconnection and interdependence of human beings, which implies respect, dignity, and compassion for others; the restoration and reconciliation of fractured relationships, rather than retribution or punishment, as the main goal of justice; the involvement of local elders, community members and victims in the process of dialogue, truth-telling, and healing; and the recognition and preservation of communal harmony and social order as essential for peace and stability (Gade, 2011).

Indigenous peace processes are based on Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing that emphasize relationality, balance, respect, and healing. Indigenous peace processes are not a single or uniform approach, but rather a diverse and context-specific set of practices and principles that draw on traditional values, teachings, and cosmologies. Indigenous peace

processes often contrast with Western models of conflict resolution that focus on legal procedures, punishment, and individual rights (Kyoon-Achan, 2014). Indigenous communities have different legal traditions and values that inform their approaches to conflict resolution. Some common values are respect, reconciliation, responsibility, and connection. Respect means caring about people and treating them with dignity. Reconciliation means restoring relationships and healing wounds. Thus, responsibility means being accountable for one's actions and fulfilling one's obligations. Connection means maintaining a bond with the land, the culture, and the community. Indigenous communities use various methods such as mediation, arbitration, negotiation, and ritual ceremonies to resolve conflicts in ways that reflect these values. Ceremonies are special events that involve spiritual laws, traditional medicines, teachings, songs, and circle processes. They help to enact conflict, express emotions, heal wounds, and restore balance and harmony.

Hybridity

The challenges associated with the liberal peacebuilding project as well as the emerging critiques of liberal peacebuilding have raised a fundamental question as to whether an alternative exists. Many of the critics of the liberal peacebuilding project have called for a rejection of the liberal peacebuilding model, and the adoption of strategies that empower and transform local structures, institutions, and agencies and are not grounded in liberal peace (Sabelo,2018; Murithi, 2008; Zondi, 2022). One proposed alternative is hybrid peacebuilding models, which is what I am proposing in my research. Hybrid peacebuilding is that space where liberal peacebuilding and Indigenous peacebuilding structures, institutions and processes interact and adapt to each other. Hybridity refers to the point of interaction between bottom-up and top-down peacebuilding efforts (Mac Ginty & Gurchathen, 2012; Richmond & Mitchell, 2011; Paalo, 2021).

The literature on Hybrid Peacebuilding models is ubiquitous nowadays and so is literature about the limitations of the liberal peacebuilding models in post-peace accord studies. Equally prevalent is literature on competing models of locally centered paradigms of peacebuilding, however, questions linger about how to balance power between entities that are materially unequal, namely, the external Western Powers and the local subaltern population in developing countries. The challenge lies in determining what should take precedence when Western Powers, which are significantly resource-rich, collaborate in sponsoring the liberal peacebuilding paradigm. Unfortunately, this approach tends to offer uniform solutions for diverse problems, irrespective of their specific contexts. The liberal peace model invariably assumes that economic and political liberalization create conditions for a durable sustainable peace in post peace accord situations. As a result, the liberal paradigm supports policies that promote civil societies, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Central to all these features promoted by liberal thinkers, therefore are institutions, programs and polices meant to avert war. According to this liberal approach, ethnic problems such as those experienced by the Borana occur because of their illiberal tendencies, and this one size fits all approach tends to miss the local nuances to the problems in favor of the dominant liberal approach.

Prior to the adoption of the term in peace and conflict studies, the notion of hybridity itself, according to Mac Ginty (2010), has been utilized in the field of anthropology, sociology, institutional, and organizational studies, as well as post-colonial studies, emphasizing the significance of culture in power and identity's discourses. In the field of post-colonial studies, for example, the idea of hybridity has been central in the debate over culture and identity formation. It reflects the resilience of the natives against the colonizers as well as the struggle under imperial domination. In the colonial situation, as Bhabha (1994, cited in Tom, 2013, p. 242)

points out, the Indigenous people perceived themselves trapped between their own cultures and the colonizers' cultures. The latter was an element that colonizers inflicted on the native people and that the natives frequently resisted and negotiated. Eventually, this struggle yielded a new form of culture and practice known as hybrid cultures. In this sense, hybridity is seen as a positive force that reflects a resistance toward dominance of a single ideology and provides space for subordinate groups or Indigenous people to express themselves. In proposing the hybridity approach, Mac Ginty (2010) calls for an end to the contested debates that are either in favor or against the liberal and Indigenous peacemaking processes. Hybridity serves as a way of moving beyond the rivalry that exists between the liberal and local peacebuilding to enhance the two critical elements of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2011b; Richmond & Mitchell, 2011). Likewise, hybridity helps to dismantle the boundaries and binaries of internal and external, Indigenous, and liberal, tradition and modernity, and looks for intersections that exist among these paradigms (Mac Ginty, 2011b). Hybridity allows for the identification of the commonalities between the two paradigms, and how these could serve as the basis for cooperation (Mac Ginty, 2010). Hybridity can be traced from the history of intercultural interaction between Western and Indigenous societies. Such interactions include colonialism and the numerous peacebuilding strategies and practices that made use of Indigenous and local resources such as the Loya Jirga in Afghanistan, the reconciliation commission in East Timor, and the Gacaca Tribunal in Rwanda (Mac Ginty, 2008; Thiessen, 2013; Tursunova, 2014).

Hybrid peacebuilding is a theoretical and practical approach that challenges the conventional liberal state building paradigm and emphasizes the dynamic interactions and relationships among different actors, norms, and practices in post-conflict settings. Hybrid

peacebuilding scholars like Richmond, Zondi, Paris, and Uesugi et al. have different perspectives on how to operationalize hybridity and how to address the critiques of hybridity.

Uesugi et al. (2020) aptly described hybrid peacemaking as "composite forms of practice, norms, and thinking that emerge from the introduction of different groups, worldviews and activity" (p. 22). Richmond (2015) echoes Uesugi et al. when he defines hybrid peacemaking as a combination of two models, the international and local. Richmond states,

> While a negative hybrid peace may represent the outsourcing of power and norms from international to the state or society, a more positive hybrid form would be representative of a contextually rooted process through which broader political and social injustice is addressed, across local and international scales. A positive hybrid form of peace implies that significant legitimacy and agency emerge from local scale. The local constitutes the state and international through networks and relationality (though some locales are more important than others) (2015, p. 51).

Uesugi et al.'s (2020) theory of hybrid peacebuilding is a perspective that challenges the conventional approaches to peacebuilding that focus on the liberal practice of state building. Instead, it emphasizes the dynamic interactions and relationships among different actors, norms, and practices in post-peace accord settings. Hybrid peacebuilding aims to capture the complexity and diversity of peace processes that are shaped by historical, cultural, and contextual factors. Richmond advocates for a post-liberal peace that is based on emancipation, dialogue, and recognition of multiple forms of agency and authority. He argues that hybrid peacebuilding can create spaces for local actors to negotiate with external actors and shape their own peace outcomes (Richmond, 2011, 2016). The third point is that hybridization is about interaction and power play and how these two influence the negotiation and renegotiation of actors in societies (Mac Ginty, 2011). Hybridity focuses on the interaction between local and international actors, structures, and efforts, and how these shape the outcomes of peacebuilding.

Mac Ginty et al (2012, p.4) defines hybrid peace as" the outcome of the interaction between top-down and bottom-up" peace initiatives "'and" proposes a four-part model to analyze the factors that shape hybrid peace: "the compliance powers of liberal peace" agents, "the" incentivizing "powers of liberal peace agents", the resistance or adaptation capacities of local actors, and the alternative forms of peacemaking presented by local actors.

In contrast, Paris' (2011) theory of hybrid peacebuilding is a critique of the conventional liberal peacebuilding approach that focuses on state building and institutional reforms. Paris (2011) argues that liberal peacebuilding often ignores or marginalizes the local context, culture, and agency, and imposes a one-size-fits-all model that may not be suitable or sustainable for post-peace accord societies. He proposes a hybrid peacebuilding approach that recognizes the complexity and diversity of post-peace accord settings and seeks to foster dialogue and collaboration between local and international actors, as well as between different levels of society.

Moreover, Anam (2019) argues that hybrid peacebuilding is a process of mutual learning and adaptation between local and external actors, and that it requires a relational approach that recognizes the interdependence and co-constitution of different forms of peace. Anam also highlights the role of emotions, affect and embodiment in hybrid peacebuilding, and calls for a feminist perspective that challenges the gendered power dynamics in post-peace accord societies. Hybridity should not be seen as the "melding of one pure entity into another. Rather, it is a complex process of variable geometry with multiple and constantly moving parts" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 72). Again, hybridization does not concern itself with the introduction of new features into a society, but instead "with how people, structures, and ideas evolve and adapt" as Mac Ginty referred to this as "development" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 73).

That said, Zondi (2014, 2017) proposes a decolonial approach to peacebuilding that challenges the Eurocentric assumptions and practices of liberal peacebuilding. He suggests that hybrid peacebuilding can foster pluralism, diversity, and intercultural dialogue among different epistemologies and ontologies of peace.

Despite the growing body of literature on hybridization, scholars have yet to establish a definitive distinction between "specific types of hybridity," leading to a lack of clarity regarding its meaning. Tabias Polzer et al. (2017) offers a definition that closely aligns with my usage of the term hybridity in my study. Polzer and colleagues define hybridity as:

> The simultaneous appearance of institutional logic in organizational combinations (eventually leading to the replacement of a logic) and more robust combinations in the form of layering and blending. While blending refers to hybridity as an 'amalgamate' with the original components that are no longer discernible, the notion of layering conceptualizes hybridity in a way that the various elements, or clusters thereof, are added on top of, or alongside, each other, similar to sediment layers in geology (p. 2)

My understanding of hybridity diverges from the conventional interpretation and that provided by Polzer and his colleagues. While I concur with Polzer et al. that hybridity does not entail the loss of distinct characteristics by the entities being combined, my perspective likens it more to weaving a sleeping mat than to layering "as in laying" geological strata. In my view, hybridity involves blending, and I employ the metaphor of a sleeping mat to elucidate this concept. Just as weaving a mat with threads of different colors preserves the individual elements of the material and the colors of the threads, which symbolize the two conflict resolution models in this context, remain distinct, each manifesting prominently at the appropriate juncture, with the Indigenous culture serving as the foundational base. This is the conceptual framework through which hybridity is approached in this study.

Conclusion

The application of the liberal peacebuilding model in inter-ethnic conflicts has not yielded the needed results. In some cases, the model has exacerbated the conflict instead of promoting peaceful co-existence, as witnessed in the Kenyan ethnopolitical conflict. One major drawback of the liberal approach identified in this discussion is the fact that it does not provide the necessary space for the involvement of local actors, agencies, structures, and institutions. In short, traditional/Indigenous ways of peacemaking and resources are not included in the peacebuilding efforts driven by the liberal peacebuilding model. This was the case in the Marsabit conflict that has been reoccurring in Kenya. However, based on a review of the various forms of peacebuilding, the best alternative approach is one that is inclusive, interactive, bottom-up, long-term, innovative, and connected strongly to the cultural resources of the community in conflict. This approach would foster a greater recognition of the necessity of peacebuilding in inter-ethnic conflicts such as Kenya, and the most suitable approach for meeting that objective of a peacebuilding that is sustainable and legitimate in the eyes of the people mostly affected by conflict.

Local communities, therefore, must be involved in peacemaking both at the local and national levels. This can be done through deliberate state policy and constitutional reforms that empower and transform local resources and structures. At the community level, the knowledge and skills of local actors must be developed further. Moreover, there is the need for continuous research, teaching, and practice of Indigenous peacemaking. This will provide first-hand information about the various Indigenous methods that exist and how such methods can be integrated into the peacebuilding processes.

The literature reviewed above represents an overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the peacebuilding approach in ethnically divided societies. Drawing on both the theoretical and empirical contributions, two propositions are developed which will be examined in relation to the Borana and Gabra conflict. The two propositions are:

1. New or alternative mechanisms and strategies are needed to prevent, mitigate, and transform inter-ethnic conflict, and

2. It is necessary to assess the effectiveness of such mechanisms and strategies in solving conflict related to ethnic problems in the arena of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Research Methods

Introduction

This study was based on a two-pronged methodological approach: (1) a historical analysis based on primary and secondary sources; and (2) a virtual ethnographic approach which involved oral interviews conducted on a one-to-one basis via Zoom using semi-structured questions. Primary sources, also called original sources, are those records or materials that were created during the period under study. They include eye-witness accounts of specific events, participants in given events, church registers, diaries, government records, newspapers, and letters. Secondary sources are written accounts and interpretations based on primary sources that provide accounts that attempt to explain how and why events happened the way they did (Tosh, 2015). The historical literature analysis provided insight into the understanding of different permutations that the Gada system has undergone over the years.

The historical literature review in this study had two specific purposes. First, it assisted in summarizing and evaluating written sources on the Gada system, and the cultural tenets that undergird it, which helped me to gain a better understanding of my main topic. Second, the literature review helped situate my research in relation to extant knowledge of the history of the Borana people and the Gada System, as mentioned in the introduction.

The secondary literature review began in the Introductory chapter and ran throughout the thesis. To that extent, I examined literature related to the history, and culture of the Borana and the Gada system before I conducted oral interviews, mostly for the purposes of contextualization, although the literature examination continued beyond the introduction. The literature around the topic that was examined was used to substantively critique the interview data.

For my secondary resources, I used internet research, library research, newspapers, monographs, journals, grey literature, and magazines. Kenya's libraries hold some primary sources on the Gada system and the Borana culture, and I ordered some scanned copies of some monographs and articles that offered some insights into the precepts and practices of the Gada system. Documentary holdings in Kenya's libraries and digital archives are accessible through online services, and primary sources on the Borana and the Gada system and its practices were scanned and emailed to me.

This qualitative study was primarily oral interview data driven. To that end, I conducted oral interviews which in turn formed part of my primary sources. The oral interview component included two groups of people, the traditional leaders, who are the custodians of Indigenous knowledge and practices, and Non-Government Organization (NGO) leaders who are involved in peacebuilding in the Borana community. Both groups were accessible to me via Zoom. My interviews were in two sets. My questions were open-ended to create room for participants to provide in-depth responses independent of the researcher's direction. The research method was two pronged. The first prong consists of historical literature that provided the context of the interviews and became part of the data and its discussion. The second prong was the oral interviews from participants, which were conducted via virtual ethnography.

According to Graizbord, Rodrigues-Muniz and Baiocchi (2017), virtual ethnography is one of the new forms of ethnographic research, which is mediated through technology, and is conducted virtually. As such, it does not require a physical presence on site. Potentially, this kind of research is broad ranging with respect to data. When it started in the late 1990s, virtual ethnographers were researching virtual communities in the cyber space - dating sites, online discussions that departed from the traditional/conventional face-to-face participant-observation

approach that had become a central defining feature of ethnography. The group that favored this kind of approach were the theory-driven sociological ethnographers. For anthropologists, getting to a site was crucial, given that at the time the research was being done by foreigners who did not speak the language or know that culture, let alone understand the local practices (Burrell, 2017). For these reasons, immersion within the community they were studying was a must, unless they worked from notes by other scholars/anthropologists. This is not the rationale provided by sociologists, who argued that such direct immersion was not necessary (Sanjek, 2014).

Virtual ethnography via Zoom was used to understand the community members' views of conflict and peacebuilding. Virtual methods like observations are used in the generation of data. I used semi-structured interviews to generate data. My approach to the research including interactions with the participants during the Zoom process was informed by Indigenous research principles (Smith, 2021). I was guided by the classical concept of liminality, defined as a transition or state of in between-ness, a phase that a society passes through whereby there is no clear demarcation between the new and the old values.

Liminality assisted me in tracking the evolution of the Gada model, and how this model contributed to and borrowed from other peacebuilding processes, as I worked to identify how Indigenous liminality (Gada) can inform theory and practice in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Dunn, 2009). I began my analysis by sifting through data for themes and organizing them according to the objective of my thesis study.

Data Gathering

To gather data for my research, I used archival sources and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were nonscheduled. I chose nonscheduled interviews for the advantages they offered. One, such interviews assisted in avoiding asking leading questions by not requiring written probes,

normally preferred by the interviewer. This type of interview allowed more flexibility and adaptability to the interviewee's responses, and helped avoid the risk of bias from predetermined probes that the interviewer might favor. For example, if the interviewee mentioned a challenge or a success that they faced in their work, the interviewer could ask follow-up questions to elicit more details and understand their perspective better. Nonscheduled interviews also enabled the interviewer to explore new topics or themes that emerged during the conversation, which enriched the data and provided deeper insights.

Besides producing in-depth responses to questions raised, a second advantage of nonscheduled interviews was that it reduces chances of a participant giving rehearsed answers. The only major weakness of such an approach is that it was time-consuming and demanded more active listening. The population group with which I worked, namely African elders, and Africans in general do not work well with fixed questions and probes, which are an integral part of moderate to high scheduled interviews (Schneider, 2012).

Participants

In this research study, I interviewed twenty-five traditional leaders, between the ages of 40-75 consisting of chiefs, sub-chiefs, kraal heads, elder men, and elder women. This age group is revered for its knowledge of Borana culture. These elders are charged with the litigation of cases, conflict resolution, and with organizing community festivities and charitable works.

All these traditional leaders play an important role in the Borana community as custodians of Borana culture and customs, as well as serving on the council charged with the litigation of cases, conflict resolution, and organized community festivities and charitable works. However, the composition of the council is all male. This is a product of a gendered historical process and culture. However, women are invited to participate on council meetings whenever the issue of

women's abuse is involved. My sampling of participants was a purposive one. Informants were chosen based on their knowledge of peacebuilding in the community. I interviewed two categories of informants. The primary informants were Borana Indigenous leaders, consisting of traditional leaders- chiefs, sub-chiefs and kraal heads and elders. The second category consists of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). I interviewed eight participants in two separate NGOs working in the community with elders and government on local community peacebuilding projects. The NGOs have an established record of peacebuilding work in these communities, and so they have potentially valuable insights into which strategies have worked, and which have not.

Sampling

Most qualitative studies require sampling of the population of participants, and the size of the sample. There is no fixed sample size for researchers conducting qualitative research (Patton, 2015). The size of the sample depends on the method used (Shaw & Holland 2014) and the complexity and depth of the study. Although there is no set sample size of participants, a sample of 20 to 30 participants is considered a reasonable number in a qualitative study from which a researcher can draw insightful finding (Creswell, 2015; Mason, 2010). Quantitative research samples tend to have larger sample sizes than qualitative samples. Citing Lewis Ritchie and Elam (2003), Mason (2010 p. 1), provides reasons for this difference.

He observes,

> There is a point of diminishing return to a qualitative sample—as the study goes on more data does not necessarily lead to more information. This is because one occurrence of a piece of data, or a code, is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis framework. Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic.

The size can be even smaller than the numbers mentioned above. For instance, Guetterman, (2015, p. 4) states that six individuals for ethnographical and grounded theory is an acceptable sample size.

Table 1: Participants Interviewed

CATEGORY	POSSIBLE INTERVIEWS	ACTUAL INTERVIEW'S
ELDERS	**25**	**25**
NGOS	**16**	**8**

Role of the Researcher

An awareness of the researcher's positionality can be a crucial step forward for the researcher and participants to appreciate group diversity and increase understanding of the cultures and environments they study (Thomas, 1993). I am conscious of how positionality or one's standpoint might be impacting my interpretations of the issues under investigation. My identity is very crucial in research because identity is what connects me as a researcher to the group I am studying. Thus, identity can have an advantage of being a connector if the people you are researching are of the same identity as you. Ultimately, identity might have the effect of influencing the outcome of one's study, and hence self-disclosure is very crucial in such research projects where a researcher shares the same features as the participants (Easby, 2016; Uesugi, et al., 2021).

Where Am I Situated in This Research?

I am a Borana, which means I share the same ethnicity and culture as the participants. Belonging to the same ethnic group, and sharing a similar culture gives me an advantage as an insider to develop rapport with participants. This insider-knowledge will form part of my primary data. As Ellis et al. (2010) argues, autoethnography helps the researcher to understand his or her experience based on their cultural biases and perceptions. In instances where sharing the same identity is seen as a liability to making trustworthy findings in critical social research, it has always been around the researcher's biography regarding race, class, and gender. This observation calls for my awareness as a researcher of how my own views and perspectives are imposed. To address this limitation, I must be willing to accept participants' views even when they go counter to my own pre-formed expectations or challenges my interests (Day, 2012). Qualitative research methods though, challenges objectivity, understood as meaning the existence of objective singular truth independent personal subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. It is "radically relational" and is influenced by the researcher's values, interests, religion, inclinations, and social location (Wertz, 2011).

The Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) approach I used to collect and interpret data is relational, and therefore by nature subjectivity is one of its central tenets (Reid et. al., 2014). This means that a researcher is implicated in the research topic that the researcher chooses, the questions raised, and the findings made, all of which are indicative of who the researcher is as a person and investigator (Cole & Knowles, 2001). This means that as a researcher, I can never be an outright insider or outsider in my community as I have a hybrid identity of being Borana and being Canadian. As Reid et al. (2014) contended, "Outsideness, and insideness are not seen as fixed or static positions, rather they are ever shifting and permeable social creations that are differently experienced and expressed" (p.50). What researchers are called to do then is to be

reflexive of the choices they make in every stage of their study, keeping in mind that the choices they make have implications for the knowledge they produce (Day, 2012). So, with the kind of research methodology I have chosen, understanding one's location as a researcher is indispensable.

Over the years, IRM has met strong opposition from scholars that espouse the traditional positivistic and post-positivistic models. These scholars questioned the limits of memory, subjectivity and multiple power dynamics within the interviewer and interviewee relationship. Instead, practitioners of the IRM paradigm problematized intersectionality, positionality, and power dynamics as the researcher generated oral interviews.

This includes but is not limited to the decision by the interviewee to participate in the interview, the subjectivity of both the interviewer and the interviewee, and the influence the interviewer has in shaping the outcome of the collected interviews. This directly goes into how important it is that I as a researcher should do some self-reflexivity – self-critical questioning about how I draw knowledge from interviewees and how power relations operate in the research process (Taylor & White, 2000). My position as a young female Borana academic affords me several benefits, such as an easy rapport with community members, but it also shapes my construction of interviews, and my knowledge of language and culture. However, as a young female researcher, I also expect to encounter differences in authority and power related to the cultural tendency of male participants who may feel reluctant to engage in a one-on-one discussion. This contrasts with female respondents, who may feel free to converse with me about my interviews. To bridge this potential inhibition on the part of males, I worked to build rapport with them by showing respect and sensitivity to their culture, of which I have the advantage of being a part. This gave me the advantage of understanding my location within the community's hierarchical social structure, and

within the matrix of gender and social status, in a community that values respect, especially for elders and culture.

That said, it is important for the researcher to minimize instances where ethnicity and culture are seen as a liability in making trustworthy findings. To that end, I took the following steps to counter my own personal subjectivity and intersubjectivity which could have potentially influenced my findings:

1. Checking back with my interviewee on the accuracy of my interviews with them helped avoid situations where I only generated data that aligned with my own theoretical models.

2. I avoided seeking universal truths by putting out different perspectives based on the research data.

3. Some members of the community had formal academic training and were therefore capable of giving me feedback on my findings, and of speaking to issues of factual and theoretical biases

4. I verified my findings by cross-referencing printed literature written during or around that time (Holt, 2003, p. 3).

The methodology used for data gathering and interpretation throughout my thesis is IRM. Although IRM has some challenges, its usefulness lies in focus of Indigenous culture, the voiceless, community concerns and emancipatory ethos. By using it for this study, there is a greater potential of gaining new insights in the understanding of Indigenous processes of peacemaking. This approach is also important for research in seeking understanding of lived experiences of marginalized participants.

Data Collection Analysis

The researcher conducted most of the interviews in Borana, and Kiswahili, and occasionally in English, especially when gathering information from individuals representing NGOs. Before receiving the final script, from which the researcher primarily worked, the researcher initially transcribed the research interview data from Borana to English. While the researcher did most of the transcribing, the assistance of a professional transcriber was enlisted due to the large volume of data. Although the transcription was not verbatim -capturing pauses, hesitations in speech, and instances of incoherence, the researcher ensured to maintain the fundamental concepts and integrity of each interview (Abrams, 2016). In cases where the sentence construction conveyed a more nuanced meaning in Borana compared to English, the research aimed to preserve the original sentence structure as it appeared in Borana.

I used a content analysis approach to analyze and interpret data generated during the interviews. From this analysis, some of the themes that emerged were highlighted. As stated by Jennissen et al. (2018), content analysis is a "scientific method where written materials are analyzed systematically, and then, grouped based on specific criteria to make information obtained available and finally, to provide a ground for future research" (p. 177). Marvasti (2019) defines qualitative content analysis as "an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without much quantification" (p. 5). Further, content analysis generates insights from data and information which have the potential to develop appropriate mechanisms for understanding the problem and finding solutions to the identified problem.

Accordingly, content analysis is the systematic analysis of the content of texts generated from the respondents during the research interviews. Content analysis can be employed when

undertaking qualitative research. This includes the responses provided by various respondents, the reasons for their answers, and the impact their opinions and answers had on the research topic. Normally, content analysis is conducted by the following four steps. First, the researcher begins by sampling a selected set of interviews and documents for analysis. Second, the researcher identifies and applies rules to divide each text into segments or themes that can be treated as separate units of analysis. Third, the researcher constructs and applies one or more concepts to each theme. Finally, the coded data is analyzed inductively to determine which themes occur most frequently, in what contexts, and how they are related to each other (Marvasti, 2019).

As described by Thomas (2006) it is a systematic procedure that "uses raw qualitative data to derive themes and concepts or develop a model through interpretations made from the data by the researcher" and "allows research findings to emerge from the frequent and significant themes inherent in raw data" (p. 238). Before I engaged in the analysis, I took the following steps: First, I transcribed the oral interviews, and compiled field notes. Second, I merged both the oral interview data and field notes into one document, after which I identified themes from the oral interview data using content analysis. This involved data-driven analysis, whereby I meticulously reviewed the participants' initial interview responses to constructed patterns based on emerging themes. For example, if social justice is mentioned at least five times, then it becomes a theme. In other words, I generated themes by reviewing the data that emerged from the interview.

Ethical Issues Considered

Considering the minimal security risk within the study area and the involvement of human subjects, the following ethical issues were taken into consideration to protect the participants in the research, the researcher, and the University of Manitoba:

1.) In the first place, I submitted a research application to the Research Ethics Board 2 of the University of Manitoba, with regards to the ethical issues and the necessary steps that would be taken to address these issues both in the field and off the research field. This step is to ensure that the research is within the ethical requirements of the University of Manitoba, and the general research community, which will contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

2.) *Access and respect for the culture and traditions of the study community:* Seeking permission and gaining access to undertake the study is vital in ensuring that the findings of the research are trustworthy. In that regard, I contacted the acting Chief of the community to ask for his permission to conduct the research before the study commenced.

3.) *Informed consent:* Participation in the research process by the various respondents is voluntary. In that regard, the research developed a consent form outlining the benefits of the research to the researcher and the participants, the possible risks that would be associated with the research, and the necessary steps that were taken to guard the privacy of the participants. The respondents could withdraw from the study at any point in time without penalty.

4.) *Assessing harm, risks, and benefits:* The study took all necessary measures, including first stage counseling, and it incorporated a counselor into the research team to ensure that all participants were protected from any harm or risk that arose during the research, interviews or after the research has been completed.

5.) *Respect for privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality*: The privacy of the participants in this study was held to the highest level of protection. It was the right of the participants to either participate or not to participate in the study, to respond or not to interview questions, and either to respond to my emails and telephone calls or not. They could withdraw from the study at any time. The study

did not force the participants to participate in the research or address interview questions that they were not comfortable responding to, and this went for emails and telephone calls as well.

6.) *Respecting the rights of vulnerable groups of people who are respondents such as women, people with disabilities, LGBTTQ* citizens, ex-combatants, and youth*: The participants included in the study are classified as vulnerable such as the women's groups, the youth groups, and the Association of Persons with Disabilities. The researcher took measures to ensure that their rights were respected and protected.

Limitations of the Study

There were three significant limitations to my research, all related to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges as my work relied heavily on qualitative research involving face-to-face interactions and observations to gather data. Due to travel and contact restrictions, I had to resort to conducting virtual interviews on Zoom. While this video conferencing platform provided me with access to my interviewees, it was not without its challenges. Technical issues arose due to intermittent or no internet connectivity, resulting in delays. Ultimately, I managed to conduct the interviews, but it took longer compared to in-person interviews. Additionally, there were practical limitations related to using Zoom. For instance, it restricted the scope and depth of the research by hindering full non-verbal communication, including body language, gestures, and eye contact. These aspects are crucial for gaining insights into participants' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (Abrams, 2016). Furthermore, Zoom does not allow researchers to observe participants in their natural environments, such as their homes, workplaces, or communities, which could potentially influence their responses and actions.

Second, due to the travel and contact restrictions imposed by governments worldwide, including Kenya, I was unable to fully access primary sources at the Kenyan Archives. These sources, which I had intended to inspect, were not available online. This limitation made it challenging to access historical background information that could have enriched my contextual data.

Third, because of the pandemic, some of my participants were not readily available for interviews. They either fell ill themselves or had family members who were unwell, leading to further delays in the interview process.

Overall, these limitations, stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, impacted the research process by necessitating virtual interviews, hindering access to primary sources, and causing delays due to participant availability.

The fourth challenge I faced was the paucity of sources on the Borana from sociological and anthropological perspectives, spanning both the colonial and postcolonial periods. Consequently, there was a scarcity of usable literature, especially in these disciplines. Some colonial contextualized information might have been helpful, there were only limited critical investigations into the life histories of the Borana, as well as their socio-economic and cultural aspects. The written literature and historiographical writing about the Borana seemed weak and repetitive, and lacking in sufficient historical context. The Borana's social life conditions include their collective notions of socio-economic conditions and notions of gender equality. I could not find anything written by colonialists or organized religions, either Christian missionaries or Muslims, neither could I find information written by the Borana people themselves about themselves.

Information on the Borana in Kenya was mainly written by renowned international scholars to whom, Borana culture was however foreign, and as such they could not provide a nuanced version of their cultural, religious, social life experiences. Among these select scholars was a British scholar, Paul T. W. Baxter, the pioneer author, who spent 60 years writing on the Oromo and their subethnic groups, including the Borana; the German Gunter Schlee, two Italian researchers, Marco Bassi and Marco Aguilar, all of whom primarily focused on Borana history and religion, with some insights into their anthropology. One Ethiopian scholar, Legassa, primarily delved into the traditional legal aspects of the Borana. Additionally, Kenyan scholars, Abdullah Shongolo, Gufo Oba, and Hassan Arero examined their life from anthropological and sociological viewpoints, including ethnic conflicts and raiding, but these studies lacked a complex and rich historical context despite being rich in interview data.

While the information provided by these scholars is valuable, it has three fundamental challenges. First, although it offers useful empirical data, it falls short of providing in-depth critical literature on the Borana's socio-cultural, economic, and religious life and their rich social conditions. As a result, there tends to be repetition in their works. Most of these authors extensively cite Baxter's seminal works with little nuance in his interpretation. Second, most of the literature produced by these scholars on the Borana deals with what happened during the precolonial and colonial times but lacks information on the post-colonial period on the people's lives, except for studies on ethnic conflicts such as cattle raiding and resource-based conflicts. Although some work has been done from the Ethiopian side, it is still relatively weak lacking particularly with regards to Borana women. Third, most of the writings are essentially observations of the Borana life rather than their self-description, even in instances where the writings were based on interview data. I need to make it clear that I am in no way underestimating the contributions that these scholars have

made towards our understanding of the culture, religion, and history of the Borana people. Researchers among ethnic groups living in Northern Kenya face the same challenges as have been well articulated by Pankhurst (2002).

Reflections and Challenges on My Research Experience

It is a common practice, and one that is of increasing importance, for researchers to reflect on challenges they faced during their research to shine light on the effectiveness of the qualitative tools and methods utilized in the research. This research has been a journey of self-discovery, exploring my identity, culture, and the violence and dehumanization experienced by my people under British colonialism. While I could only grasp these experiences vicariously, I directly confront coloniality in my daily life. Growing up in the capital city, I had limited knowledge of my heritage, which fueled my passion to investigate it through this research, with a view to introducing change in the realm of peace. Through this process, I have gained a deeper understanding of poverty, environmental destruction, and the importance of preserving knowledge and traditions, as imparted by the stories generously shared with me by my elders. Also, I have gleaned insights into conducting successful interviews within my community, which diverge from the Eurocentric approach which is normally taught. This journey illuminated truths about my people's collective experiences that were previously unknown to me.

A considerable amount of literature delves into the practices of researchers conducting studies among individuals, particularly in situations characterized by an asymmetry of power between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is commonly stressed that interviewers should remain cognizant of their own socio-economic status and educational background relative to that of the interviewee, particularly if the latter is less educated, economically disadvantaged, or hails from a rural background—thus giving rise to social and material power differentials. Scholars like

Scourfield and Welsh (2003, cited in D'Cruz, et al., 2007, p. 76) proposed that individuals lacking access to material resources might suffer from adverse effects due to structural inequalities, potentially resulting in a diminished sense of self-understanding and autonomy in decision-making. Hence, they argued, exercising caution is paramount to prevent exploitation or undue advantage-taking of such interviewees, as it is presumed, they may feel intimidated by the interviewer's economic and educational privileges.

In my own research, I observed that while most of my participants were literate, they possessed lower levels of Western education compared to mine. Contrary to my expectations, I discovered that the individuals I interviewed, although they held me in high regard, were not intimidated by my socio-economic status, educational achievements, or that I was coming from North America. For them, relationships tramped power dynamics, prioritizing personal connections over other factors. This led me to the realization that it is imperative for researchers to grasp the cultural nuances of the individuals they are studying, including the latter's preferences for the interview setting and their expectations to be treated with respect.

This recalls an anecdote involving President Clinton during his visit to Kenya. In a conversation with a Maasai elder, when Clinton mentioned he was the President of the United States, the elder likened him to a king. However, the elder's perception of power differed—he inquired about Clinton's cattle, implying that genuine wealth and status was based on ownership of livestock rather than money in the bank. What this story illustrates is that there is no straight line between the interviewer's educational and economic privileged status, and how they are perceived by their interviewee. Sometimes what connects the interviewer with the interviewee transcends the formal attributes attached to positionality, or issues of power deferential as what regulates the set-up of an interview are relationships, sometimes even for outsiders. The creation

of rapport and trust calls for respect between the interviewer and the interviewee. This anecdote resonates with Ferguson's (2022) perspective on individuals often deemed vulnerable, such as welfare recipients. Ferguson argues that despite their economic vulnerability, they possess self-awareness and the ability to devise strategies for survival. Some may argue that this perspective overvalues an individual's capacity to comprehend themselves, irrespective of prevailing structural constraints (D'Cruz et al., 2007, p. 76). I want to clarify that I am not suggesting this. Rather, I believe in striking a healthy balance between personal agency and acknowledging the impact of structural factors. What I have gleaned from this experience is the importance of recognizing that my interview participants possess strengths, warranting equitable treatment, and in most cases have more power conferred on them by virtue of them being sources of information which I as the interviewer am seeking. I came to understand that reflexivity was ongoing throughout all phases of the interview process, prompting me to consistently challenge my assumptions about the participants and avoid anything that might impede my interviews, particularly the assumption that my access to education and resources puts them at a disadvantage.

As we gear up for field work, we are taught that it is essential to document our research questions and allocate time for each query we field, akin to a checklist for each response before we embark on the field work. We are taught to stick to the questions which the Research Ethics Board 2 approves and to keep a detached stance. Although I abode by approved script of questions, I found it difficult to stick to the formulaic question and answer format. I found that a conversational storytelling research interview was more acceptable to my participants, and they spoke more deeply to the issues raised by my questions. The format of the interview was different.

Initial Set-up Interview Interaction

As such during my interviews, the initial phase often involved friendly greetings, inquiries about my family's well-being, discussions about my neighbors, and my current whereabouts. This introductory exchange typically spanned between 30 minutes to an hour. Despite initiating the interview process, interviewees frequently veered off-topic, delving into unrelated matters before circling back to the primary discussion points. I interpreted this as a desire for shared authority not only within the interview setting but also in shaping the interview outcomes. This approach resonates with Michael Frisch's (1990) concept of "shared authority," which underscores participatory action research principles in oral interview scenarios. It became evident that sticking solely to formal interview questions often failed to yield the desired outcomes.

Short Answers Without Context

I quickly realized that soliciting direct answers without providing context to respondents proved ineffective. That was because they viewed questions as multifaceted, with various possible answers and perspectives. At times, participants challenged the premise of my inquiries, showing a greater interest in discussion and dialogue rather than simple question-and-answer exchanges. They sought answers to questions expressed in diverse ways and were keen on hearing my opinions and experiences, acknowledging that I too brought a unique perspective to the interview or discussion. This approach reflects a way of knowing that values multiple viewpoints rather than seeking a singular, authoritative answer. Two metaphors described by Howard Las Varas Tsai (2020) to illustrate different ways of understanding are apt here. Tsai, in his work on ritual and ethnicity in the Indies, employs the metaphor of a staircase to represent a singular, authoritative, positivist approach – like scientific learning. Conversely, he uses a tree as a metaphor to convey the uniqueness of each culture and perspective, highlighting equality among them. This theme resonates with the concept of "two-eyed seeing" or *Etuaptumumk* in the *Mi'kmaw* language,

emphasizing the integration of diverse perspectives in learning. I found that personal engagement fosters more genuine and thoughtful responses compared to a formal, structured approach. This method, however, is time consuming. Despite the time invested, I emerged from these interactions with a deeper understanding of my topic than I would have through a quick, Eurocentric approach. Conversations not only made interviews reflexive but also reflective, enriching the exchange of ideas. This ties in with Jessica Senehi's (2020) storytelling methodology that highlights profound respect for the research participants knowledge as the reflexive researcher is writing with people in a conversational approach that honors their stories that make us feel stronger (pp. 47-54)

Primary Documents Challenges

During my preliminary consultations with the National Archives in Kenya, I was informed that the archive held collections of Northern Frontier District provincial, district, and intelligence reports, and that they had been digitized, allowing for remote access to some of them. However, it turned out that none of them had been digitized. Then, *COVID-19* hit in 2020 just as I was preparing to go to Kenya to conduct my fieldwork and archival research. By the end of March 2020, travel restrictions had been introduced worldwide, preventing me from traveling.

After travel restrictions got lifted, I traveled to Kenya to conduct archival research in person and to visit with people I had remotely interviewed via zoom. However, this marked the onset of numerous challenges. Initially, the lack of a comprehensive catalogue inventory hindered my ability to gain an overview of the contents within the archive, particularly concerning the Northern Frontier District, the focus of my investigation. Most of the staff exhibited a lack of specialized knowledge, with only one individual possessing rudimentary expertise who offered some assistance.

While the documents contained valuable information, they presented various obstacles, some of which proved insurmountable. Many documents featured blank or blurred pages, rendering them indecipherable, and their lack of digitization made them non-searchable, demanding tedious and time-consuming efforts. Additionally, discerning whether certain information belonged within the collection in which I found it posed challenges for proper citation. Upon my return to Canada, I eagerly sought access to Kenyan archive documents located in the United States. However, my enthusiasm dwindled when I discovered that rather than being available in digital or PDF format, the documents had been transferred onto microfilm. Although one of the libraries in Canada had readers capable of digitizing the material, facilitating accessibility, they lacked search functionality. Consequently, the only method to sift through the material was to painstakingly download it page by page and save it onto my external drive in PDF format, a task that consumed countless hours. Despite the assistance of the staff at both institutions, they lacked specialized knowledge regarding document handling and proper citation protocols. Even the personnel at the U.S. library, through which I acquired the microfilms through the University of Manitoba library loan department, encountered similar challenges.

Overall, I am incredibly grateful to the librarians and archivists in Kenya, Canada, and the United States who generously donated their time to assist with my work. Without their invaluable help, accessing the archival materials would have been significantly more challenging.

Emotional Roller Coaster

While in Kenya, I took some time to visit Marsabit, my study focus area. Although I had visited these areas before, this time I viewed them through a different lens, informed by my interviews, readings of colonial literature, and archival documents written by District Administrations and Provincial Administrators. I reminded myself that, like my oral interviews based on semi-

structured questions rather than hypotheses, I would approach my visit of Marsabit with an open mind—a mental landscape rather than a roadmap. However, this did not mean I lacked prior knowledge of the place. I already knew about precolonial communities that inhabited that area who were non-hierarchical, the idyllic landscapes around Mt. Marsabit, and the waterholes that different ethnic groups shared, which served as centers of daily practices of peacemaking and peace-sustaining, even as colonizers later used them as boundaries (KNA PC NFD/2/2/3 Marsabit District Handing Over Report, 1945. p. 8). Conversely, I also had read about the existence of poisoned wells, massive land expropriation, forcible land removals, the romanticized images of camels and nomads, and the frontier mythology with its embedded feature of violence during the colonial era.

I spent some time navigating mostly the margins of my Marsabit, which is part of the Northen Frontier District, that during the colonial times was sold as an exotic place through the images of an undeveloped frontier, a mythological camel and romanticized a romanticized nomad. I visited three places around the county: Mt. Marsabit, Lake Turkana Wind Power (MLTWP), and Marsabit town. I started with the sacred place around Mount Marsabit, once renowned as a center for peacemaking among different ethnic groups, and a revered place where humans and non-humans found oneness and peace. Communities kept returning to this space to strengthen bonds of peaceful co-existence. However, the place was conspicuously absent, and that absence represented traditional ethos epistemicide (Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 1996, 2018, 2014, 2005) to me - the death of traditional processes of peace and ethnic co-existence. As I explored the area, I could hear conversations from my interviewees, primary sources, and me. At the MLTWP, I witnessed the power of private ownership, where locals lost their ancestral lands and identities became essentialized, where they were once fluid. Marginal benefits extended to locals by the

private company were fiercely contested because compensation for land was minimal, and the legality of land acquisitions by businesses came under scrutiny.

What struck me was the stark lifestyle contrast between the small community of workers and families living around MLTWP and those residing in the adjacent town of Loiyangalani. While the housing provided for turbine engineers boasted amenities like running water, constant electricity, and Wi-Fi connectivity, Loiyangalani town lacked all these necessities, with prevalent poverty evident. This disparity was similarly apparent in Marsabit. I found the normalization of poverty and the perpetuation of outdated tropes about "unpopulated" and "unproductive" (Mosley & Watson, 2016, pp. 452-475) lands deeply troubling. The Frontier landscape narrative, a significant component of LTWP's sales pitch, drew inspiration from both colonial and post-colonial contexts.

The corporate presence resulted in intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, driven by competition for resources, and undermined peace resolution processes among ethnic groups. Colonialists initiated divisive mechanisms, which were perpetuated by post-colonial elites and corporations. I experienced colonialism indirectly and coloniality directly. Despite attempting to find solace in the resilience and heroism of my ancestors who endured colonial violence and in those of us facing the legacies of colonialism in its post-colonial aftermath, I found myself overwhelmed by trauma. Questions consumed me: How does one honestly recount experiences that haunt them? How can I even begin to grasp the reconciliation process amidst such anguish? Is cartesian objectivity even a possibility in such instances? Is there any need for peace in such a community, and why? I found myself concurring with Sean Byrne et al. (2018) when they argued that understanding imperialism's practice and implications is pivotal for reconciliation in conflict settings plagued by structural violence and in post-peace accord environments (Byrne, Clarke, & Rahman, 2018).

Reflecting on this insight, I immersed myself in the situated knowledge of my people, guiding me toward embracing my identity as Borana, Kenyan, Canadian, and African—identities distinct yet harmonious and complementary. The answer to my question then was, the place of pain, loss and violence as pointed out by Sean Byrne, et al, was where peace processes begin in once colonized places.

Ancestral/Blood Memories: The Past That Never Left - Teachings from the Wisest

Traditional knowledge is communicated in multiple ways and forms. Typically, it is conveyed through songs, didactic methods, folklore, and stories. Stories, in various forms, serve as the primary conduit through which knowledge, wisdom, meaning, and traditions are passed down (Senehi, 2020). Unsurprisingly, stories are widely favored as instruments of effective communication. They evoke emotions, impart lessons, sustain mental health, and convey profound truths in simple yet effective ways.

I sat down with my maternal Akoo (grandmother) to listen to the stories she grew up hearing, understanding the purposes for which they were told. I have already shared one of her stories in the introduction of my second chapter. Akoo recounted tales of the Italian and Abyssinian wars, which deeply impacted her family living on the border with Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Her people moved back and forth across the border to visit relatives on both sides. The war erupted in 1936, a year after her birth. By the time Ethiopia ended Italian colonial rule during the Second World War, she would have been seven years old. Akoo pauses, taking a deep breath before emphasizing that peace was what her people truly desired, and fighting could not achieve that. She stresses that the only path to peace was for the warring parties to sit down and negotiate their differences. War and the dispossession of her people she had already endured were key issues, compounded by the

hindrance the border posed to their free movement to visit relatives. "After all," she remarked, "the border found us."

The delineation of the border rendered their sacred centers on the Ethiopian side inaccessible water wells and grazing lands, abundant on the Ethiopian side. This border, she lamented, disrupted their traditional peace processes and livelihoods. Moreover, it was due to this border that her people established a sacred site on Mount Marsabit, which eventually became unreachable due to British colonial laws designating it as an animal sanctuary, thereby prohibiting human visits. She further articulated that what the colonial state chose to overlook was the symbiotic relationship her community had with animals and plants, allowing them to roam freely within the Mt. Marsabit Ecosystem—an integral part of their identity.

Akoo vehemently condemned Western education, Christianity, and Islam for undermining traditional institutions of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Despite this stance, she displayed a nuanced understanding of these institutions, suggesting that instead of undermining Borana traditional institutions, there should have been an exchange of beneficial practices. She argued that these other institutions, in practice, were not inherently peaceful. Akoo noted that education provided under the gaze of progress was always turned into a tool of oppressive knowledge and power. On the other hand, education and religion could be used to deconstruct the agenda of repressive institutions (Freire, 2017, 1970; Canaan Banana, 1990).

Akoo passionately reminisced about the traditional life she once lived, highlighting the lessons of reciprocity, compassion, and good neighborliness promoted by her community. She acknowledged that conflicts with neighboring ethnic groups were not absent in her grandparents' time; however, what set them apart was their unwavering commitment to seeking resolutions. More than anything else, peace was revered.

She bemoaned her people's condition of mental health, charging, "My people look sad all the time. Always complaining about one thing or the another." When I asked why she thought that she informed me that life had lost meaning because the traditional worldview of her people had been either erased or distorted. Their values are now oriented by "things" and not love for humanity and nature. She attributed all this to their loss of land, which she considered an epitome of communal relationships, relationships with the living and nonliving entities, material livelihoods, and spiritual well-being, among other things. As Akoo reflected on this aspect of colonial life, Alma M. O. Trinidad (2012, p. 1) indicting words on colonialism with my own addition of coloniality when she wrote,

> For [decades] the steady agenda of imperialism [and coloniality, my words] among Indigenous communities …has contributed to historical trauma and strikingly social conditions such as genocide, displacement, loss of land, the decimation of traditional knowledge systems, ecologies, and economies across time, people and place, and structural discrimination.

As result of these legacies, Indigenous peoples, and Akoo's people, who are my people, an array of challenges and disparities arose – poverty, mental health issues, social anomie, dysfunctional traditional mechanisms of peace processes and conflict resolution.

These conversations occurred over several days, during which I learned a great deal from my grandmother about life. First, she imparted the importance of being a good neighbor, emphasizing that living in a neighborly way entails embracing peace as a daily practice, rather than merely adopting it as a strategic approach. Second, I observed that when she became emotionally engaged in her storytelling, her thoughts flowed more abundantly, and the depth of her emotions enriched her interpretations of experiences. This taught me the significant role emotions play in understanding events and interpreting data, suggesting that they can serve as valuable tools for interpretation (Roper, 2003, p. 12).

Furthermore, I learned from Akoo's Indigenous knowledge that humans are integral part of ecosystems, blurring the lines between the living and non-living, thereby granting even non-living entities rights. These ancestral memories serve as foundational elements from which we should draw inspiration. We must write from the pain of colonial experiences of the past and the ongoing coloniality of today, guided by a liberatory hope rooted in the principles that motivated our ancestors to pursue lives characterized by peace, sustainability, and harmonious coexistence with both the living and non-living realms.

Methodology, Interview Process, and Interview as Conversation

Upon commencing my fieldwork, I found myself wrestling with the techniques of information gathering and questioning methods, as well as the complexities surrounding reflexivity and positionality, which I had studied and learned about in preparation for my research fieldwork. I grappled with the suitability of my chosen methodology and its format. I began to question the efficacy of employing reflexivity as a methodological tool and pondered the significance of positionality in research, withing an African context since they were framed from a Eurocentric perspective. The roles of reflexivity and positionality are facing increasing criticism by some scholars who say their efficacy as methodological tools is overblown (Lynch, 2000, pp. 26-54) These queries surfaced against the backdrop of my training in qualitative research and the scholarly literature to which I had been exposed.

My training primarily emphasized Eurocentric interviewing methods, notably the utilization of semi-structured questions. This approach typically involves starting with open-ended questions, followed by probes aimed at eliciting clarification on specific aspects. The interviewer progressively refines their inquiries around the core concepts under investigation until they conclude that they have obtained sufficient information in response to their queries.

While probes have the potential to provide needed answers to questions, when asked in a stoic manner, they risk objectifying the participant or intruding on their privacy. Broadly speaking, this impersonal and "stonily" approach does not resonate well with Africans, especially elders, who prefer a conversational interview setup. Consequently, I felt very uncomfortable with this line of questioning because I was concerned it made interviewees feel like, in the words of Sennett (2004, pp. 37-38), "insects under the microscope."

Two models appear to be extensively employed in qualitative research. In one model, the interviewer assumes the role of the expert, motivated to glean insights from the interviews. Conversely, interviewees are characterized as being "motivated not to know certain aspects of themselves and… they produce biological accounts which avoid such knowledge" (Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B., 2003, p.169, cited in Brinkmann, 2013). Accordingly, the interviewer prompts the interviewee to narrate their experiences, asking questions such as "describe how you felt," "what occurred next," and "elaborate" (Brinkmann, 2013). During this process of recounting events, interviewees are scantly asked to justify their responses. The questions follow a semi-fixed structure, eliciting semi-fixed answers, as there is limited scope for elaboration with such a line of questioning.

The second model, advocated by Carl Rogers, a psychoanalyst, supports client-centered psychotherapy, upon which qualitative interviewers constructed an interviewee-centered approach. In this context, the interviewee is considered the expert. This model has been conceptualized by Fontana and Prokos (2007, p. 53) in postmodern terms as polyphonic interviewing, "where the voices of the respondents are recorded with minimal influence from the researcher," and by Fontana and Frey (2005) as "a method of friendship" due to its personal, empathetic, non-directive, and humanistic characteristics, among others.

However, I find both models unacceptable because they assert a one-directional contribution in an interview situation, centering around individualistic experiences. Although Carl Roger's principles, such as being personal, humanistic, empathetic, and non-directive (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 153), are congruent with the model that could be embraced by Africans, Among the Western models I have discussed here, I find myself supporting the third, less-written-about model. This model closely aligns with an interview format with which Africans would be more comfortable. This is the epistemic research interview approach, which involves "testing, questioning, and justifying what people say" (Brinkmann, 2007, pp. 116-138).

My preferred interview method, tailored to the African context, is what I term the Conversational Research Interview Model (CRIM). This approach mirrors the Epistemic Research Interview Model (ERIM) in essence but differs in its non-confrontational nature. Unlike, the narrative and phenomenological research interviews which are essentially monologic, it fosters a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee, delving into deeper levels of conversation that shape our "interpersonal social reality and the self" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 151). As eloquently noted by Brinkmann (2013, p. 152), "conversation gives the interview a privileged position in producing knowledge about the conversational world." In this approach the interviewer sets up research interactions by creating a social space of transparency and empathy (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) to attempt to establish rapport with the interviewee.

While this model does possess some weaknesses, I firmly believe that its advantages outweigh them. Rather than getting entangled in epistemological debates, I rather-make a statement to the effect that I find this personal approach, where I, as the interviewer, engage in a conversational dialogue with the interviewee, often dialectic in nature, to be most pertinent in the African context. This preference is primarily because this approach aligns well with the African

Chapter Five

Borana Notion of Equality and the Practice of Social Justice: Traditional Institutions and the Judiciary Processes

Introduction

Informed by cultural ways of knowing and understanding. The approach centers and privileges indigenous knowledges. Provides guidance in addressing complex, theoretical, methodological, and epistemological questions. I join the conversation on models that have been produced before, and this one is one way (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Murithi, 2008).

The study focused on the traditional methods of conflict management through the Gada Model, a traditional peacebuilding mechanism. It explored the Borana society's socio-historical structure and compared it with neoliberal models of peacebuilding. The aim was to develop a blended model informed by the principles and practices of the traditional Gada Model. The approach centered on and privileged indigenous knowledge (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008; Murithi, 2008). It provided guidance in addressing complex theoretical, methodological, and epistemological questions. Broadly, it attempted to answer three research questions: 1) What models did the Borana use in the past and currently to build peace? 2) How are peace and conflict concepts understood among the Borana people? 3) How effective is each of these peace models?

To find answers to these questions, the researcher gathered oral interviews from two purposefully selected groups: the Borana elders and the NGOs embedded in the Borana community. The response rate to the researcher’s interview requests was encouraging, as the proposed number of elders was achieved. All the targeted elders accepted the interview requests. Despite their concerns that researchers often misquote them or select excerpts that misconstrue

their statements, the elders were eager to participate. The interviewed elders were between 40 and 79 years old, which is the appropriate age range for those who sat on the Council of Elders.

The same cannot be said about the level of participation by NGOs. Fewer than originally proposed participated. Initially, I planned to interview sixteen NGO leaders but ended up interviewing only eight: five from one NGO and three from another. Access to NGO members and their willingness to participate varied. Those who declined cited fears of losing funding from external sponsors or being shunned by the local community. Some also preferred to remain anonymous. However, the few who agreed to participate provided robust interview when responding to the researcher's open-ended questions, participants generously shared their perspectives and interpretations of traditional and modernist worldviews. Their views frequently touched on issues of equality, justice, reconciliation, peace, and traditional jurisprudence, all informed by their experiences.

From the content and thematic analysis, I conducted on the interview manuscript, I identified several themes, which I present in this chapter. This chapter contains direct quotations from the research participants so that readers can hear their voices, with minimal commentary and analysis from me.

In presenting my qualitative data I was confronted with a common challenge in reporting qualitative research interview findings, which was condensing large amounts of data into the acceptable requirements of research communication, such as books, journals, and dissertations (Walcott, 2009, p. 39; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 189). However, for those keen on exposing readers to as much of the field information as possible, this challenge is less significant, especially when respondents directly address the issues raised by the researcher.

These can be equally more rigorous and compelling to the reader exposed to interview data that has not been reduced to ‘snippets of information’ or has been severely cherry picked. That way the narratives of the researcher are decentered so that readers can capture the perspectives and emotions of participants directly from them and form their own views. Long quotations are used to provide context. It is in the following discussion chapter that the researcher will weave text, direct quotations, and views from other scholars relevant to the research. Chapter five explores the respondent’s experiences and perceptions of the Borana notions of equality and their practice of social justice as well as the Borana’s traditional institutions and the judiciary processes.

Social Justice Notion of Equality and Its Practice

Social justice has different meanings that vary according to diverse cultures (O’Neill, 1993). However, scholars broadly agree that social justice is context-specific (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). Additionally, social justice differs from individual justice in that, unlike communal justice, which entails collective obligations to one another, individual justice involves only personal responsibilities to each other (Rhodes, Battin, & Silvers, 2002).

Broadly speaking, principles of social justice can be categorized into three types: 1. Redistributive or Compensatory Justice: This involves compensation and punishment for wrongs committed. 2. Procedural Justice: This focuses on fairness in adjudicating cases of wrongdoing. 3. Distributive Justice: This pertains to the allocation of finite resources (Maiese, 2003; see also Deutsch, 2011; Jenkins, 2011; Amstutz, 2005).

While understanding these types of social justice is important, it is even more crucial to appreciate how people perceive them. People's perceptions influence their actions, including

their enactment of peace processes, which is often based on their understanding of peace. In the following segment of this chapter, I report my findings on how the Borana perceive social justice.

Contrary to the contention by some scholars that Africa had no organized forms of justice prior to the British forcibly inserting themselves into their lives, some there is increasing literature arguing against this viewpoint (Ajayi & Buri, 2014; Falola & Adebayo, 1985, p. 60; Isichel, 1983; Onadeko, 2008; Burns, 1972, p. 55) Africa had a vibrant social structure that organized their legal , social, religious system that supported their lifestyle, worldview and their relationship to themselves and the ecosystem. The system ensured that the conflicting parties reached an amicable resolution at the end of the day (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

Social justice as a principle and practice was repeatedly mentioned by the respondents. In general, Borana people recognized the difficulty of defining the concept of social justice, while at the same time reporting that its enactment was obligatory and that it could be only defined in acts of behavior and collective responsibility. Replying to the research's open question on notion of social justice, one elder in a lengthy response said,

> Social justice is very hard to put into practice, and yet it is demanded of us. We must treat everyone as equals, give opportunities to every member of the community in a fair manner. This involves the sharing of material things as well, and the protection of the weak in the community, children, and the elderly. But this does not mean giving people an equal number of cattle or goats, but rather giving people several cattle and goats according to their needs.
>
> It is about fairness, I think. For example, you cannot give an equal amount of food to an adult and a four-year-old and still be fair. Practicing justice is very hard for the powerful to share with a sense of fairness as required by social justice principles. However, they cannot practice injustice or what is unjust with impunity. Waqqa punishes them if they do not treat people in a fair manner. This is what I got from my culture.

Similarly, another respondent described social justice the same but added that *Waqqa*, and the ancestors punish those that do not practice social justice. He stated:

> Waqqa demands of us to observe customary law that requires that all community members to do justice and acts of kindness. Waqqa rewards those that do just that. Those that do not abide by this commandment find themselves in trouble. They get punished, illness befalls them, their harvest is lean, their cattle do not calve, and sometimes the whole community in which the violator resides gets punished, by having a poor harvest, drought, or a plague of locusts that destroys crops in the community.

The quotation above highlights, in an indirect way, the responsibility of the whole community to ensure that all members observe social justice principles, and that they are accountable to one another to avoid collective punishment.

When the researcher in a follow-up question asked a respondent to give examples of acts of kindness and social justice that required of community members, the respondent informed us that:

> Social justice is about protecting the rights of every individual in the community. Communities have a collective responsibility to protect the unborn, children, adults and the aged. It also means that we must treat all people as equals, with respect and dignity. It means that no one should be without land if they need one, go hungry or go naked. It is our collective responsibility as a community to see to it that there is justice done to people.

There was generally a wide swarth of concurrence among respondents interviewed on specific categories that required protection. Mirroring, the commonly shared views by the responds, one of them said,

> Social justice is for the strong hearted, and not for those weak in heart and mind. To me, to practice social justice is to ensure that the weak and marginalized in the community are treated fairly and with justice. It means we treat women as equals to men, we respect children, the unborn and those that are already with us, the elderly.
>
> It means ensuring that every one of those community members we consider weak and marginalized is treated in a way that is not prejudiced, demeaning and disrespectful. We have people in our communities who cannot

> plough for themselves because they are either too elderly or weak. Social justice requires that we assist them. We call it social justice because it is justice that considers the wellbeing of the community and social relationships.

Pivoting from the general understanding of social justice as understood in the West, the same respondent spoke about doing justice to the environment which they described as" part of us," pointing out several ways in which there is a synergetic relationship between humans and the environment.

> Practicing social justice in our culture does not mean it only has to do with living organisms. It also includes the environment, which is part of us. The earth is our mother, and we must respect the earth just as much as we do our biological parents. There is a sense in which we can be said to be part of the ecosystem, as such we must treat the earth and everything there is in it as family and with respect and dignity and as equals.
>
> If we do not do social justice to nature/earth/ecosystem, the Creator punishes us, so do our ancestors. How does *Waqq* punish us when we abuse nature? By using nature to punish us by fighting back- droughts, fires, and floods for instance. Pandemics as well. This is the teaching that I got from my elders

One respondent was particularly keen on discussing environmental stewardship and the connectedness of all living and non-living forms on earth. There is increasing recognition among scholars of the interconnectedness between humans and environmental factors, and how environmental stressors hugely contribute to either a wide range of illnesses or diseases caused by air pollution. (Myers & Frumkin, 2020). These scholars have also underscored the importance of this intersectionality of the living, nonliving and the environment in the reduction of social inequalities as it has the effect of, when well handled, promoting equitable access to opportunities for all community members, and access to local resources. However, despite the heightened awareness of the linkages between humans and the environment, challenges still exist

which impede the adoption of a holistic approach. The same respondent describes the complex relationship between humans and the ecosystem.

> Our forefathers in the precolonial times recognized our interdependence with the environment from which we derive our existence. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the grass we use for thatching out huts, the environment which includes the land is the basis of our livelihood. Not only do we get food from our environment, but we also harvest medicines we use for our health. Our forefathers were fully aware of this existential relationship we have with the environment.
>
> Another respondent commenting on the same subject highlighted the repercussions anthropocentric actions have had on health, equality, food security, access to resources. and ultimately social justice said,
>
> Abuse of the environment affects our health. Polluting the environment often leads to breathing problems. It leads to bad health. Cutting down trees creates soil erosion, leading to poor harvest sometimes. Our forefathers used to plant trees to avoid this, and to provide shade for themselves and their animals. Today we have people digging mines everywhere and cutting down trees for sale, and this has depleted vegetation and increased floods and soil erosion. We cannot win against the environment which is our mother. It has a capacity to defend itself by causing disasters such as floods, and mudslide, which kill people and animals.

Answering the researcher's question on the connection between the destruction of the environment and social justice, the same respondent made a very poignant connection. He said the following:

> When land has been washed away by floods, community members, the powerful usually push the poor and weak to barren lands., and where they cannot find the Shade to resolve their conflicts and decide on how to allocate resources in their area. Having few of these resources therefore means that the poor and weak of the community do not have access to them, in other words social injustice prevails, and customary laws are violated.

A substantial portion of respondents attributed environmental destruction to government related groups and corporations. They complained about hydro-electric projects that the government has constructed in the Northern District of Kenya, which constitutes 80 percent of Kenya's landmass. They uniformly charged that these projects including Tana Hydro Power Station, which they asserted were either owned or approved by the government, caused land destruction – floods, destruction of homes, livestock dying from ingested plastic bags which were used by as

containers for what was used in the construction of those plants. One of these respondents went on to express dissatisfaction with the quality of the material used to build those plants. The same respondent further pointed out that the projects, including roads had “negative impact on the wellbeing of our communities, dislocation and dispossessions.” Most of these respondents invariably bemoaned the disproportionate social, economic and demographic repercussions the which the government sponsored in the name of business and/or development had despite the government's own national laws that promote sustainability and clean air.

A topic that was discussed widely by the respondents with the researcher though, elated to social justice was that of modern gender inequalities disparity which most of the respondents was a concerning problem confronting women today. Women often find themselves at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and continue to suffer from exploitative patriarchy, which manifests in their marginalization, exclusion, and exposure to violence. Gender disparities cannot be understood merely in statistical terms.

To fully comprehend the social hierarchization of gender, one must grasp its intersectionality with variables such as nation, class, race, family type, geographical location, sexuality, age, religion, ethnicity, ability, and sexual orientation. As scholars have eloquently argued, “gender is historical” and constructed on “patterns of gender asymmetry” (Scott, 1990, p. 3). Variables in this intersectionality are informed by power relations.

African scholars are increasingly advocating for a paradigm shift that promotes power-sharing, equality, peace, sustainable nurturance, compassion, and social justice (Amadiume, 2024, pp. 1-7; see also Amadiume, 1988, and its new edition published in 2015). Both African authors and many of the respondents interviewed have demonstrated that the generalization that all males suffer from toxic masculinity is not only inaccurate but also counterproductive. It often

pits men against women, causing each group to entrench its position. One respondent explained it as follows:

> Gender partnerships are the best strategy for resolving gender-based conflicts. This approach humanizes the other and does not view them as a perennial enemy. For instance, if you consistently see men as enemies with chauvinistic attitudes towards women, you are more likely to alienate them and even push away those who might have been sympathetic to your cause.

Responding to a follow up question posed by the research regarding about what a solution to the bifurcated approach could be adopted to resolving gender-based conflicts, the same respondent said the following:

> I think we have a problem that is largely influenced by Western gender discourses that tend to see things in a binary way, they must always try to find who the enemy is in every discussion, or where is difference of opinion. They try to find who the winner is instead of coming up with a consensus or shared solution. Our approach is, we are not looking for enemies or winners every time there are conflicts between spouses. Colonial ideas have brought us a lot of confusion and sharpened our spousal conflicts, and further confuse our people by imposing culturally irrelevant solutions.
>
> While it could be argued that the respondent might have overstated the culpability of colonial pathologies that led into cultural anomalies that distorted the ways in which Borana people resolved their gender conflicts, the accusation has some merit to it. Colonialism/imposed a white culture that was imbued with a huge dose of an assertive and corrosive masculinity *pupillized* Borana males and infantilized female spouses.[23] Even some western scholars have started distancing themselves from western imposed models of resolving gender-based conflicts.

Writing in a blog about how an African matriarchitarian approach can assist in the promotion gender equality and social justice across nations, Amadiume expressed similar sentiments as most of my respondents did on the question of how best to advance gender equality. Movement

[23] Colonial whites treated African men as in need of education on how to be "responsible" husbands, encouraging them to manage their families singularly and treat their female spouses as dependents, like children. By law, female spouses were prohibited from entering contracts or owning property. Although women generally owned fewer resources than men in precolonial times, colonialism exacerbated this disparity. The imposition of rigid, written laws further entrenched these divisions, enforcing uniformity and deepening gender inequality

beyond the gender antagonistic quagmire was the focus of her latest book on Matriarchitarian Perspective. Introducing the focus of her book she wrote,

> In *African Possibilities: A Matriarchitarian Perspective for Social Justice*, I focus on the exploration and exposition of possibilities that advance gender partnership and people power-sharing to move beyond the present antagonisms and impasse in gender discourse—thus, to look at an alternative, inclusive, and different compassionate society. Gender still matters both in improving personal and social relations and on the question of power in relation to society, the nation, and the state.

This approach Amadiume lauds as a departure from a conflictual and antagonistic type of gender relationships to an African one infused with what she calls gender inclusiveness. Medium explains this notion as a,

> shift from an exploitative patriarchal capitalist model of exclusion, marginalization, and violence to a new planetary consciousness of a matriarchitarian inclusive cosmos that celebrates sustainable nurturance, peace, compassion, knowledge, social justice, and progress. Gender and people inclusiveness promotes social equality and power-sharing, and these are necessary for achieving inclusive and equitable development and a better future for all.

Every society needs a legal framework to regulate its practices, establish authority, resolve disputes, and define applicable laws. Contrary to the argument posed by some scholars that Africa lacked organized forms of justice before the British intervention, growing literature challenges this perspective (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014; Falola & Adebayo, 1985, p. 60; Isichei, 1983; Onadeko, 2008; Burns, 1972, p. 55). Africa had a dynamic social structure that effectively managed its legal, social, and religious systems, supporting its lifestyle, worldview, and relationship with the environment. This system ensured that conflicts were resolved amicably (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

In the traditional Borana community, women enjoyed equality with men. They could sit in judgment over the behavior of men on the ruling council and had the power to hold them

accountable if they violated customary laws. Although they had different tasks, this did not mean they were considered inferior to men. Outsiders often saw women cooking and fetching water and mistakenly thought this indicated they were subservient to their husbands. This is a misunderstanding.

Many respondents from the senior ranks shared the view that women historically had more rights in Borana traditional communities than they do in modern times. This position was echoed by several lower-ranked respondents, who also suggested that women historically had more rights in Borana traditional communities than they have today. That was however disputed by a 72-year-old respondent who said that women only enjoyed equality with men in theory. "Women were most in cases excluded from participating in a meaningful way in the Borana community, for instance in public fora where decisions are made. We mainly see women participating as witnesses or audiences in ceremonies or being present as disputants."

Criticizing the disparity in the allocation of chores and the role of religions in support of patriarchal supremacy the same respondent protested in the following way:

> I do not believe that Borana women in the past were treated as equals to men. This part of history is often romanticized. Just look at the role's women played in the home. They worked in the fields alongside their men, but when they returned home, the men would rest while the women cooked, served them, and washed dishes—all without any help. Women also took care of the children, fetched wood, thatched roofs, and constructed huts. This was not equality.
>
> Three ideologies contributed to these oppressive behaviors: Christianity, Islam, and, to a lesser extent, African tradition. The most socially oppressive were Christianity and Islam, which promoted the rule of men over all aspects of social life. I do not see that as equality at all. These two religions promoted extreme patriarchal bias.

The respondent further noted the widening gender disparities in the Borana community, arguing that the issues of gender disparity and sexism were as prevalent in the Borana traditional

communities as they were in todays in Borana communities. The respondent concluded by calling for the incorporation of women, along with the elderly, children and the environment into the Borana social fabric as equals to promote social justice practices. Another widely raised view expressed by many respondents was the belief that certain roles and behaviors are appropriate only for females or males. They noted that these roles and behaviors are instilled from an early age. A 69-year-old respondent explained it as follows:

> You must understand that in our traditional homes, there was a clear division of labour between females and males. Men are the heads of their families, they provide for the family, protect it, and ensure there was peace in the family. Women were expected not to raise their voices against their husbands, respect their husbands. Man did respect their wives too but that was never often the admonition given to the men, and again men were often told that as a caution because of reported egregious behaviour against their female spouses.

The data generated throughout the interview period reiterated the points mentioned above, showing a widespread internalization of traditional, stereotypical gender roles among the Borana. It demonstrated how these gender roles were linked to socialization within the family.

Additionally, the data revealed that younger Borana men's adherence to these gender roles and behaviors was higher than that of senior males in their community. In contrast, women's adherence decreased as they advanced in age, as evidenced by women's protest and advocacy movements, such as those under *Siqqee*, which gained momentum in the modern period.

Community, Reconciliation and the Offender

Embedded within the indigenous social system of governance is the restorative, healing, and reconciliatory potential that, when realized, brings harmony not only to the disputants but also to the community, land, and environment. For instance, among the Borana people, it is believed that

when a conflict arises between two disputants, the entire community, along with the ecosystem, experiences a disruption. This relational rift affects not only the individuals involved but also the harmony of the broader environment. One respondent noted that when a member of the community committed a crime against another, the whole community felt the impact of that wrongdoing.

> Community is built on solid, and positive relationships. People must relate to one another in a peaceful way. So, if one of our community members violates our customary laws, say by killing someone. Once that happened it destabilized the balance of relationships in the community, we all become sick, killers and the murdered victim at once. We need healing because we are broken. Because of our relationship to ourselves as individuals and as members of the community. Our relationship with land is broken as well, since land is part of us, and it must be cleansed to heal our relationship and have peace restored. According to our customary law the offender must be brought before our traditional courts. I am talking about how this used to happen in our traditional societies.

Borana people have an elaborate way of reintegration the offender and reconciling them to the community. Specific remedial action was required of the offender for the community of which they are part to correctly recover peace on the land. Addressing the question of how to recover restore peace to the land and its community same respondent explained,

> This is a complex process, it is not easy We begin by reconciling perpetrator, victim, community, and the environment. This must follow some process though. First, once the offender accepts admits he or she is guilt, because before trial he or is bring innocent, then the community must determine if the offender intended to kill the deceased, because motive for the Borana customary law is important as it determines the kind of punishment one gets. If it determined the act was premeditated, the offender could be banished from the land for some years, during which time he/she resided with another community, which in most cases had positive relationships with the offender's community.
>
> Negotiations with the receiving community are conducted before the relocation of the offender. The same process was followed before the offender rejoined her or his community, both ethnic communities would talk to determine whether it was the right time for the offender to return. On a few occasions the offender would decide not to permanently live in the community to which he or she was banished. Now, let's say it found that the killing was an accident, the offender did not intend to kill the deceased. At that point the offender would be sanctioned and ordered to pay some reparations in cattle, and the number was determined by the severity of her or his case, how remorseful and

> contrite they were and the willingness to be a constructive member of the community. Now that the offender was reconciled to herself or himself to the community to the land/environment, rituals followed to cleanse the people and environment.

Another respondent was keen on sharing that offenders were treated with respect. He informed that treating the offender with respect was important because the idea was to reintegrate him into the society and not to be punitive. commenting on the importance of not impugning the character of the accused, the respondent opined,

> Community is as good as the each of its members is, if one member of the family offends, we all have offended, there is not peace in the community until all the units of the community, which include people, the land, the offender, the living dead have been reconciled. How we relate to the units that constitute the community tells us whether there is peace or not in the community. A person does not lose their humanity because they have committed a crime, although they still need to be sanctioned for their offences. We do not dehumanize them.

Borana believed that when crime went unattended Waqqaa meted out punitive sanctions on the community where the offender resided.

> When there is a conflict in the community, normal relationships among the disputants, the wider community, the land, and the environment break down. Nothing functions well in the affected community. If the conflict is not addressed, *Waqqaa* sanctions every member of the community. The punishment may come in the form of a pandemic, poor harvests, drought, loss of livestock, or increased discord until the issue is resolved.

In Africa, Indigenous Justice Systems (IJS) were embedded in the community and it involved victims, offenders, their families, and the wider community in the process of resolving their disputes. All the negotiations were conducted in accordance with customary and traditional procedures, rooted in the community's practices. The inclusion of both families was important because the focus of the proceedings unlike the formal judicial system which focused on punitive sanctions, restorative and transformative justice principles (Elechi, 2004), ultimately, reconciliation. All the participants in the process were given enough time to weigh in on the case.

Reconciliation, however, does not occur until certain steps are taken, including expressing remorse for the crime committed and paying reparations. The outcome of this process is forgiveness, followed by reconciliation, which involves four key elements: the victim, the perpetrator, the community, and the land/environment. For the process to be successfully completed, all four elements must be involved in some way. Murithi (2019, 2009) outlines the necessary steps for disputants and the community to reconcile with themselves and the land/environment. Murithi notes that Tutu, as the leader of the Reconciliation Commission, followed the principle of ubuntu and outlined five steps in the peacemaking process: accepting guilt, showing remorse, paying reparations, asking for forgiveness, and then achieving reconciliation (Murithi, 2009). Forgiveness and reconciliation were solemnized by rituals and ceremonies, which also signified the reintegration of the offender into the community.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed Borana's unique understanding and practice of social justice, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all entities within ecosystems—both living and nonliving. They showed that the Borana advocated for a holistic approach that prioritizes environmental stewardship and fosters a mutually beneficial relationship among humans, and between humans and the environment. This perspective deviates from conventional views that privilege human dominance and centrality within the ecosystem.

Before discussing the findings, it is important to clarify how key terms—*environment*, *ecology*, *land* and *spirituality*—are defined and used throughout this dissertation. The *environment* refers to everything that surrounds and influences the existence of a person or substance. This encompasses not only the physical aspects but also the spiritual, political, and social dimensions, as well as both living and non-living elements (Sibanda, 1997; Lee, 1997). *Spirituality*

(Spirituality is not religion, as religion in the strictest sense of the work, where religion has a body of doctrine and dogma).

On the communal level, (it) may mean ...shared ultimate values and ideals promoted by a particular group or tradition. On the academic level (it) refers to emerging scholarly discipline which studies the lived communal and individual experience of that energy, power, or force (Gumo, et. al., 2012, p. 524).

While *environment* refers to the entirety of what exists—living and non-living, biotic and non-biotic—*ecology* specifically refers to the mutual relationships between organisms and their environment. It is the study of how living things interact with one another and with their surroundings (Gumo et al., 2012). Throughout this work, the terms *environment*, *ecosystem*, and *ecology* are occasionally used interchangeably to refer to the collective whole of living and non-living entities.

The interconnectedness of humans and the ecosystem is crucial to the survival and health of both entities. The destruction or depletion of ecosystems, which serve as human habitats, threatens the existence of both humans and the environment they inhabit. Although much has been written about the importance of conserving ecosystems and developing sustainable environmental management strategies, Western scientific models have significantly influenced these writings. These models often emphasize human dominance over the environment, a perspective that contrasts sharply with how Africans view their relationship with the ecosystem, as evidenced by field research. The importance of the ecology is seen in its various forms of Eco spirituality (Antoni 2012; Olupona, 2006) especially to the Africans. Africans attribute spiritual significance to the natural environment, which they believe is connected to environmental justice (Chemhuru, 2022) They view the ecosystem as suffused with spiritual connotations (Mbiti, 2015). Thus,

African spiritual and religious practices are inseparably linked to nature (Olupano, 2002; Chitendo, et. al., 2022). To Africans the environment was important since African spirituality was communicated through it. Africans used their spirituality to conserve and sustain the environment. It must be noted that African worldviews have not remained static but have evolved with changing times because of many forces, one of which is modernization, resulting in some blended type of spirituality, processes of peace, and the utilization of principles of traditional knowledge, combined with today's modern conservation principles.

Disappointingly, despite gaining independence, research data shows that postcolonial governments have often endorsed colonial environmental policies. These policies were resented by local communities and frequently sparked intra and interethnic conflicts over land. Scholars have asserted that these adversarial policies resulted in the erosion of people's livelihood strategies (Wolmer, 2007).

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However, there is a vibrant body of literature that explores the interconnectedness between traditional religion and ecology/environment. African scholars have highlighted this interconnectedness, demonstrating how spirituality and traditional religion connect to the environment. For instance, according to Sibanda (1997, 2000), African people's spirituality, cultural practices, and taboos accumulated over centuries regulate the use, conservation, and management of natural resources. This clearly illustrates the pivotal position and role of traditional practices in ecological conservation.

Spirituality is central to most religions but is often fraught with issues of hierarchy and power. Regardless of its form, spirituality shapes how practitioners relate to themselves and the world around them (Sibanda, 1997; Mbiti, 1969, 1970, 1997). African spirituality, as described

by the Borana people, links individuals with something beyond themselves and the ordinary world. It enables communication with *Waqqaa*, the spirits, and encompasses both the living and the nonliving within the ecosystem. Insights from the spiritual realm instill a consciousness of being part of an interconnected web of life. As noted in research on spirituality and ecology, by Gumo, et. al. (2012), African spirituality has been reinforced by "the environment where humanity worshipped and venerated everything under the earth, on the earth, between the heavens and the earth, and in the heavens above" (Gumo et al., 2012, p. 523).

Borana's spirituality, which is the central tenet of their traditional religion, aligns with this broader characterization of African spirituality. As Gumo et al. (2012) noted about African traditional spirituality, it is applicable to the Borana as well:

> It is not a spirituality of the past but one that Africans have created today by living and practicing it. African spirituality is traditional not because it is fossilized, static, and incapable of adaptation, but because it originated from the people's environment. It is a culture that is learned and imitated by those belonging to various spiritualities.

Interview data revealed that the Borana people do not separate humans from the environment. Unlike Western ecological theories, the Borana believe that the environment has its own inherent rights and must be treated with respect and justice. For the Borana, as for many African communities, the land—including the environment, trees, rocks, mountains, and air—is deeply connected to humans through familial and spiritual bonds (Sibanda, 1997). They regard the land as their (mother), which the Borana call *Dachee Haadha Margoo*, and themselves as its children. The concept that the ecosystem/land/environment/ecology has its own social rights is a novel perspective in existing discourses. This perspective emphasizes the importance of social responsibilities between humans and the environment, grounded in reciprocity and mutual respect.

Additionally, the research data showed that the Borana consider the land sacred. This spiritual link between humans and the environment is highly relevant to discussions on ethics, ecosystem conservation strategies, and ecosystem management. For the Borana, environmental stewardship is rooted in a strong spiritual connection with the land, which they view not merely in economic terms but also as a moral, ethical, and socio-cultural entity.

Like other Africans across the continent, the Borana ethically relate to the land through their traditional religions, ascribing sacred powers to places which they believed *Waqqaa* chose to make special. These places are not only respected but also revered as manifestations of the sacred, through which *Waqqaa* communicated. Borana believed *Waqqaa* communicated in many ways, notably and more often through the eagle.

The research data also showed that the Borana people consider their land sacred, emphasizing a profound spiritual connection between humans and the environment. This spiritual bond is integral to their discussions on ethics, ecosystem conservation strategies, and ecosystem management. For the Borana, environmental stewardship is deeply rooted in this spiritual connection, where the land is viewed not only in economic terms but also as a moral, ethical, and socio-cultural entity.

Like other African communities, the Borana's ethical relationship with the land is shaped by their traditional religious beliefs. They ascribed sacred powers to certain places that they believed were specially chosen by *Waqqaa*. These sites were not only respected but also revered as manifestations of the sacred, serving as a means of communication with *Waqqaa*, most notably through the eagle.

Besides the development of environmental conservation and management strategies, the belief in the interdependence of humans and the land fostered unity and peace within communities. However, respondents disclosed that organized religions, such as Christianity and Islam, often eroded the traditional knowledge systems of the Borana, leading to the exploitation of natural resources (Appiah-Opoku, 2007).

It is important to point out that, as derived from research data, that Africans have traditionally held a deep respect for the ecosystem, viewing it as sacred. This belief has fostered environmentally friendly practices and a strong relationship with the land, contributing to the conservation of natural resources and ecological sustainability. Environmental preservation is deeply embedded in their religious and cultural beliefs, enforced through taboos that have communal and institutional legal support (Udgaonkar, 2002; Sibanda,1998). In contemporary times, these practices are also reinforced by formal laws.

In addition to developing environmental conservation and management strategies, the belief in the interdependence of humans and the land has promoted unity and peace within communities. The findings also revealed that respondents believe community engagement is crucial in promoting and practicing social justice.

The interviews revealed that the Borana people had strong indigenous management strategies, supported by vibrant social systems. For the Borana, the environment has traditionally been considered an integral part of their lives, with its stewardship falling under the responsibility of the Gadaa system. The environment was treated with deep respect, as it was believed to have sustained life and provided livelihoods for both humans and animals. Through the Gadaa governance, the community collaborated to conserve the environment, guided by their

highest traditional authority, whose values morally and ethically required the preservation and sustainability of natural resources. According to the Borana, the laws of the Gadaa system mandate that the community worked collectively to protect the environment.

This finding aligns with contemporary research that employs the planetary justice approach, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans, the environment, and ecosystems. This approach seeks to reduce inequalities and promote equity, resonating with both global and holistic perspectives. It underscores the clear connection between an integrated ecosystem approach and social justice, advocating for justice, equality, equity, and fair resource allocation. However, the Borana perspective diverges from the planetary view by emphasizing spirituality, recognizing humans as equal to other entities in the ecosystem, decentering humans within the ecosystem, and attributing social rights to the ecosystem itself.

In summary, three things stand out in this portion of the discussion of the findings on the interconnectedness and interdependence of the living and non-living. First, it reveals that balance in human/environment relationship, resulting in the prevalence of social justice and the prioritization of equal and fair access to resources, is crucial for conflict management and peace within the community. This contribution by the Borana underscores their Indigenous knowledge system's value in promoting social and environmental justice, resolving conflicts over resources, and creating sustainable peace. Second, also, as the research data has demonstrated, social justice is not an individual endeavor; it involves community members caring for one another, a practice that the Borana people advocate, promote, and embody. Therefore, social justice cannot be reduced to narrow normative and personal convictions. Third, as well, what is crucial to note that the research data has demonstrated is that social justice is not an individualist exercise; it involves community members caring for one another and living peaceably, which the Barona

people advocate, promote, and practice. As such, social justice cannot be reduced to merely narrow normative and personal convictions.

Fourth, it also illuminates the custodial relationship between the Borana and the ecosystem. The Borana believed that they had a communal duty to protect the ecosystem and that in turn their community protected them – this was a reciprocal relationship based on respect and social rights. This was poignantly expressed by a Maasai man when interviewed by a CNN reporter on the relationship between his community and the forest which he described as existential. He answered this way, "Without the forest there would be no people…. We use it as a clinic, a hospital, so we must handle it with a lot of care."[24] A comment by a CNN reporter in response to the answer he got from Parmuat Ntirua Koikai, a Maasai elder, is equally insightful. He commented, "his deep respect for the forest has earned it protection. Unlike many other forests in Kenya, that have been logged or developed, Naimina Ekhiyio remains intact" (Lewis, 2024)

Parmuat Ntirua Koikai's interview, together with the research discussion above, clearly highlighted the Borana's belief in the importance of understanding the interdependence and interconnectedness between humans and the environment, as well as the importance of biodiversity conservation and Indigenous knowledge. This awareness emphasized the need for peaceful coexistence between living and nonliving entities, humans and nature, and the reliance on Indigenous wisdom. The discussion of the findings further offered valuable insights into why the Borana people maintain spiritual and social relationships with their ecosystem, ascribe rights to it, and strive for peaceful coexistence both among themselves and with their environment and

[24] Neil Lewis, This remote, mystical forest has been protected for centuries. Now it's under threat | CNN August 9, 2024.

that principles were embedded in the Borana *Waageffata* (religion), which has no written sacred books.

In conclusion, the discussion shed light on various socio-cultural, legal, and environmental concerns within the community. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts involving community members, government agencies, and other stakeholders to promote equitable land distribution, protect ancestral rights, strengthen legal frameworks, restore spiritual connections to land, foster peace-building initiatives, and promote environmental sustainability.

The other key finding was that to the respondents, social equality was a collective responsibility based on the principle of equity, which promoted the distribution of resources among community members based on the needs of each member of the community. Theorizing from an English context, Sarah Worthington stated that although there was no "general theory of equity," the concept pervaded the entire English Common Law landscape, making intervention when confronted with hard cases to which the Common Law had no answer, and that sometimes it played a supplementary role to the common law regulations. The concept is understood in contrast to the meaning of the notion of equality, which has come to mean sameness in treatment of individuals or groups, (Biggar & Hood, 2018). But what does equity mean, and understanding the meaning of the concept will illuminate our understanding of what it means to have equality based on the principle of equity.

As Biggar and Hood, (2018) has noted,

> Equity has emerged as an alternative construct linked to social justice, especially in the fields of health and education. Equity invokes a search for the social, economic, and political causes of inequality and for remedies that consider context and circumstances of disparate outcomes.

From the above quotation, the view that can be drawn from the notion of equity is that its intervention is uneven and unequal. Worthington, discussion of equity as a concept and how it is implemented is useful in our understanding of how the Borana understand equity and to a certain extent, how it operates in their daily lives. Like the Borana, Worthington's equity is conscience and moral based in ways that English common law is not.

Scholars have observed that people practice equity for various reasons. These motivations range from a belief that it is inherently fair, to a desire to reduce social inequality between themselves and under-resourced members of their community (Schulz, Fischbacher, Thöni, & Utikal, 2014), to maintaining their self-image as generous individuals, conforming to societal norms (Baumeister, 1998; Goffman, 1959), and making prosocial choices (Balliet, Parks, & Joireman, 2009). Additionally, some individuals may seek to appear fair (Andreoni & Bernheim, 2009) or act because they view inequity as innately unjust (Choshen-Hillel et al., 2015). Other scholars, such as Halevy and Chou (2014), argue that practicing equity is intuitive, as people are naturally inclined toward equal resource allocation.

These motivations can be seen as a combination of choice, conscience, and moral considerations, echoing Worthington's view on the foundations of equity. While both Worthington and the Borana see equity as rooted in conscience and morality, they differ in terms of what drives its practice. For the Borana, the concept of *Waqqaa* compels them to practice equity. This heightens the demand for its practice.

What is clear is that the finding above shows that for the Borana people, equality is not about equal allocation of resources but rather about distributing resources based on the material needs of each community member. Those who are marginalized or have less receive more,

aiming to elevate them to a level where they can achieve food security, shelter, and access to clean water. This approach agrees with a Marxian perspective, which advocates for the distribution of resources according to people's needs and their contributions according to their abilities. It appears that this Borana social system is deeply embedded in Marxist principles. Functionally, this means that people's material, spiritual, and intellectual contributions vary depending on their material wealth, and resource allocations are made according to individual needs. Thus, for the Borana, equality is fundamentally rooted in equity. While this practice might superficially resemble nepotism or favoritism, it serves to reduce inequalities between the haves and the have-nots.

Equity, however, has its critics. They argue that it applies multiple standards to the same problem and does not treat all individuals equally. Additionally, critics contend that, in the absence of uniform standards, judgments depend on the discretion of the judge rather than a consistent body of law. This, they argue, makes the process arbitrary, subject to the whims of individual judges. As a result, the outcomes can seem incoherent and lead to irrational remedies. One of the staunchest critics, Peter Birks, criticizes the process that leads to outcomes inspired by remedies derived from equity practices. He refers to this process as "discretionary remedialism." According to Birks, in discretionary remedialism, which he mistakenly views as exclusive to judicial processes based on equity, judges have the freedom to choose whatever remedy they deem appropriate for a specific situation (Birks, *Three Kinds of Objections to Discretionary Remedialism*, 2000, p. 15). Birks argues that this practice shows disrespect for the rule of law.

Birks adopts a linear approach to remedies, rejecting the practice of remedial discretion, which resembles the traditional Borana method of awarding compensation to victims (Dietrich,

2005, p 69). This approach contrasts with the Borana's collective leadership, which offers a broad range of possible remedies depending on the specifics of each case. As Dietrich (2005, p. 69) noted in a different context while discussing remedial discretion, something similarly applicable to the Borana though from a different philosophical perspective, “remedy selection is not to be tied to historical and doctrinal limitations.”

Indigenous approaches, however, apply the equity principle in ways distinct from what Birks criticizes. First, although their principles may be unwritten, elders base their decisions on long-standing traditions, ensuring that judgments are not arbitrary. As previously mentioned, decisions are made collectively by elders, and any remedies awarded must be acceptable to the community, providing strong checks and balances. The outcomes may differ for similar cases because decisions are based on individual needs. Birks also seems to imply that when judges rule according to the law, they do not exercise discretion—an assumption that is clearly incorrect.

However, the indigenous model differs from Worthington's proposal, which advocates for a fused and integrated model of equity and common law. According to Dietrich’s interpretation, this fusion results in “a coherent, unified, common law encompassing the historically separate (but now administratively fused) jurisdictions” (pp. 62-63). This stance also diverges from MacGinty’s. MacGinty, in discussing how to reconcile the indigenous conflict and peace mechanisms with the international model, suggests a hybrid peacebuilding approach that neither fully supports nor opposes indigenous or liberal peacemaking processes (MacGinty, 2010).

MacGinty views this hybridization as the only way to resolve the contest between indigenous and liberal models. He defines a hybrid mechanism not as “the melding of one pure

entity into another," but rather as a "complex process of variable geometry with multiple and constantly moving parts" (MacGinty, 2011, p. 72). Essentially, MacGinty's hybridization focuses on the interaction between local and international structures, shaping the outcomes of peace processes.

However, his approach identifies issues without offering clear strategies for addressing them. As noted in Chapter Three, MacGinty cautions against romanticizing indigenous models (MacGinty, 2008). This study's proposed blended model aligns with MacGinty's in some respects but differs in its underlying principles. While MacGinty places greater emphasis on needs, he does not equally prioritize local indigenous approaches with modernist liberal models operational in the local context, Instead, his model blends local and international factors.

In contrast, this study emphasizes equity, a concept that features prominently as a new element balancing both the indigenous (which introduces the notion of equity) and the modernist approaches with which it is blended.

In traditional jurisprudence, such as that of the Borana, remedial discretion emphasizes that justice is applied on a case-by-case basis, considering the community's perspective and allowing for forgiveness where remorse is shown. An example, discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, is the case of Marcellus Williams, who was executed despite pleas from the victim's family and the prosecutor urging Missouri Governor Michael Parson to commute his death sentence to a lesser punishment (https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2024-10-05/a-texas-execution-is-renewing-calls-for-clemency-its-rarely-granted)

All this highlights the importance of understanding the concept of equity, not only in Borana's practice of justice but also in the allocation of resources. Unlike in England, where, according to Worthington, equity is applied to intervene in difficult cases where Common Law provides no solution, equity in Borana traditional society was an integral part of the legal system.

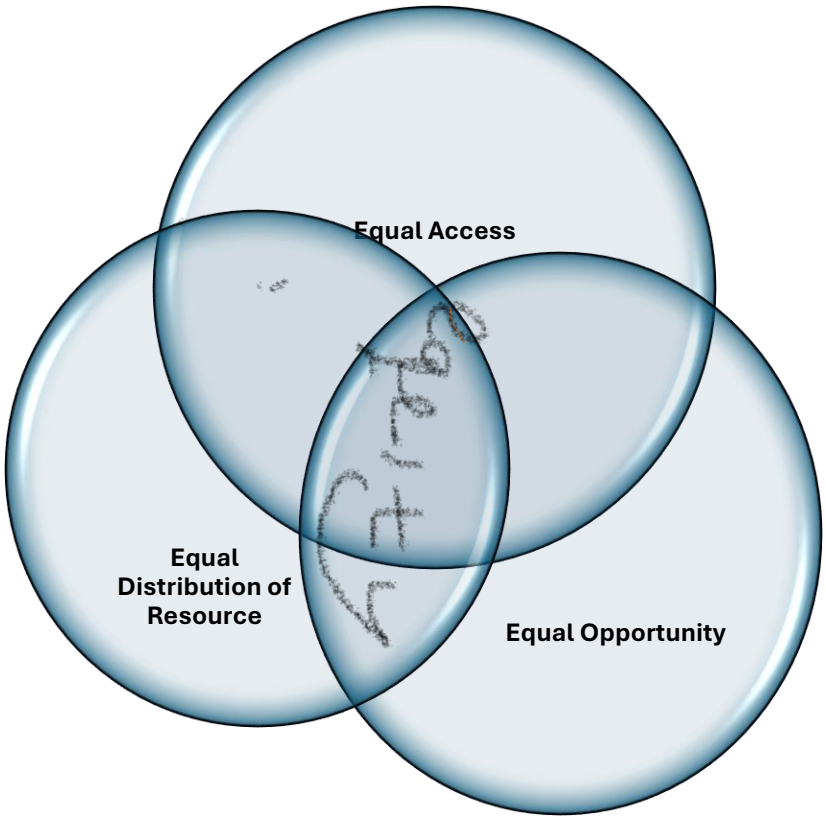
After several decades of colonialism and neocolonialism, a wave of literature has emerged advocating for the integration of justice, equality, and equity to alleviate poverty and conflict. A noteworthy example of this shift, albeit modest, is reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. This agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 measurable targets, praised as "universal, integrated, and transformative visions for a better world," promoting development at a planetary scale.

While the United Nations' views on poverty reduction and the provision of clean water differ significantly, the Borana people's perspective offers a unique and deeply rooted approach. The UN’s call for collective responsibility is aspirational and commendable, but for the Borana, the reduction of poverty, the provision of clean water, and the respect for the earth as having inherent rights are moral and spiritual collective duties.

For the Borana, access to both material and immaterial resources is seen as a fundamental right. The community, therefore, has a duty to ensure that its members' basic needs are met based on this right. Practically, this means that if a community member lacks pasture for their cattle, the community has a collective responsibility to provide access to pasture with grass. The guiding principle within the Borana community is one of equality, rooted in the notion of equity. This finding is consistent with a growing body of new scholarship that, like the perspectives of the Borana and other African communities, views social justice as relational. This perspective

calls for universal efforts to reduce poverty, achieve sustainable development, and ensure access to clean water, emphasizing collective responsibility. Additionally, it highlights the importance of justice for ecosystems, with the notion of land stewardship gaining prominence.

The diagram below demonstrates how access, equal distribution of resources, and equal opportunity are interconnected and mediated through the notion of equity.



Moreover, the research on social justice, equality, and freedom/liberty revealed three critical insights about the Borana people. First, it highlighted that African communities, unlike those rooted in Rawlsian individual liberalism (Rawls, 2005, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1993, 1985), are

founded on principles of communal equality and liberty. Second, the findings emphasized that effective and sustainable social justice principles are those that are organically connected to the communities in which they are embedded. This underscores the importance of consulting with locals before outsiders undertake any projects within their community. The Borana demonstrated that their indigenous knowledge provided efficient methods for deriving livelihoods from their environment without causing its destruction. Third, the research and analysis of the discussion revealed that the Borana engaged in social networks to deliver social justice and respond to the humanitarian needs of their community members. This approach has been instrumental in reducing social injustice, conflict, and poverty.

Fourth, the findings revealed that a substantial number of the respondents believed that marketization and insensitive developmentalism pushed by government and corporations were the main causes of environmental destruction leading to social inequalities. The Borana considered their duty as custodians of the earth very seriously. The findings revealed that the regulations that enforced compliance with good practices of environmental conservation and management had the force of moral imperative, and hence they dutifully carried out their responsibilities to protect the integrity of the ecosystem. The findings showed how they engaged on crop rotation to keep the soil fertile, and leave land fallow to regain its productivity, protected trees and animals which either thought to have been sacred or related to them by sharing their totem. The Borana used land to get what they needed, and plants were used as well for the same purpose. By mentioning these ways in which the Borana people treated the ecosystem with respect, the researcher is in no way trying to essentialize them but rather to underscore what they did best despite the imperfections.

Fifth, with the introduction of Colonialism land tenure and use changed, the local government took over the ownership of land and used it to industrialize and urbanize in ways that prioritized profit over environmental sustainability. Urbanization and industrialization triggered huge competition for the land and all that grew on it, as the land's market value increased. There was an increase in rural-urban land conversion and rural land being turned into commercial industrial and residential areas in cities, with China providing a good example. All these have negative repercussions on environmental management and sustainability, especially where capitalism exists, as the system prioritizes economic growth and profits often without any concern to damage its practices might cause, leading to unsustainable development and environmental damage.

Like in all other areas of the world colonization brought into the area, rapid urbanization, and industrialization, mainly that of mining and oil and gas exploration. The northern frontier district, which constitutes eighty percent of Kenya's land mass, has become a new frontier for development and business expansion. The construction of Roads notable of which is Lamu Port-South Sudan- Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET), a combination of roads, railways and oil pipelines running from Isiolo, in northern Kenya to Lamu in the north coast of the country.

The constructions have been built in the name of trade and industrial expansion, triggering the loss of Borana ancestral lands through dispassion to various entities including government officials, cooperations and elites who have become extraordinarily powerful. Land-grabbing, and encroachment into customary rights by government and capital are now commonplace. Land has been transformed by these businesses, and development projects such as the Lake Turkana Wind Power impact the social relationships of the local people in adverse ways. An overwhelming

majority of respondents felt that because of the rapacious, sometimes forcible expropriation of land by government and other capitalists' groups approved by it, the intrinsic, sacred value and sacredness associated with land has been overtaken by economic considerations, highlighting a cultural shift in attitudes.

These findings also showed how the government and corporations interfered with the preservation of cultural heritage, and the erosion of community identity tied to those lands. The loss of ancestral lands also meant interference with communication with *Waqqaa* since the Borana communicated with *Waqqaa* in specific places which are sacred. It also interfered with their judicial and conflict resolution responsibilities since cases were tried and conflicts discussed and resolved under a specific tree in the areas.

Not only were the Borana people concerned with the loss of land or its unfair distribution, loss of spiritual connection to the land, loss of places where conflicts could be resolved and peace constructed, they were equally concerned with the depletion of the biodiversity, as a scourge that was felt all over the world. For instance, according to the 2020 WWF's Living Planet Report, the Planet Report, the world has lost 68 percent vertebrate wildlife populations, and 83 percent of its monitored freshwater animals since 1970.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species in 2024 reported that 25 percent of mammals, 34 percent of conifers, 31 percent of sharks and rays, 13 percent of birds, and 33 percent of reef-building corals are threatened with

extinction. The cause is attributed to habitat loss, toxic pollution, invasion by alien species and overconsumption, mostly by the wealth.[25]

This portion of my discussion of findings focused on the powerful linkages between government, big financers, as well as large companies and markets which resulted in the widespread loss of land and spiritual connection to it on the part of the Borana people, as well as massive environmental depletion. The cooperation between government on the one hand and capital, on the other, is concerning for other reasons. Such cooperation often leads to government authoritarianism, dictatorial tendencies, corruption, and insensitivity towards the needs of the general population. To conclude, this finding highlights the need for greater sustainable management of resources and accountability to the community where they are located. It also raises concerns over the loss of cultural heritage and the erosion of community identity tied to these lands.

In addition, the findings showed that women in the Borana communities were not considered equal with men even though they had the power to expel men who sat on the Council of Elders if they strayed from customary laws. Gender disparities cannot be understood merely in statistical terms. To fully comprehend the social hierarchization of gender, one must grasp its intersectionality with variables like nation, class, race, family type, geographical location, sexuality, age, religion, ethnicity, ability, and sexual orientation. As scholars have eloquently

[25] There is a disparity between developed and developing countries, which contribute less to pollution but incur greater biodiversity losses. Biodiversity loss and climate change not only adversely impact the environment but also raise economic, social, moral, ethical, security, developmental, and health issues among other concerns, especially for the developing world which disproportionately is affected by its consequences.

argued, “gender is historical” and constructed on “patterns of gender asymmetry” (Scott, 1990, p. 3).

Variables in this intersectionality are informed by power relations.

This research has already found that women in Borana traditional communities were marginalized in the exercise of formal political and social life. However, they were not totally excluded from exercising authority in all spheres.

For instance, women in the Siqqee Sisterhood Association, as the research has shown, had the power to dismiss elders from the Council of Elders if they violated some traditional laws. It was also contended that they played behind-the-scenes power, normally engaging in a variety of indirect forms of power. For example, influencing a public communal decision through their male spouse. Further it has shown that Borana women were also involved in the exercise of authority and power[26] in other various ways beyond what has been mentioned here.

While the participation of the *Siqqee* organization was important in imposing check and balances on the Council of Elders, the promotion of peace and stability in the community, its involvement in traditional governance tended to be circumscribed, especially when it came to making laws and cultural norms as well as enforcing them, which largely fell on males in the community. Moreover, they did not have a voice in crucial issues such as the composition of the Council of Elders, the organization of most of the communal ceremonies, and how cattle were

[26] The first thing to note in any discourse around power it that it is essentially interpersonal. We use power to influence, coerce, and to accomplish set goals. As such power has an impact on relationships between people. In the area of gender, power usually rests with men more than it does with women (Kahn, 1984). Power normally is based on having access to concrete resources like cattle, money, land, etc. Power also can be used to make the other comply with the wishes of the one possessing and exercising it. It can be exercised directly or indirectly. Doyle (1985) citing Huston (1983, p. 170) provides a definition of power and its different forms that are more comprehensive in that it embraces some of the elements of power mentioned above and is more relevant to this discussion on gender power relations. Doyle defines power as “the ability to achieve ends through influence” (p. 151). He lists the types of power as reward power, coercive power, referent power, legitimate power, expert power, and informational power, each one having its own bases (pp. 152-153).

traded beyond their control of milk cows and the production of their milk. In that case the mere inclusion of women in the administrative structures – being part of *Siqqee* - did not guarantee the transformation of the patriarchal institution, its customary laws and social norms that governed the larger context of the Borana community. However, it would be disingenuous to conclude, based on the qualitative data collected for this research, that women in customary systems did not have power in all spheres of Borana traditional life. This contradiction warrants further research, if for any reason, because it is generating paradoxical views that present women in the traditional Borana community as having power on the one hand and as being less powerful on the other.

Asking the following questions may shed light on the dynamics of gender relations within the Borana communities. Did Borana women have a sense of control over their bodies and lives? Did they experience autonomy or equality in relation to men? Findings indicate that traditional Borana communities were conscious of gender inequalities within their society. Interview data further revealed that women were acutely aware of their subordinate position within the Borana community. These inequalities were exacerbated by gender stereotypes, as discussed in Chapter two, (see also Doyle, 1984, pp. 57-80 for gender-based stereotypes across communities). These stereotypes were prevalent in songs, poems, plays, jokes, and perhaps most significantly, in religion—both traditional religion and the two major guest religions, Christianity and Islam. Religion has been and continues to be "the single most important shaper and enforcer of the image and role of women in society" (Ruether, 1974, p. 9). While Marxists attribute misogyny to economic power struggles, Ruether (1974, p. 9) eloquently points out that religion remains an "ideological reflection of … sexual domination and subjugation." Its power, particularly in major world religions, lies in the use of patriarchal language. Patriarchal symbols

and imagery permeate religious language, such as the portrayal of God as male—Father, almighty, omniscient, and wise. This reinforces male authority, positioning men as rational and powerful, while women are seen as less powerful and more emotional.

The masculinization of religion, as previously discussed in earlier chapters, has had corrosive effects on Borana religion and culture, which traditionally did not center on patriarchal beliefs. These characteristics are particularly evident in Christianity and Islam, both of which have influenced the Borana religion, with Islam being more dominant due to historical circumstances. Both religions empower men, and as they become more institutionalized and codified, they become increasingly rigid.

Traditional religious structures, on the other hand, allowed women a greater degree of freedom in property ownership—such as owning milk cows—and for those who were priests, even an elevated status over males, granting them privileged voices. In the Borana traditional religion, some women held more power than men due to their connections with *Ayaan*a as *Qallu*s (priests). Their roles in society transcended the patriarchal structures of authority and norms that governed them. Both men and women participated in officiating religious activities. Female *Qallu,* who served as intermediaries between *Waqqaa* and individuals or communities during times of celebration or conflict, were considered indispensable to the community. For instance, during droughts, female Qallu would intercede with *Waqqa*a on behalf of the community to request rain.

Before the arrival of these religions, Borana society had different gender roles and social structures that were more egalitarian or distinct from the patrifocal model introduced by Islam and Christianity. The imposition of these religious ideologies led to a shift where men were

increasingly viewed as the undisputed heads of the household, and women were relegated to roles that diminished their autonomy and authority, effectively treating them as dependents rather than equals.

A common concern raised by many respondents regarding the influence of foreign religions was their adverse impact on traditional cultural values, particularly in relation to gender relations. One respondent, reflecting the views of the majority who shared this sentiment, highlighted how both Islam and Christianity have affected Borana traditional gender dynamics, stating:

> Although I am familiar with both religions, my knowledge of Islam is more profound because it was the first religion I encountered after living as a traditionalist for a long time. After I converted to Islam, I quickly realized I had to change many aspects of my life, especially in the home and in my relationship with my *niittii* (wife). I was told that I was the decision-maker in the home and that my *niitti*i should not be involved in decision-making. Men were expected to make decisions, and women were expected to follow without challenging them.

Comparing the methods utilized by the traditional system to those utilized by guest religions, the respondent informed,

> In traditional homes, a *dhirsa* (husband) would sit down and discuss matters with his wife, such as children, cattle, camels, home security, preparations for their child's marriage, or adding a new hut. While men often dominated, it was not to the extent that Islam brought into our homes. The changes led to fights in many households. Men ruled supreme, and the role of women in society took a turn for the worse. Christianity was also disruptive to our traditional marriages; it was still not entirely beneficial for us. Men ruled supreme in Christian households as well.

Addressing the mismatch between traditional and religious peacemaking processes, the same respondent went on to express dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness and irrelevance of the new religious methods of conflict resolution. He noted:

> The major problem we faced was that we could no longer settle disputes in our homes using the traditional peace mechanisms that had served us so well for many years. Imams and pastors dismissed our methods as pagan, and the colonialists condemned our way of life as uncivilized. These institutions wouldn't allow us to maintain our traditions; instead, they imposed their cultural ethos upon us. While our traditional system had its shortcomings, I can confidently say that under these religions, things became worse. Both religions are marked by a significant degree of inflexibility.

The quote above highlights the significant impact that the introduction of Islam and Christianity had on the Borana society, particularly in terms of gender roles and social dynamics. Based on the analysis of this quote, it can be said that the patriarchal structures inherent in both religions, where men are typically positioned as the heads of households and women are often seen as subordinate, have influenced and altered the traditional gender relations within the Borana community.

The situation of women within the Borana community is now encouraging as they are beginning to raise their voices against their marginalization. Their voices are now being heard in many areas of their lives. For example, restrictions on girls schooling have been relaxed, and work restrictions on the part of women, lifted, early marriages and female circumcision ended and declared illegal. Their struggle is not isolated. It is part of women's new social movements across the world who are engaged in different ways of protest for gender parity – *the #Native Woman's Association of Canada (NWAC)* focuses on indigenous women and girls, advocating for their rights with respect to health, social justice and against violence. It advocates for an end to the pandemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, the #IWillGoOut movement in India, which called for equal rights of women in the public sphere, #NiUnaMenos movement a Latin American movement that protested violence against women and femicides most prominently in Argentina and Mexico, and the #MeToo movement in the United States, which demanded legal redress for sexually abused women.

After the 1990s, Africa witnessed a proliferation of women's movements that actively pushed for post-conflict peace, aiming to prevent a relapse into violence. These efforts were particularly notable in countries like Cameroon, Mozambique, and Uganda. Unlike the earlier movements formed after African countries gained independence, these post-1990s women's movements were independent of nationalist parties (Tripp, et al., 2008, Chapter, pp. 62-80). This independence provided them with the space to advocate for both political and women's rights. For the first time, African women's movements elected their own leaders, lobbied for constitutional changes that allowed them to participate in official peace efforts at both local and national levels, and pressured their governments to expand economic opportunities and rights for women. These activities of activism led to significant achievements (ibid).

Two significant events sparked renewed energy and heightened activism among women across Africa. The first was the 1985 UN Nairobi Conference on Women, which focused on peace, development, and equality. One of its key resolutions was the advancement of women's rights. The conferences spurred the diffusion of ideas between and Women's movements on promoting the spread of a broad agenda on gender equality across African. The second was UN Resolution 1325, adopted by the UN Security Council on October 31, 2000, which called for a greater role for women in conflict prevention and resolution. The resolution encouraged states to include women in the negotiation and implementation of peace accords and to support local women's groups and indigenous conflict resolution processes (Puechguirbal, 2010, pp. 172-187). While these milestones have led to significant achievements in expanding women's rights, progress has been frustratingly slow.

Although there has been some progress on issues of gender equality, albeit piecemeal and incremental, such as women being able to own property and have some control over their own

bodies, much remains to be improved. For example, women still bear an inordinate load of domestic chores, and opportunities to own businesses and access resources are still severely restricted. Besides, unlike the composition of the *Siqqee* organization, which was drawn from women from all walks of life, today Borana women's leadership is often drawn from the elite, which does not necessarily imply that these women will defend the rights of all women, and especially those from the lower strata of society. Furthermore, in the absence of other, more substantial reforms, the mere inclusion of women does not guarantee the ways institutions work, or their transformation.

The global clarion call by women for their emancipation, continues as they to strive to achieve full equality and respect for women and their concerns in every aspect of life, encompassing cultural, religious, public, and private spheres. However, they are advocating for both men and women to adopt an androgynous approach to daily life, moving beyond traditional gender roles of femininity and masculinity (Ruether, ed., 1974, pp. 38-39) to "Male Mothers" or Maternal Partnerships.

Scholars have provided different ways of approaching issues relating to women's oppression. Two influential studies were published in 2001 by David Dollar, Raymond Fisman and Roberta Gatti, and Anand Swamy et al., that favored an instrumentalist approach. In these two studies, the scholars made an argument that countries that involved higher levels of women's participation in politics and the labour force, were less corrupt, and by extension, liberal in their treatment of women. In that same year, the World Bank Report, echoed their position and argued that women "could be a good force for good and for governance and business trust (World Bank, *Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Washington, DC and New York: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2001, 96).

Conclusion

This portion of the discussion of findings has investigated the status of women within the Borana community. It revealed that, while women enjoyed a wider and many freedoms and property ownership, precolonial, they still were treated as unequal to their male counterparts. It also explored the role of guest religions in exacerbating women's oppression, marginalization and infantilization. Further, it discussed the new progress that the Borana women have achieved on the way to fully liberating themselves.

This discussion of findings and analysis reveals a critical insight into the oppression and marginalization of women, which is that the promotion of traditional gender roles not only deepens but also widens gender power asymmetries. It enforces rigid structures and unbalanced power relations within societies, favoring patriarchy. As a result, this dynamic leads to gender conflicts and disrupts communal peace. Overall, it can still be argued that women, just as Nussbaum, (2001, p. 1) has observed, "women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life" As one of the key correctives to gender disparity, especially the one resulting from the hegemonic patrifocal narrative imposed by guest religions, analysis of the research data, suggests that it is critical to highlight feminine qualities in religious symbols, conscious language, to ensure balance of gender power relations.

Traditional Institutions and the Judiciary Processes

Every society needs a legal framework to regulate its practices, establish authority, resolve disputes, and define applicable laws. Contrary to the argument posed by some scholars that Africa lacked organized forms of justice before the British intervention, a growing literature challenges this perspective (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014; Falola & Adebayo, 1985, p. 60; Isichei, 1983;

Onadeko, 2008; Burns, 1972, p. 55). Africa had a dynamic social structure that effectively managed its legal, social, and religious systems, supporting its lifestyle, worldview, and relationship with the environment. This system ensured that conflicts were resolved amicably (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

The Boran people like all other African communities had their own laws that organized their lives and laid down principles of their jurisprudence. Most of the respondents reported preference for traditional justice processes to resolve conflict rather than doing it through the modern court system. They argued that traditional adjudication processes were more human. Besides thinking that traditional ways were more human, the respondents stressed that the traditional systems were less expensive and had a better outcome, the mending of fractured relationships and harmony. which they pointed out were not the objective of the formal courts whose intention was merely punitive. A respondent reported on the issue in the following manner:

> In the Borana community, when someone commits a wrong, they are brought before the elders to have their case adjudicated. If they admit their fault, the elders take remedial and restorative steps to reconcile the wrong party with the wrongdoer and repair their relationship. This may involve the wrongdoer offering compensation or simply apologizing. The primary concern is ensuring that both the wronged party and the wrongdoer, along with their families, are satisfied with the outcome, leading to peace and unity within the community. You see, the key concern is to see to it that relationships of the one against whom the wrong is done, and the wrong doer and their families are satisfied with the verdict, and that at the end of the day, there is peace and unity in the community.

The Marcellus Williams case highlights the inflexibility, inattentiveness, and at times, disregard of evidence in the formal court system—an issue the Borana community also identified as a weakness of such institutions, along with their potential bias. Williams, an African American man, was convicted of the 1998 murder of Felicia Gayle, a former newspaper reporter, in August

2001. Gayle had been found stabbed to death in 1998 (https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/24/us/marcellus-williams-scheduled-execution-date/index.html)

Despite no physical evidence linking Williams to the crime—no hair, blood, forensic evidence, or DNA—he was convicted based solely on the testimony of his ex-girlfriend and a jailhouse informant (https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/msnbc-opinion/marcellus-williams-missouri-execution-prosecutors-innocent-rcna172234) In the face of overwhelming exculpatory evidence, Williams was sentenced to death. His defense team spent more than 20 years attempting to overturn the conviction.

In time, the defense was joined by the prosecuting office, the victim's family (who, while believing Williams was guilty, strongly opposed the death penalty), and members of the original jury, some of whom had changed their minds and now believed in his innocence. Despite these widespread pleas for clemency, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to stay Williams' execution by lethal injection, which was scheduled for Tuesday, September 24, 2024(https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/msnbc-opinion/marcellus-williams-missouri-execution-prosecutors-innocent-rcna172234; https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/24/us/marcellus-williams-scheduled-execution-date/index.html)

In this situation, the Borana traditional court would have likely taken the lack of evidence seriously from the start, possibly deciding not to bring the case forward. If the case did proceed, the court would carefully evaluate the evidence, consider the merits of the case, and assess the credibility of the witnesses. They would also pay close attention to the pleas of the victim's relatives and the micro-community (the attorney's office, defense team, and jury members)

against imposing the death penalty. Their primary pursuit would have been uncovering the truth, rather than relying on a structured body of information that might disregard it.

Some of the key concerns that the respondents noted were that formal courts verdicts were often arbitrary, and they went further to bitterly complain that the courts did not compensate the injured for their loss, in contrast to the indigenous courts which they said did. One of the respondents in the group said the following about the ineffectiveness of formal courts for not compensating the injured.

> You see, formal courts impose fines on offenders to benefit the state, rather than compensating the victims. Those who have lost cattle, goats, sheep, or camels receive no restitution or apology. Offenders are incarcerated and made to work for the government, while the victims remain uncompensated for their losses. Upon release, the offenders often face hostility from the victims and their families, potentially escalating into retaliatory violence. This occurs because the underlying conflict has not been adequately resolved.

In addition to the concerns previously mentioned, most respondents indicated that they distrusted individuals who litigated cases in their community, as they were usually outsiders. In contrast, they expressed a higher level of comfort with cases handled under the Gada system, where jurists were members of the community, thereby fostering confidence in the process. Communal trust in the system is vital, not only for those directly involved in disputes but also for the entire community, because for the Borana, it is essential that the verdict gains acceptance by the whole community.

To ensure a fair judgment, the process, procedures, and conduct of the case must be perceived as just. The research indicated that the Borana people were particularly concerned about avoiding substandard trials. A senior respondent, emphasizing the fairness and justice of

Borana trial processes, described how trials were conducted in accordance with customary law this way.

> Boran customary laws are structured in such a way that you willingly accept the verdict. This verdict is delivered by a council of elders, where both the accused and the accuser are represented by advocates. During the elders' meetings, some defend the accused, while others argue on behalf of the accuser. These gatherings are seen as the embodiment of justice. The Boran have a saying: *Qaroomi wa qore, morki wa balleessa, aadani wa buufatti* (Wisdom defines judgment, rivalry destroys cohesion, laws settle apathy). *Qarooma* (wisdom) refers to the arguments put forward in defense of an individual.
>
> If you are an intelligent person, you can present a compelling case on behalf of the person you are advocating for. However, this does not guarantee victory. Ultimately, what matters is justice as defined by customary laws, with the essence of these laws guiding the final verdict. At the conclusion of the session, the verdict is handed to *Abba Seera*, a role equivalent to that of an Attorney General. In any gathering where disputes are resolved, this individual, who is well-versed in traditional customary laws, must pass the final judgment, much like a judge in a modern court of law.

Describing how the case was disposed of after the admission of guilt by the offender a sixty-year-old respondent said the following:

> If you admit guilt for an offense, a fine will be imposed. If you disagree with the judgment, you can appeal to other elders whom you trust. An appeal will be granted. The primary role of the elders is to ensure you are satisfied with the judgment. They will use wise sayings and counsel to make you feel content. After this process, you may plead guilty. Subsequently, a penalty will be determined. The elders will deliberate among themselves to decide the appropriate penalty. The same elders who rendered the final judgment will then advocate on your behalf to reduce the penalty. For example, if the initial penalty was five cattle, the elders may negotiate to reduce it to just one cow. The Boran community cannot impose the full penalty without seeking a reduction.

Traditional justice in the African context has always been theorized as singularly concerned with restoring harmony and relationships. Scholars like Archbishop Desmond Tutu have been cited as one of the leading Africans that favored that position mostly based on his work with the Rwanda people after the 1994 Genocide, when some Tutsis were calling for retribution against the accused perpetrators (Tutu, 1997, pp. 257-260). Talking to a group of Tutsis after visiting a church filled with corpses which had been left there untouched for a year (most of which

probably were of the Tutsis) and a crowded prison in Kigali filled with Hutus accused of committing genocide, Tutu urged those that wanted perpetrators punished to "go beyond retributive justice to restorative justice, to move on to forgiveness because [he said] without it there was no future" (Tutu, 1997, p. 260). Tutu's words were obviously misinterpreted as they were said strictly within the context of pure revenge not encouraging to engage in retributive justice not born of malice (Tutu, 1997, p. 260). We know that because Tutu in many instances has called for and wrote about all the kinds of justice contained in traditional justice.

Tutu's words were sometimes misunderstood as rejecting retributive justice entirely, when in fact, he was emphasizing the importance of forgiveness over pure revenge. This misinterpretation is evident, given that Tutu has consistently advocated for various forms of justice, including those within the realm of traditional justice. Commenting on compensatory side of justice and its costs schedule a respondent started,

> If someone kills another person, they get fined 30 cows, after they have been tried and found guilty according to the Borana customary law. but you can negotiate it down from 30 cows to 25 cows. For small crimes like fighting or hurting somebody, 10 to 15 cows. And if he cannot pay, he can negotiate. If he still cannot pay, then his community pays on his behalf. After paying the fine, for him to be forgiven, the offender must show remorse; he must apologize.
>
> Then discussion takes place among elders, and he will be forgiven. The same applies to other ethnic communities. For instance, if the individual is from another ethnic group, and his family is known to the community, lived in the community for a while, and they speak the language, the application of the law is the same. He will be listened to elders discuss, victim show remorse, he will be fined depending on the crime and forgiven.

The same respondent went further to dissatisfaction with the way President Moi's courts disposed of cases and accused him of being not proactive with respect to crime. The respondent pointed out that,

> During Moi's time things were OK for pastoral communities because people feared him. If one killed, they were punished. In Kibaki's time things changed, a lot of deaths, no preventative measures, the government was part of the problem. People were not going to court for killing. The Kibaki government abolished the compensation schedule of cows because he said it was a backward way of doing things.

The key concern which this respondent had with Presidents Moi's courts, which sentiment was echoed by an overwhelming majority of my respondents, was the elimination of compensation for the injured parties to a dispute. This finding further reveals and reinforces belief in that Africans believed in compensatory justice as well.

When asked if there was any time before when the only form of justice extant was the restorative one, some respondents intimated that, historically, that was the only type practiced among the Borana. Explaining how the Borana ended up embracing the notion of compensatory justice, of the key respondents stated the following,

> Prior to the formation of the Gada customary law, (*seera-aada*) convicts were used to be set right by mutual understandings, blessing and forgiveness. Nevertheless, as population and crimes increased, many cases became difficult to get traditional resolution by blessings alone. Many people became reluctant to forgive everything and the demand for equal compensation for equal losses became imperative.

This was a clear departure from what scholars have made us to believe about the African ways of concluding cases , and the kind of justice open to them, Africans, the Borana inclusive, have been told that they only believed in restorative justice, and not in any other kind of justice, As, a result most Africans involved in disputes have not found any satisfaction or resolution of their cases in formal courts, where the other types of justices have either been disregarded or implemented in ways that contradict traditional ways, for example, not compensating the injured

This section discussed three forms of justice to which Africans subscribed namely,

compensatory/retributive justice, procedural justice, and distributive justice. It also highlighted procedures and processes of case adjudication in traditional trials, underscoring the differences in how the accused were prosecuted and for what purposes. The overall view drawn from the section and other areas of research regarding jurisprudence was that formal courts leaned heavily towards a neoliberal model, with many respondents indicating that formal courts methods of conflict resolution overlooked elements of traditional jurisprudence. This finding underscores a perceived disconnect between formal legal process and values of the Borana community.

Conclusion

This section has shown that Borana traditional jurisprudence was deeply rooted in the principles of fairness and social justice for all community members, including strangers living among them. Their traditional laws emphasized the importance of communal life, aiming to restore harmony and mend broken relationships between disputants, their families, and ultimately the entire community. Notably, the Borana laws acknowledged that individuals progress through life at different paces, and this understanding was reflected in the application of varied remedies to similar cases. Additionally, the laws recognized the primacy of collective life, which was fundamentally based on relational existence, and this recognition significantly shaped their legal framework.

Chapter 6

Reconciliation and Peacebuilding Practices in Intragroup and Intergroup Borana Conflicts

Introduction

Indigenous reconciliation and peacebuilding Indigenous community's practices maintain and restore peace and harmony in their homelands that include among others consensus decision-making, storytelling, spiritual practices, and circle gatherings (Kovach, 2021; Lambert, 2014). Indigenous peacebuilding is embedded within the unique cultural and historical context of Indigenous communities empowering them to address their peacebuilding needs in a way that is centred in their cultural norms, values, rituals, and practices (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021; Wilson et al., 2019). It is important to include Indigenous and local people within their own cultural contexts utilizing their own wisdom, epistemology, cultural resources, and peacebuilding methods to solve their own problems (Lederach, 1997).

In the three sections below in Chapter six, I discuss intragroup conflict among the Borana people, the Borana reconciliation process that restores harmony to the community, and the peacebuilding process that is unique to the Borana people.

Resolving Intra Group and Inter Group Conflict

Many Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) scholars explore the causes of and interventions in intergroup conflicts without equally paying attention to intragroup divisions that divide communities and often ensure the escalation into violent exchanges (Byrne, 2002).

The Borana have their own laws, rules, and regulations that manage conflict within the Borana community. A respondent said that these laws relate to many facets of life and are there to safeguard the security of the Borana community.

> Do you know Boran takes affairs as a government. They have their customary laws. They have their judicial laws. These customary laws of the Boran are not written in books as the government has. It is within the head of the elders. Even the young ones learn these laws under the shade of the tree. Ever since these laws were formulated, they have been passed on to generations until today. Everything is covered under appropriate rules, regulations, and prerogatives[27]. Cattle have their own prerogatives.
>
> All livestock have their own prerogatives. The wells have rules and regulations. The ponds have rules and regulations. The grazing and the watering have rules and regulations. The wildlife too has its own rights. Marriage has its own rules and regulations. Everything about and for the Boran has rules and regulations. If people quarrel with each other, everyone has their own set regulations [code of conduct]. Children have rules and regulations. Adults have rules and regulations.
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> The elders have rules and regulations. The girls with *tonsure* [unmarried] have rules and regulations. Women have rules and regulations. The *Jaallaba* have own prerogative. The *Hayyu* have their own prerogative. The *Abba Gada* has own prerogative. The *Qaallu* have own prerogative. The Boran have rules and regulations for everything. They indeed safeguard their customary laws. They hold each other high. Not all the children of the Boran belong to only those who gave birth to them, they belong to the larger Boran community.
>
> If they go astray, it is the duty of all Boran to lead them to the right path. Disputes between Boran is like disputes of the *affines* [In laws]. Disputes between people within villages, it is the elders who sit and mediate the contestants. Even if the disputes are between relatives, it is the elders of the family who come together and settle. Disputes within villages, it is the elders of the respective villages who settle. But if the disputes are more serious, the elders of the neighborhood can be incorporated. The village elders and the elders from the neighborhood can come together to solve any disputes.
>
> According to the customary laws of the Boran, many elders of the shade are conversant with it. There are no books that have been written to refer to. People can be involved in a variety of disagreements. They may dispute over water management. They may dispute over ponds and wells. They may dispute over pasturing and watering livestock. Husbands and wives may disagree. Father and sons may dispute. The disputes may come in different forms. However, all will be examined and solved by the elders. All disputes entail set rules and regulations. They too have predetermined penalties.

These laws and regulations are passed down by elders to the younger generations under the shade of the tree as the elders are responsible to the community to resolve the myriads of disputes that arise every day in the community. Yet there remain many challenges in resolving conflict among the Borana people. At the same time, however, the respondents reported that politics was the main obstacle in conflict resolution. They also mentioned arrogance, people's ignorance of the existing Borana customary laws, and the use of wealth to buy justice as stumbling blocks to resolving intragroup disputes. One elder commenting on all three of these challenges noted the following in his story:

> The first is arrogance, second is ignorance to the existing Boran customary laws. The third is politics. The political leaders do not follow any legal laws. They corrupt cases. The fourth is wealth. The wealthy one corrupts people. Cases that are being handled at the shade, they hire lawyers and take to court. Some people do not even have knowledge of their own Boran traditional customary laws. Since they are conversant with the state laws, they tend to push you towards it. In this way, they cause misunderstanding.

Some Borana people try to push conflict cases into the courts rather than having them resolved through Borana customary law practices. Similarly, another elder noted that some Borana people are corrupted by greed and that is why they take their cases to the courts. He articulated the following in his narrative:

> Some individual's corrupt cases of the Boran because they count on their wealth. Therefore, they never appear to the Boran shade. He will take his case to government court. Today the major reasons why Boran cases are not resolved is because of interferences by the political leaders. The people of politics do not speak the truth. In this way Boran people talks are lost. Boran people speak the truth to each other and hence resolve all cases under the shade. The Boran people say, "Wisdom scrutinizes issues but countering causes loss." Intellect makes [an] apt verdict, but rivalry often contradict and never arrive at solutions.

Corrupt politicians also prevent the Borana from using their customary laws to resolve their conflicts. Similarly, another participant informed me that the government takes advantage of the rivalry between groups, he observed that, "the dealings of political leaders revolve around rivalry. Again, the Boran says, "'Meat that is prevented from fire, cannot get cooked; a talk that is prevented from truth cannot settle'. Now everyone denies truth, then how will a talk at the shade end in harmony."

Along the same vein, but this time including the elites in the mix, another respondent, opined that Marsabit's conflicts won't be resolved by corrupt elites as only the elders have the good of the community in their hearts and will transform conflicts peacefully.

> Conflict in Marsabit will not end if other manipulative, educated individuals are involved in Marsabit conflict. Even Borana elites are not for Borana people. They are out for their own individual interests. If we want peace, we should get elders in the rural areas. Those that are not corrupted by power and elites.
>
> People killing each other are the ones in rural areas and those inciting them are those sitting in towns and cities. We do not want conflict, we want peace. Power has gotten into people's heads. Government involvement and political affiliation has been corrupted. Politics is two wars. Planning and power. Government is controlling all of it by planning conflict, using their resource powers. They do not care about peace. They are part of creating conflicts.

The respondent concluded by noting that the community had challenges in resolving conflicts because the corrupt government and modern society had weakened the Borana's cultural traditions and peace practices calling them backward and traditional. This is what he had to say on the issue:

> Tradition has been diluted by those that are undermining our Gada institution through their education. Our current *aba gada* has a degree, but knows very little about our culture, he despises it. There is too much individualism, so people are only interested in themselves as individuals. We do have "I"; we have 'We"; We do not own, we share. But now things have changed. Everyone wants to win. These kill's culture.

Individualism comes at the weakening of Borana cultural and peacebuilding practices. Similarly, other informants commented on challenges regarding seeking ethnic co-existence, and stakeholders involved in the peace process. Commenting on efforts exerted by government in the Boran and Gabra peace process one informant articulated that only when both ethnic groups desire peace will it materialize.

> The government has attempted to restore peace. Even other actors like the NGO have attempted to bring peace between the Boran and the Gabra who were fighting. Now if the Boran wants peace and the Gabra does not want peace, peace will not happen. If the Gabra wants peace and the Boran does not want peace, peace will not come. The NGO and the government, even if the two contestants do not want peace, they cannot bring peace by themselves. Unless the Gabra and the Boran willingly accept to embrace peace, peace will not come.

In contrast to the previous respondent and commenting on how religious people pursued peace-making in the community, another respondent commented that interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians is important as the international interfaith INGO is using spirituality and working very hard to bring about peace between the different ethnic groups in the region.

> Nowadays land is a cause of our conflicts for what is an emotional issue for Borana people. Business has joined in this exploit and the authorities in the government are backing it. These two groups have forcibly disposed us of our land and deprived us of our right to live in our ancestral land. They have deprived us of water and pasture on our land. This we do not understand. The government has never given us a clear explanation for this. We are just told to live in peace together and to share the resources which in fact are controlled by others. Land is very important to our people; it is a spiritual home.
>
> It is not a commodity to our people. Recently a religious group known as Interfaith has been following the search for peace. Interfaith group comprise of leaders of both Christians and Muslims. Together they are searching for peace. In this group, there are people of different faiths. There are people of different ethnicities. The Meru, the Kikuyu, the Gabra, the Rendille, the Boran, the Burji, all these ethnic groups are among them. Instead of searching for peace using traditional systems, they are using spiritual

> systems to seek peace. They made references to holly books, when approaching mechanisms to reconciliation or conflict resolution.
>
> People tend to listen to this group through their appeal peace was restored for a short while. But there is no legislation that binds these communities together. These Interfaith groups have attempted to seek peace through many ways. They also approached the leaders such as the governor [as] reconciliation between the groups leaders was not resolved. If the heads did not reconcile, whom then will the citizens look upon? There is nothing. May the Almighty bring peace! They have also offered other ways of helping. The NGOs also support them through facilitation. Since the government wants peace, they too provide them support. They also, through hardship, are still attempting to bring peace. They are still pursuing to resolve this conflict.

The control of the land is being manipulated by big business and corrupt politicians who seek to control the water and farming and do so by escalating intergroup conflicts to divide the people. The land has a spiritual meaning for the Borana people as well as providing resources and livelihoods to Borana farmers. Consequently, the respondents offered different views about how Borana people conceptualized land, and the role land played in ongoing conflicts among intra and inter-ethnic conflicts. They also shined light on the relationship between them and government mediated through land ownership. One respondent informed me that the land is life for the Borana.

> Land is life itself to us Borana, we live on it, we grow food, we get materials for building our homes, *kraals*, mud for our houses and the grass we use for thatching our homes. I can mention many things. We harvest pharmaceuticals from it. We cannot live without it. We communicate with our creator and ancestors through the land. It is everything to a Borana.

The Borana communicate with their ancestors and the creator through land rituals. Another informant revealed that the land is the main driver of conflict between the Borana and the Gabra ethnic groups.

> Land is the main conflict issue. Both Borana and Gabra have their identity tied to the land. Gabra claim Borana land belongs to them. The challenge is how do we solve

> conflict when identity is part of it? Similarly, another responded stated, “everyone claims this land is tied to their identity. This is true about other communities as well.

The land is tied to both ethnic identities that makes negotiation difficult as the Gabra and the Borana conflict is encoded in identity. Another interviewee also opined that the Borana’s sovereignty and independence is dependent on their relationship with the land.

> Land is the basis of our sovereignty; it is the basis of our economic, cultural, religious, and political independence. People without land do not have any freedom and are homeless and poor. Because of its importance people fight when they think other people have encroached on their land. Land problems are related to its inheritance, sometimes arbitrary boundaries between ethnic groups, boundaries set to trigger intra and inter-ethnic conflicts.

The encroachment on land boundaries escalates tensions and often triggers violence between different clans in the same group as well as intergroup conflicts. Along the same vein another respondent made it known that the greedy British colonizers controlled the land to grow food and cash crop

> When the settlers came to this country, they took away violently took land from us. They knew if they were to survive, they needed land to grow food and to create farms to grow cash crops. These guys were clever and greedy, clever in that they knew what they needed to live. They knew there were many resources and benefits that accrued from landownership. That is why we fought against them. We fought them because we wanted our land back, to which we had all sorts of connections. I am a traditional doctor. I use plants for medicinal purposes. Without access to land, I would be out of business.

All the ethnic groups in Kenya fought against the British colonial power because they wanted their land back from them. Echoing the preceding words another responded contended that the land provides resources as well as a spiritual energy that communicates peace among all the ethnic groups.

> Land gives us everything, used by us as Indigenous people. It sustains life. We have rivers, minerals, food products -fruits, nuts, all sorts of wild animals on which we depend. Yesterday I spent the whole day hauling bricks home to build a house and a build. The

> land gave me clay and water for making those things. Through the land we communicate peace to each other, we converse with our creator and a throng of our ancestors through the land.

Borana customary laws are owned by the community and are there for their security, and they are implemented in a multitude of relationships each day. The laws are transmitted by the elders through stories to the younger generations. The elders have the community's trust to use these laws to resolve the myriads of disputes that arise in the community.

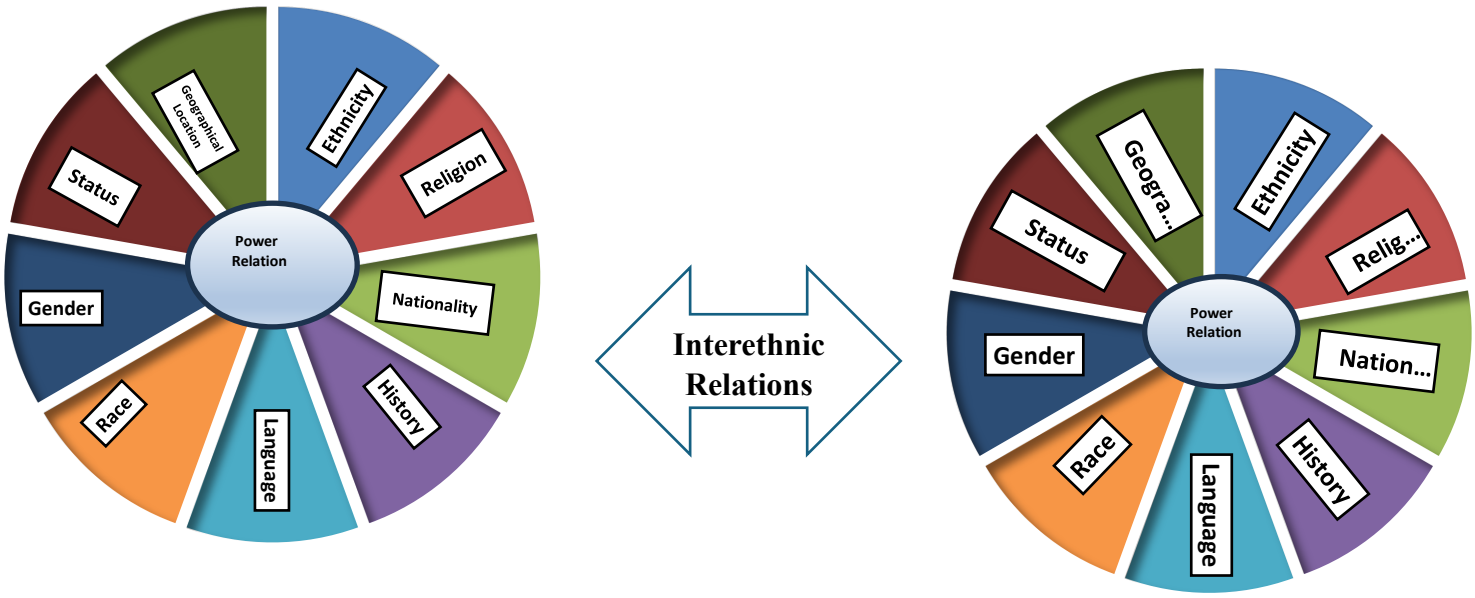
Resolving Intra Group and Inter Group Conflict

Many Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) scholars explore the causes of and interventions in intergroup conflicts without equally paying attention to intragroup divisions that divide communities and often ensure the escalation into violent exchanges (Byrne, 2002). As several respondents interviewed for this research have reported, identity is one of the key causes of ethnic and interethnic conflict. People across African are generally grouped into ethnic groups that share the same cultural beliefs, values, and region. So interethnic conflict occurs when ethnic groups live in different, often contiguous regions, and have a different belief-disbelief system. What complicates identity issues though is that even people who belong to one ethnic group belong to a multiplicity of subethnic or cultural groups predicated on their religion, education, subethnicity, region/land, age, gender, educational level, and other social groups based on other social identifiers. Thus, one member of a given ethnic group can identify as belonging to a multiplicity of cultural groups. It is on these differences that intra-ethnic conflicts arise. There is no direct line from traits to how ethnic groups intra and interrelationships. A group can share the same traits and not have positive relationships. In other words, sameness or difference do not necessarily determine what kind of intra or inter relationships an ethnic group has,

harmonious or conflictual. Identity self-understanding is important because how we view our identity, how we view others, and how we perceive we are viewed by others determines how we are approach intra and interethnic peacebuilding.

BORANA INTRA ETHNIC RELATIONS

OTHERS ETHNIC GROUPS RELATIONS



Ethnic Full/Partial Inter-Transportable Variables

1.Language

2. Religion -Christianity, Islam, Indigenous and Atheism

3. Models of Peace-Making

The Borana have their own laws, rules, and regulations that manage conflict within the Borana community. A respondent said that these laws relate to many facets of life and are there to safeguard the security of the Borana community.

> Do you know Boran takes affairs as a government. They have their customary laws. They have their judicial laws. These customary laws of the Boran are not written in books as the government has. It is within the head of the elders. Even the young ones learn these laws under the shade of the tree. Ever since these laws were formulated, they have been passed on to generations until today. Everything is covered under appropriate rules, regulations, and prerogatives[28]. Cattle have their own prerogatives.
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disputes that arise every day in the community. Yet there remain many challenges in resolving conflict among the Borana people.

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> Land is the basis of our sovereignty; it is the basis of our economic, cultural, religious, and political independence. People without land do not have any freedom and are homeless and poor. Because of its importance people fight when they think other people

> have encroached on their land. Land problems are related to its inheritance, sometimes arbitrary boundaries between ethnic groups, boundaries set to trigger intra and inter-ethnic conflicts.

The encroachment on land boundaries escalates tensions and often triggers violence between different clans in the same group as well as intergroup conflicts. Along the same vein another respondent made it known that the greedy British colonizers controlled the land to grow food and cash crops.

> When the settlers came to this country, they took away violently took land from us. They knew if they were to survive, they needed land to grow food and to create farms to grow cash crops. These guys were clever and greedy, clever in that they knew what they needed to live. They knew there were many resources and benefits that accrued from landownership. That is why we fought against them. We fought them because we wanted our land back, to which we had all sorts of connections. I am a traditional doctor. I use plants for medicinal purposes. Without access to land, I would be out of business.

All the ethnic groups in Kenya fought against the British colonial power because they wanted their land back from them. Echoing the preceding words another responded contended that the land provides resources as well as a spiritual energy that communicates peace among all the ethnic groups.

> Land gives us everything, used by us as Indigenous people. It sustains life. We have rivers, minerals, food products -fruits, nuts, all sorts of wild animals on which we depend. Yesterday I spent the whole day hauling bricks home to build a house and a build. The land gave me clay and water for making those things. Through the land we communicate peace to each other, we converse with our creator and a throng of our ancestors through the land.

Six important key findings emerged inductively from the data on intragroup and intergroup conflicts. First, the findings revealed that Borana people preferred resolving their conflicts through traditional systems rather than in the modern formal systems. The Gada institution has been however on the decline because of governments, religion and modern education's assault on

it. However, despite its weak structure, it continues to influence the way in which Borana people resolve their issues and build peace – negotiate their contemporary cultural, social and political life. Thus, this finding demonstrates revealed a high degree of articulation and efficacy of Borana Gada traditional governance despite its weak state. However, this finding also showed that Gada's incapability of coping with new challenges such as intermarriages, land privatization, political marginalization and environmental degradation, which calls for a blended model, and also goes to show that gada system alone cannot resolve new challenges with which Borana are confronted. Research also showed that the traditional structure of governance has undergone considerable change leading to a significant erosion of the authority of its leaders and their peace and conflict resolution mechanism.

This research demonstrated the high degree of articulation and efficacy of customary governance as opposed to the failure of State-centric attempts to protect specific areas within the broader landscape. Customary institutions, however, are increasingly delegitimized and incapable of coping with new challenges such as massive immigration, political marginalization, and de facto land privatization.

Borana customary laws are owned by the community and are there for their security, and they are implemented in a multitude of relationships each day. The laws are transmitted by the elders through stories to the younger generations. The elders have the community's trust to use these laws to resolve the myriads of disputes that arise in the community.

Second, contemporary Borana people's ignorance of these customary laws as well as individual's using their wealth in Kenya's judicial system to buy verdicts greatly hamper the full use of these laws as the shift from an agrarian to a capitalist economy has taken the focus away

from the community to the individual. Corrupt individuals also use the state's courts to bypass Borana communal sovereignty and integrity.

Third, the findings also showed that cooperation existed among various entities – traditional leaders, government officials, NGOs, and religious groups – to resolve ethnic disputes and promote peace. This cooperation between government and other entities underscores a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders from different sectors to address ethnic disputes and foster peace. Such cooperation is very critical for comprehensive and sustainable conflict and peacebuilding strategies. On the other hand, the research made a finding that at times these stakeholders work at cross-purposes, which hinders peace efforts.

Fourth, some government officials take advantage of ethnic group rivalry to control local resources by undermining the Borana's customary practices that preserve communal truth over individual greed. Corrupt elites escalate intercommunal conflicts while the elders who have the community's interests at heart seek to preserve the community and its cultural traditions and peace practices. Moreover, the government does not want to resolve Marsabit's inter-ethnic conflicts.

Fifth, the Interfaith International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO) is working with Christian and Muslim communities in Marsabit to build intergroup dialogue to transform inter-ethnic conflicts in the county. A further finding was made difference in faiths and atheistic positions do obstruct solid collective efforts from these groups to pursue peace.

Sixth, the data also revealed that land has a polysemous meaning to the Borana. Land is a basis for the dispensation of spirituality, and the practice of social Justice and peace.

The research also found that Borana people were unhappy with the dispossession and subsequently, distribution of land which they perceived to be inordinately unfair. They also felt that the marketizations, corporatization and *elitization* of land was an affront to their sovereignty, religious sensibilities; and was a source of their pauperization. For example, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015, pp. 19-20), notes that sovereignty was predicated on the land and that the colonial project depended on land possession for material survival. Thus, to the indigenous people, land formed the basis of their livelihood. Thus, a struggle for "land is life – contents for life" (Wolfe 2006, p. 387). Land had a spiritual, economic, cultural, and political significance to them. As an economic asset, it was a basis for social and economic development, also for the reduction of poverty, and as a cultural asset, it provided political stability for their ethnic group and social harmony until colonialism disrupted it. Little wonder that, scholars stress that the survival of indigenous people depends on the destruction of colonial structures (Tuck &Yang, 2012, p. 7). Ecologically unsustainable, coercive dispossession, unsustainable extraction of natural resources. Land as family and land as commodity derived from totally distinct realities, as evidenced by the way it was conceptualized by the two groups. It is this incommensurability of interests which becomes a basis for intensive and intractable conflict. This is generally the fate of indigenous populations living among settler, and sometimes former settler societies, and the basis of intra and interethnic traditional communities espousing different views.

In addition, the land provides a spiritual light and life for the Borana. The land and its resources are being coveted by the government and business interests while they continue to enflame inter-ethnic conflicts as they seek control over the water and arable framing land. Both the Borana and Gabra's ethnic identities, sovereignty, and independence are tied to the same territory that creates an intractable conflict as it is difficult to disentangle ethnic identities from

the territory. As rival clans and sub clans encroach on the territory, it often escalates into violent conflict.

The finding also showed that borders remain a focal point of contention and a stumbling block to regional ethnic cooperation and integration. Because it is impossible for these ethnic groups to live in hermetic segregation or to create soft borders so that conflicts flare up.

3.Reconciliation

There are few challenges of reconciling Borana people because the problem is with trying to mediate between Borana people and other ethnic groups in Marsabit.

For example, an interviewee disclosed that the Borana will obey their elders' decisions. However, Borana customary practices and reconciliation methods do not easily cross over with the Gabra and the Garri and their clans and sub clans.

> Between two Boran, there are not many challenges when reconciling them. Borana's have Sabbo and Goona. The legal application in resolving disputes is the same. The Gabra and the Garri too have clans and sub-clans. If we turn to the Boran practices, if there is a dispute between two individuals they are summoned at the shade. For example, a Karayyu and a WarraJidda may have a dispute. As they come to the shade, they may come with their relatives. This is where there arises a problem.
>
> The elders try to advocate in favor of their relatives. This is not allowed in Boran legal practices. Nonetheless, in the end the judgement is made according to Boran judicial practices. That which incline towards favoring relatives will discontinue. In the past such an unlawful attempt was never there. Nevertheless, even if such attempts are made, in the end justice prevails. If cases are handled favoring relatives, the judgement often ends erroneously, therefore elders make judgement in accordance with Boran judicial practices. One respondent explained:
>
> According to Boran traditional legislative system, they have elders, they have *Jaallaba*, they have *Qae,* and they have *Hayyu*. Cases of relatives discuss affairs of their members. *Jaallab* belongs to a larger *moiety,* and he attends to the affairs of the general *moiety* members. The *Hayyu* belongs to a larger *moiety*. If cases become difficult to be solved, the *Jaallab* are consulted.

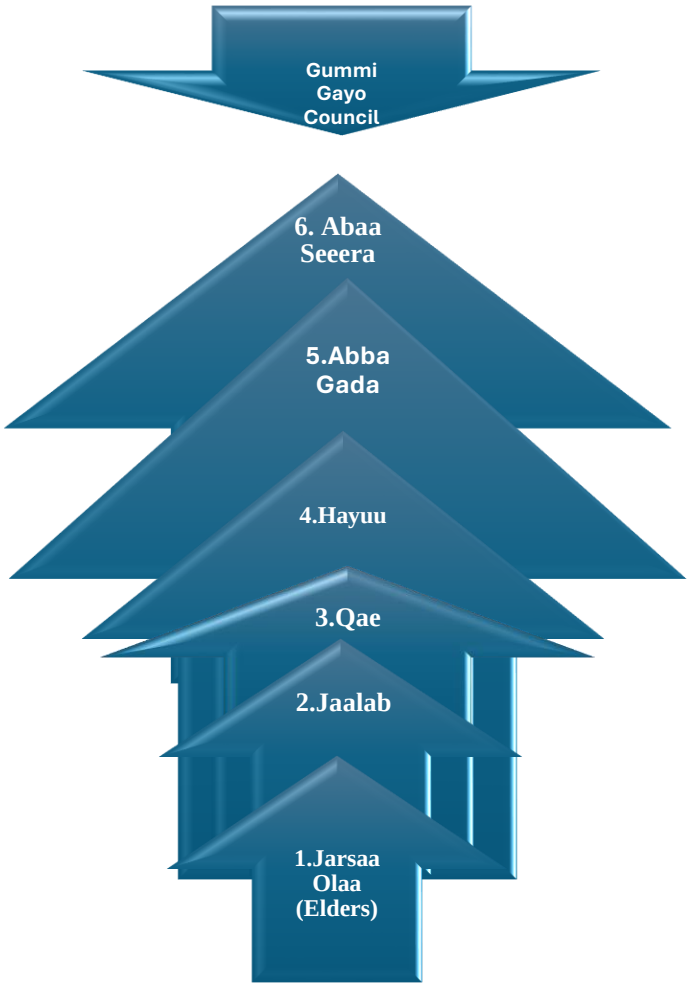
If the case must surpass the jurisdiction of a *Jaallab*, they consult *Qae*. If it has to go beyond *Qae,* then a *Hayyu* is consulted. Cases that reach the attention of the *Hayyu* are regarded as serious cases. Cases of relation concerns matters of providing provision for those in need. Cases that demand for a *Jaallab* arbitration, are those concerning larger clans.

The *Jaallab* solves disputes in accordance with customary laws but never in accordance with favoring relatives. If relatives have disputes among themselves, they too can solve their disputes collectively. They can sit, discuss, and settle their disputes peacefully. Cases of disputes of different relatives, they consult respective elders, discuss, and solve harmoniously.

The judgement of the elders, no one can ignore. But if one is not satisfied with the judgement, one is allowed to appeal for additional elders. He will be allowed to name elders of his choice, and he will be at liberty to call them. According to Boran custom, if you are not satisfied with a judgement, you can appeal for more elders of your choice to review the case. One is allowed to appeal. In accordance with Boran dispute resolution practices, it is mandatory to see that both parties are fully reconciled satisfactorily.

There are many different levels of third-party intermediaries and customary practices led by Borana elders from *Jaallab* arbitration, to the *Qae*, to the *Hayyu* and disgruntled conflict parties can appeal elder's decisions to any of these different reconciliation processes.

Traditional Borana Conflict Resolution System



The Organogram is more elaborate than what appears above. At its apex is the Gumi Gayo and at the lowest level is the Olla, which is at a local, village level. The Gumi Gayo is the supreme legislative and judicial body comprising representatives from all major Borana clans. It is often referred to as a Pan-Borana assembly. The Gumi Gayo Assembly is held every eight years, aligning with the term of service of the Abba Gada, who is evaluated midway through his tenure as leader of the Council of Elders.

The assembly is responsible for making, amending, and enforcing laws. To ensure continuity retired abba Gadas serve as advisors to the siting Abba Gada and his council of elders.

Below the Gumi Gayo are the clan assemblies (Kora Gosa), which handle disputes and matters specific to their respective clans. The laws and processes of these assemblies are like those of the Gumi Gayo Assembly. Unlike the Gumi Gayo, clan assemblies convene annually.

Adula Council: The council is led by the Abba Gada, who is supported by a retired Abbootii Seera (Fathers of the Law). These Gada officials serve in an advisory capacity (Bassi, 2005; Legesse, 2000).

Olla: This is the basic, foundational unit of the territorial administrative structure at the village level. The Luba leadership and local councils (Kora) perform legislative, judicial, and administrative functions at the local level. Overall, to the organizational structure preserve institutional history by staggering some terms of its members. (For more detailed information on the Gada system and its legislative, judicial, and administrative structures, refer to Legesse (1973, 2000), Demeksa (2018), and Shongolo (1974).

As has been shown, when cases are litigated and reconciliation effected, it starts at the lowest village level and makes its way any the way to the Gumi Gayo. However, if it gets resolved at any of the lower levels, and reconciliation realized, it ends at that stage.

There are also many traditional reconciliation processes that could be used to transform relations between rival ethnic groups in Marsabit. For example, a respondent narrated that *affinal* relationships are ignored when elders try to reconcile warring communities. He reported on this issue in the following manner:

> There are some Borana elders' people who come from outside and come very often. He came in search of peace. If we talk, "Gentlemen problems have come, what is Gabra to Boran?" They are either father or *affine* and as well as friends or in-laws. Therefore, of the same flesh. But now they are eating each other. We all have *affine* from among the

> Gabra. We have in-laws from among them. I have many relatives from among the Gabra. These kinds of relationships have been ruined by war. The ones that murdered each other recently were blood cousins. Relationships have been ignored and hence they fight based on ethnic loyalty. The ethnic label was regarded [as] important. When one is killed, the other come from the other side and kill another one. The spear is looking for an ethnic label. *Affinal* relationship is ignored when one is on a mission to murder.

The respondent continued that it is difficult to get the Borana and the Gabra to see that they are related by blood and kinship as ethnic identity trumps these historical relationships. The ethnic violence between both groups is ongoing as the government and its legal institutions does little to prevent the bloodshed.

> This war is not a concealed war. Even those who kill others are well known. They are never arrested. Even if arrested today, tomorrow you see him just walking as he is released. He bribes and frees himself from government hands. This is our way of life. People are dying night and day. Nobody can say what we can do about this. I have never seen such a situation. I am eighty-eight years old. Even during colonial rule, I paid tax as I was an adult. The much this land was closed today, it has never been in the past.

Another responded stated that it was necessary that a delegation of elders, women, and youth go to see the President to describe what is unfolding in Marsabit in terms of continuous ethnic violence.

> The way we shall get out of it is difficult. We Boran are in deep problems. If possible, a delegation should go to the President and sit to together. The prevailing problems that are bedeviling us are presented to him. If this is not done, nothing will be a reprieve for us. Unless it is said that we have such and such problems, nothing will improve our wellbeing. It would have been better if only we about ten elders go along together with ten women and ten youths to the Head of State to explain our predicament. Unless this is done, this land will never forever be in the right direction for us.
>
> Even such proposal if in the first place we suggest to our leaders, none will take it up. We on our own cannot even visit the Head of the State unless our elites take us there. One big tragedy that has the Boran community [has] at hand is that we have become people who only consume. We have become those who follow our own stomach. Today one can never find someone who advocates for the land. Everyone scavenges only for their own welfare.

The respondent continued that the Borana are dependent on their political elites to advocate on their behalf which they do not do as they are consumed with meeting their own interests. Local people have abandoned their customary laws that provided reconciliation and justice for its own members as the deep root of individualism from the capitalist economy has set in as the traditional culture and local economy is ignored and destroyed.

> Even the customary ways and laws of the Gada have become weak on our side. There is nothing about what is said by the *Abba Gada* or the *Qaallu* that is taken seriously. It has become our own weakness. All the customary laws that we used to abide by have now been abandoned. There is nothing of our wellbeing that today we prefer to follow. People themselves do not follow the ways of the livelihood that they were brought up in.

The respondent concluded that it is difficult to get to peace between the Borana and the Gabra when the truth is not spoken about who is causing the conflict, the individual(s) is not held accountable for their behaviour, and there is no reconciliation rituals performed to restore harmony and bring peace back to the communities.

> In one way peace might prevail. If people come together and speak the truth to one another and to identify those who brought the spear. And those who brought the spear are shown their guilt and to accept the wrong, then peace will prevail.[29] The essence of the custom is discussed and whatever judgement for the guilt committed is reached. If they have not arrived at this point in unison, that they have come together and have pronounced peace and dispersed, such may not be amicable. During reconciliation for peace, there is something in accordance with the Gabra and Boran relations that they exchange. If this customary rite was not performed as appeasement, then peace might not prevail.

If the Borana and the Gabra cannot perform their customary reconciliation rites, then the violent conflict between both ethnic groups will continue unabated. The disharmony impacts not just the community but also the land and the environment.

Five key findings emerge from the data in this section. First, the Borana adhere to the teachings and rulings of their elders. However, Borana traditional customary laws and reconciliation processes do not handily translate across the ethnic divide to the Gabra and Garri communities as they are unique to the Borana's cultural and historical context.

Second, there is a plethora of reconciliation processes, institutions, and practices within the Borana peacemaking culture. Conflict parties dissatisfied with an outcome can appeal the decision to a higher reconciliation body. It is more challenging for the Borana elders to use Borana grounded reconciliation processes with other ethnic groups like the Gabra as they are alien to them.

Third, the Borana and Gabra ethnic groups are locked in identity politics and fail to see that they are related to each other historically by kinship. The Kenyan government does little to intervene and prevent ethnic warfare between both communities. Ethnic political elites use the conflict to feather their own nests.

Fourth, a delegation of Borana elders, women, and youth must see the Kenyan President and inform him of what is transpiring in this manufactured inter-ethnic conflict that is trampling the Borana people's rights, their customary laws, and reconciliation practices. The Borana's customary practices would discover which parties were fomenting conflict and hold them accountable for their actions. The reconciliation rituals are needed to heal the Borana and Gabra communities and the land so that harmony and peace can be restored to Marsabit's milieu.

Peacebuilding

There is a multi-track plethora of key stakeholders including local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are key actors involved in inter-ethnic peacebuilding providing conflict intervention and prevention skills, consensus decision-making, development aid, and humanitarian relief so that local people can meet their basic human needs that includes access to food, health care, shelter, and water as well as meeting their identity needs (Byrne, 2023).

For example, one respondent disclosed that there are a multitude of key stakeholders involved in multi-track peacebuilding. This is what he had to say on the issue:

> The various players involved in peacebuilding include the national government administration, office; the county government; elders; faith-based organizations, including the Interfaith Network, Caritas, and Catholic Justice and Peace Commission; nongovernmental organizations, including PACIDA, NAWIRI, DLCI, Isiolo Peace Link and Isiolo Peace Triangle; community-based organizations; Frontier Counties Development Council; and formerly District Peace Committees. The key stakeholders interviewed mentioned that the national government administration office and the elders are strong players in peacebuilding; faith-based organizations too played major roles above the national government level.

That said, another respondent avowed that elders and NGOs are the key third party intermediaries in intragroup and intergroup conflict settings. NGOs have a lot of material resources to bring to the peacebuilding table whilst elders bring their wisdom and knowledge of customary laws and traditional peacebuilding practices.

> The key people in conflict resolutions are elders, but of course the young men also participate in many meetings more or so to learn their customary laws. NGO's do facilitate meetings for communities at conflict with each other. NGOs normally bring communities together to solve their conflicts and to reconcile. Their role in conflict resolution is important because they facilitate, provide transport, food and accommodation to elders, NGOs normally play a neutral role in such process. NCIC (National Cohesion and Integration Commission) members recently held meetings with Borana and Gabra professionals seeking approach to conflict resolution.

NGOs and state agencies like NCIC as well as international NGOs are important third-party intermediaries intervening in intergroup conflicts in Marsabit. Yet another respondent narrated that the NGOs and INGOs like Interfaith must partner with government agencies like NCIC who has a government mandate to intervene in inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya.

> We have NCIC and interfaith organizations. NCIC is a government agency. Interfaith is an international peacebuilding organization formally known as Warsaw Society established by the United Nations. Interfaith operates in about twenty-three countries, Kenya included. Whenever we come to an area for [a] peacebuilding approach or program, we normally do not come to implement it directly. We normally partner with government organizations / department concerned which has the mandate to deal with conflict resolution / or peacebuilding.
>
> Counties are well placed to carry out peacebuilding activities. Marsabit's Department of County Cohesion provides input for other departments and can mobilize resources in the event of conflict, but there is no peace directorate to coordinate the country's peace actors, nor is there a specific budget allocation in support of peacebuilding efforts.
>
> This gap results in the curtailment of important peacebuilding activities due to [the] lack of funding; and District Peace Committees, which were aligned to districts in the pre-devolution era, are languishing, partly due to lack of support and direct funds from the national government, which ceased after devolution. Coordination between the various peace actors in the county is poorly managed even at the national level.
>
> Marsabit's Department of County Cohesion doesn't have a peace directorate nor the financial resources to coordinate the various stakeholders working to build peace between various ethnic communities. District Peace Committees also do not have the finding to be actively engaged in intergroup peacebuilding. The funding gap has curtailed many important peacebuilding projects in the region. In addition, to the point made by the respondent above, five issues were also highlighted in one of the stakeholder forums that I attended that undermine intergroup peacebuilding efforts in Marsabit, namely, governance, people's insecurity, the rule of law, cross-border spillover issues, and emerging conflict issues.

The respondent went on to say that the Borana, the Gabra, and the Rendille continue to be engaged in protracted ethnic conflicts primarily over land and resources and cattle rustling as well as their ethnic identities that are tied to the same territory. The perceived historical injustice

narratives continue to embroil the three ethnic communities escalating conflict between and among them.

> There were three major ethnic groups fighting each other. The conflict was both economic and social and political competition. There is also an element of recognition of ethnic identity. There are elements of ethnic superiority as well as claim to portions of land. They also mentioned historical injustices and ethno-political regimes. There is a conflict on claim to Saaku constituency from the Gabra, the Rendille and the Boran too. The claim involves a round time limit. One ethnic group says they were the first occupants of Marsabit and that others recently came to the area and settled. Other issues revolve around [a] perennial cattle rustling culture from Rendille *morans*. We have tasked our research team to compile these narratives for analyses. Peace is a fragile thing it can exist for long but can be affected easily within hours.
>
> From our initial assessment we found out that issues of conflict resolve around: lack of representation in the county government, and access to resources such as pasture of water and to development from the county government; marginalization from county resources; claims to land ownership; extension of boundaries favoring one ethnic group; revenge and counter revenge; compensation for looted livestock; issues of trauma like the Turbi massacre; lack of counseling services for affected victims; issues to do with displacement because of attacks, impunity, and the protection of perpetrators of conflicts; concealing criminals and firearms; issues to do with the community militia; the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) as a transnational issue; issues of government officials corrupt dealings in exacerbating conflict among communities; the county government has a peacebuilding department though they do not have funding to facilitate their activities; partiality of government in dealing with conflicts in favoring some communities against the other that is partly due to corruption; and issues of delaying responses to conflict situations, hence maximizing damages.

The third-party intermediaries face a myriad of conflict issues that are straining relationships between the Borana, Gabra, and Rendille communities. These conflicts are exacerbated by the lack of provision of resources including counselling services for trauma victims as some corrupt government ministers continue to stir the pot to escalate tensions between these three ethnic groups in Marsabit.

Two key findings emerged inductively from the qualitative interviews with regards to how the research participants perceive peacebuilding. First a plethora of key stakeholders are

working diligently together in a multi-track peacebuilding process that includes elders, NGOs, and INGOs to build peace in intragroup and intergroup contexts in Marsabit. NGOs provide the resources to the participants while the elders include the peacebuilding knowledge and wisdom that are necessary to engage many peacebuilding actors and conflict parties in a sustainable and adaptable peacebuilding process.

Second, NGOS and state agencies like NCIC, elders, and INGOs like Interfaith are partnering together to provide peacebuilding services to Marsabit's ethnic communities. However, Marsabit's Department of County Cohesion does not have the financial resources nor a peace directorate to coordinate the various stakeholder interventions in inter-ethnic peacebuilding. The result is the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Borana, Gabra, and Rendille communities that are locked in conflict over cattle, land, environmental resources, and identity. Their conflict narratives point to a past littered with perceived injustices that perpetuate contemporary conflicts. The lack of government provisions as well as some recalcitrant politicians maintaining their power by fomenting conflict among the three ethnic groups means that these deadly conflicts are ongoing.

Peace Sustaining[30]

[30] The phrase "peace sustaining" is intentionally used to distinguish it from "sustaining peace." "Peace sustaining" implies an ongoing, continuous state, whereas "sustaining peace" suggests a temporary or intermittent effort—something external on which one works, rather than something integral to one's being. For the Borana and other indigenous peoples, peace is not a distant concept or commodity; it is an intrinsic part of who they are, something they embody and live every day.

The study revealed that the Borana people, like many indigenous groups, perceived peace as defined by action, something actively lived out through daily interactions with others and the environment. Peace, in this context, is not merely the absence of conflict or violence, but a continuous practice.

This finding was born out by interview data in the field. Many people articulated what peace and reconciliation meant to them. One respondent stated.

> Borana people believe peace is both individual and collective. The word for peace is *Nagaa* in our Borana language. *Nagaa* is based on communal relationships, and when the balance of relationships is disrupted, peace is broken and since peace is a collective value its disruption means that the whole community gets sanctioned. Peaceful individuals make a peaceful community. That means if we are to have a peaceful community, we need individuals that are at peace with themselves. Borana people's notion of peace is holistic, they believe in cosmic harmony, so that all people should live in harmony with the living and nonliving. The practice of *nagaa* promotes personal and collective relationships.

Another respondent, a sixty-year-old elder added that peace affects the state of mind and how everything is interconnected and interdependent and explained it this way,

> Peace is a state of mind that is very, very difficult to explain, you know it when you have it, because you experience it, you live it, you breathe it. In practical life peace is about relationships, how we relate to one another as human beings, how we relate to our relative earth, trees, birds, rivers, ourselves, the ecosystems, all of which are family. If our relationship with either the land, which is our mother, or our siblings – the living and nonliving entities is fractured, I know I have no peace. Reconciliation in my view is mending up this relationship if it is broken.

Another respondent, a senior elder explained how the concept of *nagaa* was central to living a peaceable life opining that the notion of *naaga* held everything together.

> One very strong moral bond that unites the Borana people is the concept of *nagaa* for their wellbeing while maintaining respect for *adda seera.* Borana people believe in peaceful ways of living. They believe that any issue should be peacefully solved. We as a people value peace, it is a guiding principle in all forms of relationships with each other and with the environment. Peace is what binds us all together.

Another respondent expressed a similar view when he noted,

> Peace to me is when I am not fighting with other people, my neighbors, my family and all my kin, which includes all the animals, trees, ants and even snakes! In other words, peace in its fullness can only be experienced. I cannot tell you in words what it is. All I can tell you is that peace tastes delicious, it smells good. It is difficult to describe just like it is difficult to describe any of our feelings. What does it mean to be happy, hard to describe but I know how it feels, it feels good! I know what conditions prepare us for peace – good relationships with everything there is around us. We, the Borana believe that the sky, the earth, the water, mountains, and the creator are our family members, thus why there is respect, there is that reciprocal relationship between us, and when we cannot relate that way, there is no peace. You abuse a tree, then nature punishes you because you have disrespected a family member.

A 75-year respondent argued that to sustain peace, peace sustaining activities on a daily basis were necessary. Further, the same respondent said peace was fragile and in need of daily care.

> Peace is when there is no fighting in the community. It is like a tree, you grow it, water it and constantly tender it. If you stop watering your garden it dries up and dies, if you don't need it, the weed chokes your plants, and they die. It is so with peace, you must water it, hoe some weeds around it. What does that mean? It means that we must live out peace every day, otherwise it perishes. And again, like plants, peace gets sick, and when that happens, we must wake up and bring it back to our lives. This happens to all of us because we are humans. In a community we are at peace when our relationship is good with every member of our community.

Addressing the question raised by the researcher to give an example of sustaining peace activities, an elder of the local council stated:

> Borana people live in peace every day, they greet each other with works wishing the other person peace and act peaceably toward them. Gifts, humanitarian services through *Marro* and busa*gonofa*, help to address the needs of those that are in need, making everybody live a life free of hunger, nakedness; and being disrespected because you do not have food and clothing. They practice social justice towards each other ensuring that basic social needs of community members are met.

This finding suggests something unique to the Borana and other indigenous peoples, As has been already pointed out previously in this dissertation, sustaining peace is a new concept to the international world, recently introduced by both the UN General Assembly and Security Council

who adopted the language from the Advisory Group of Experts 2016 (https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Guidance-on-Sustaining-Peace.170117.final_.pdf) who were responsible for the introduction of this language of sustaining peace in 2016. What was new in this resolution was that its definition delinked it from being defined in opposition to violence or conflict. For the first time the international community defined peace. Here it is important to point out that the international community essentially articulated what indigenous communities including Borana have been doing as part of sustaining peace for years.

In conclusion, Borana concept of peace offers peacebuilding architecture that is actionable and, unlike the UN, is not caught up in the aspirational cycle. What this means then is that the sustaining peace is the retooling of works that the UN and other modernist models have done before, from the traditional standpoint sustaining peace, although the notion as used by the UN is interpreted differently to suggest aspirational goals, sustaining peace is action they have been living out for years in their traditional societies. Is shown in the literature section in chapter 3, sustaining peace is not a substitute for conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. As such, it does not address the drivers and root causes of conflicts and their underlying root causes. Its role is to encourage the community to engage in sustaining peace activities

This section presents three key findings.

First, it highlights that the Borana view peace-sustaining activities as integral to their daily lives, involving both living and nonliving entities.

Second, the responsibility for maintaining peace is shared by all community members and spans multiple sectors/institutions and ages.

Third, it demonstrates that the Borana's peace-sustaining activities are deeply rooted in spirituality, which is revived daily through their relationship with the land and wetlands. These natural elements serve as mythical points of contact between humans and the divine.

Conclusion

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The Borana concept of peace offers a peacebuilding framework that is practical and actionable. Unlike the UN, which often becomes entangled in aspirational goals, the Borana approach focuses on lived experience. In this context, the UN "peace sustaining" involves retooling the efforts already undertaken by the indigenous models, including that of the Borana. From a traditional standpoint, peace sustaining is not just an abstract goal but a practice that has been part of their communities for generations.

As shown in Chapter 3's literature review, sustaining peace is not a replacement for conflict resolution or peacebuilding processes. It does not directly address the root causes and drivers of

conflicts. Instead, its role is to encourage the community to actively engage in peace-sustaining activities.

General Conclusion

Chapter six explored the respondent's perceptions of the Borana's reconciliation and peacebuilding practices in addressing intragroup and intergroup conflicts. Indigenous people's cultures are resources, and it is critical to include their cultural peacebuilding practices that address local conflicts and to utilize them as the core to build a transformational and reconciliation process (Lederach, 2010; Q'um Q'um et al., 2022; Strega & Brown, 2015). An ongoing relationship between external third-party intermediaries and ethnic group leaders is also important in sustaining grassroots peacebuilding activities as they bring commitment, confidence, resources, different skill sets, and trust to the peacebuilding table (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011; Richmond & Mitchell, 2011).

Borana elders are part of a continuous system of connections and relationships in local villages, and they are part of peacebuilding and conflict dynamics in Marsabit. These insider-partial local mediators are known and trusted by local conflict actors, and they facilitate solutions that are respected by those parties, and they know the parties, the locality, and their conflict (Lederach, 1995). Insider-partial mediators remain in the context of the conflict, and they do not enter, and leave compared with outsider-neutral mediators that come and go at will (Lederach, 1995).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

The study identified 13 key findings, which are distilled into several themes for discussion. These themes—social justice, peace, reconciliation, land, and hybridity—were selected because they best encompass the broader findings. It is important to note that the order in which these findings are presented is not hierarchical but arbitrary.

First, I summarize the findings related to the blended model. Second, I explore the concept of distributive social justice as discussed in the thesis. Third, I outline all thirteen findings before focusing on the role of land in the lives of the Borana people. Land, in this context, epitomizes all the findings, as it appears throughout the thesis and carries multiple meanings. Notably, land holds a uniquely polysemous nature in African contexts, where its significance is multifaceted. The word "polysemous" itself stems from the Greek *polysemos*, meaning "of many senses." Fourth is the conclusion encompassing the whole thesis, followed by the recommendations.

Summary

I presented a new paradigm that goes beyond the context-specific frameworks of colonial and post-colonial perspectives, instead focused on precolonial times. In this exploration, I investigated principles of conflict management and peacebuilding, aiming to extract those that could inspire new indigenous models in conjunction with modern peacebuilding mechanisms. This approach advocates for a blending of these two frameworks, rather than a mere hybridization.

On one hand, we have indigenous mechanisms of peacebuilding, and on the other, modernist models, which encompass all frameworks developed from colonial to contemporary times. What makes this model unique is that the contributing frameworks retain their distinct identities while sharing their best practices. However, Indigenous principles serve as the primary drivers in this approach.

Additionally, this model recognizes that indigenous principles alone are insufficient to address contemporary challenges. As such, it is necessary to incorporate elements from modernist mechanisms to effectively tackle issues that indigenous practices cannot adequately resolve. Importantly, this integration occurs without compromising the core values or spirit of the indigenous principles, allowing them to evolve and adapt to new situations.

Change, as one respondent stated, is inevitable. To illustrate this, the respondent provided the example of a snake that periodically sheds its skin. He narrated, “Our tradition has never been static; it has evolved to adapt to new circumstances. Just like a snake that grows too large for its skin, it becomes uncomfortable in that tight casing. The only relief it can find is by shedding its skin, after which it feels fresh and rejuvenated.” The respondent concluded by applying this metaphor, stating that just as snakes shed their old, tight, and sometimes diseased skin for new, non-tight skin that is free of disease, traditional principles governing the lives and jurisprudence of traditional peoples have overtime changed to discard outdated principles that are no longer relevant or deemed unacceptable from an emic perspective.

These indigenous principles have historically guided and informed the peacebuilding models that the Borana used to organize their spiritual, social, cultural, and legal lives. In that context, I also examined the resilience of traditional cultural values and practices, which have

persisted despite external pressures to eradicate or replace them. I concluded the section by asserting that indigenous peacebuilding processes alone were not sufficient, just as neoliberal paradigms alone were inadequate.

Research data revealed that the neoliberal distributive model fails to ensure a fair and just adjudication system for the Borana, neither does it provide effective conflict resolution mechanisms. The discussion highlighted that respondent perceived the judiciary as heavily biased toward a neoliberal approach, which marginalized traditional jurisprudence and conflict resolution methods. The conclusion drawn from this analysis was that the resource delivery systems within these models were found to fall short in providing the Borana community with even the most basic levels of social justice, resulting in an inequitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and access.

In contrast, the analysis of the Gada model revealed that it was more effective in addressing the spiritual, material, and judicial needs of the community, particularly for its least advantaged members. Despite its limitations, the Borana's traditional social systems consistently promoted fairness and social justice by prioritizing the welfare of the most vulnerable members of their community.

Recognizing the strengths inherent in both indigenous conflict and peacebuilding models, as well as those in neoliberal/modernist approaches, I concluded that a blended model, incorporating elements from both paradigms and grounded in indigenous principles, would be the most effective and practical peacebuilding mechanism.

This approach is distinctly infused with traditional spirituality, an approach for which some African scholars such as (Dei,2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Mbembe, 2019;2001 add Mazrui 2014, Tapiwa, 2014). and Tutu, 2009)[31] started to advocate as part of a holistic worldview. These two models are historically distinct, and separate and have different judicial origins, but blended in their social and judicial implementation.

Below, I diagrammatically illustrate the progression of these models, from the colonial to the blended approach.

[31] These African scholars widely share similar perspectives on the concept of African Indigenous Knowledge, which refers to the knowledge systems, beliefs, philosophies, values, and practices that Africans have developed over centuries. These ways of knowing are deeply rooted in the spiritual, cultural, and environmental contexts of African societies, offering alternative approaches to understanding the world, education, and community life. This knowledge is holistic and relational, inextricably intertwined with spirituality, the natural world, and communal living. A central feature is the belief in the interconnectedness of all life—humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. In many African cultures, humans are viewed as part of a larger ecosystem, where every entity (animals, plants, ancestors, etc.) plays a vital role in maintaining balance. This belief fosters a deep respect for nature and promotes sustainable living practices. The philosophy of *Ubuntu*, *meaning* "I am because of the community," encapsulates this sense of interconnectedness and interdependence. It emphasizes the importance of community and the collective well-being of society, prioritizing communal values over individualism.

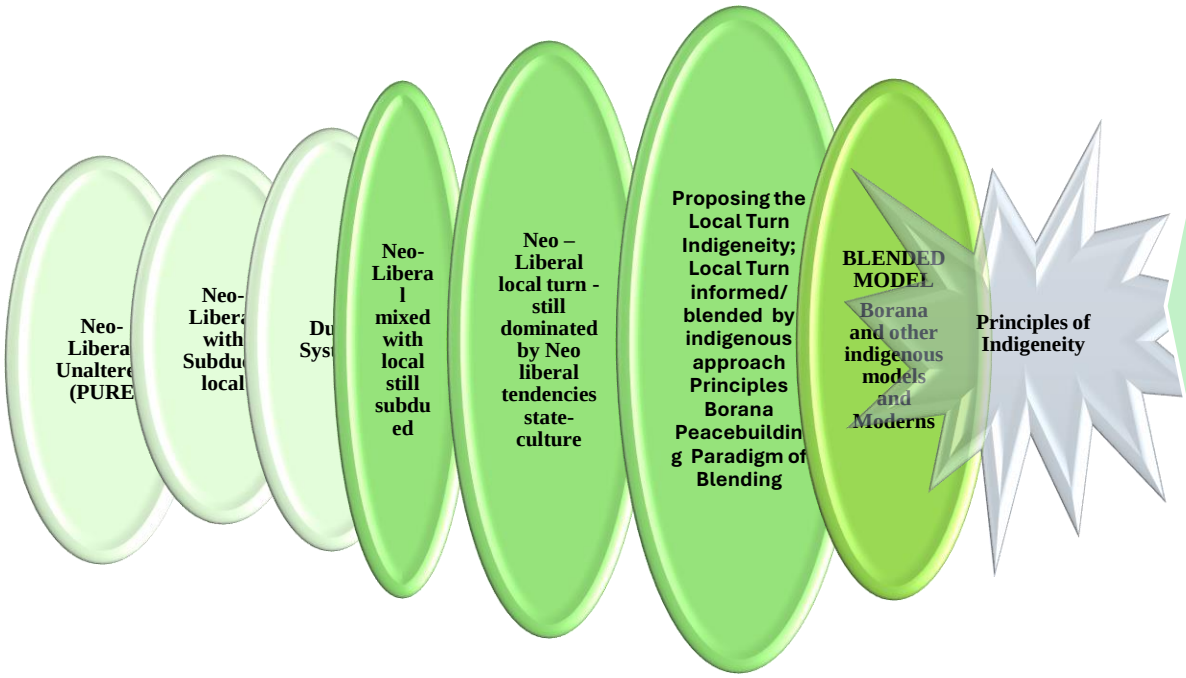


Diagram Explanation

The diagram illustrates the development of peace-making mechanisms from precolonial times to the present. It begins with the precolonial period, where traditional systems were inherently indigenous, evolving organically and voluntarily through adaptation, including borrowing, and discarding practices from other ethnic groups. The key word here is *voluntarily*.

The second phase occurs during colonial occupation, a period characterized by the arrest of organic growth and the imposition of peacebuilding models designed to divide and rule Africans. During this time, chiefs and kraal heads were co-opted, and cultural practices were distorted. This phase extends from the colonial era into the post-colonial period, marked by the introduction of dual administration systems.

The third phase emerges in the 1990s, influenced by Boutros Boutros-Ghali's post-Cold War optimism around democracy. This neoliberal approach promoted a one-size-fits-all solution to peacebuilding, often disregarding cultural specificities.

The fourth phase reflects a shift introduced by scholars like Mac Ginty and Wilson around 2010. This turn emphasized greater local participation and the involvement of international NGOs. While it acknowledged the importance of context-specific approaches, it retained the dual system, which undervalued traditional values as universally significant within nations. During this period, African voices such as Dei, Gatsheni, Tutu, Mazrui, and Murithi began to amplify calls for ingenuity and the integration of cultural frameworks into conflict resolution. Their advocacy emphasized a model that borrows voluntarily and centers indigenous practices.

The challenge, however, remains that indigeneity continues to be overshadowed by neoliberal ideologies.

What I propose is a new model that blends traditional and modern frameworks while being guided by indigenous values. This model would prioritize reparations, the restitution of relationships, and equity—particularly in resource allocation—as central pillars.

This approach to social justice bears a striking resemblance to John Rawls' model outlined in his 1971 work, *A Theory of Justice*. Although Rawls' ideal society is founded on the moral principles of individual liberty and equality, he, like the Borana and other indigenous groups, advocates for a society that favors the least privileged as a measure of justice, which he terms "fairness" (p.302). In his second principle of justice, Rawls argues that the "least advantaged" are unfairly treated. This principle describes how wealth, income, and opportunity (1971, p. 75), among other factors, should be distributed. The central tenet of Rawls' theory of justice as fairness is equality of opportunity. In a just society, individuals should be provided with basic social, material, and immaterial needs to ensure that everyone can lead a life of respect. However, Rawls acknowledges that his principle for distributing social resources cannot eliminate all inequalities. Despite this, he remains deeply concerned for those who lack access to essential social resources. Thus, Rawls, like Borana, uses the situation of the least advantaged members of society as a criterion for evaluating the fairness of resource distribution.

However, this similarity should not be misunderstood as implying that Rawls' approach, which favors the least advantaged (Rawls, 2001, p. 42), is identical to the Borana principles of equity and compassion. Unlike Rawls, the Borana take a communal approach rather than an individualistic one. As discussed in the body of the thesis, Borana's approach is more aligned with the liberation theologians' concept of the preferential option for the poor as a measure of social justice (Gutiérrez, 2004).

The analysis revealed that the blended paradigm is both novel and distinct from existing models, including hybrid ones. Unlike these models, the blended paradigm maintains the uniqueness of each model and extends beyond local, situated knowledge and ownership. Currently, local knowledge is predominantly influenced by neoliberal elements, even during the

so-called "local turn" era. Consequently, the proposed blended peacebuilding mechanism is not only innovative but also unique.

The thesis also discussed the importance of IK. It showed that IK is not a static body of knowledge that can be discovered like a piece of gold in the ground. In the thesis discussion, its analysis has demonstrated that IK is socially constructed and often emerges from substantive dialogue that reflects diverse interpretations, contrasting viewpoints, and even contestation. This contestation is what enables change and adaptation. As we have seen, it would be misleading to claim that IK is value-neutral just like any other body of knowledge. All knowledge is rooted in specific cultural and social histories, as one of my respondents pointed out.

In this sense, IK is not only about African ways of knowing or the product of multicultural traditional epistemologies, but it also stands in opposition to hegemonic colonial and neocolonial discourses, as the research has shown. Highlighting this distinction does not overemphasize epistemological differences; rather, it underscores the argument already made in this thesis that these differences make conversations between and among epistemologies not only desirable but essential.

As noted, IK was characterized by diversity and heterogeneity of perspectives. This approach underscores the risk of promoting a one-size-fits-all solution to managing conflicts, which often leads to didactic and juristic paralysis. Furthermore, it recognizes that Africans, including the Borana, had their own vibrant knowledge systems, which provided them with various social competencies and served them well for centuries before the advent of colonial rule.

I find Tsai's (2020, p. 7) metaphor contrasting a staircase and a tree in his introduction to his book on rituals and ethnicity useful for understanding how indigenous people approached

discussions and thinking processes. In this metaphor, Tsai contrasts vertical thinking, symbolized by a staircase, which he associates with rational, unilinear, and hierarchical thought, with a tree, symbolizing the “divergence of cultures and languages.” Tsai explains that the tree represents the uniqueness of culture, where all cultures are treated as equal and contributory in decision-making.

In the African context, this "master trope" can be interpreted as representing, based on research data, the democratic nature of African dialogue and discussion, in contrast to the staircase, which symbolizes a linear pursuit of truth. The "tree" stands for a system of growth, branching, and interconnectedness.

We have seen how in African democratic traditions, dialogue often emphasized participation, consensus, and inclusiveness. The metaphor of the tree suggests a rooted foundation where discussions grow and branch out, allowing multiple perspectives and voices to be heard, like the branches of a tree reaching out in different directions. This metaphor highlights the organic and inclusive nature of African communal dialogue, where decisions grow out of discussion, respect for diversity, and a shared sense of responsibility.

However, indigenous knowledge has not been recorded yet, nor documented in a written form for sharing to communities. Some indigenous practices are unsuitable for use today.

Summary of findings

1. Indicated that a blending of indigenous knowledge with scientific/modern knowledge resolved some complex conflicts, albeit temporarily.
2. Showed that gender disparities existed in the Borana traditional communities despite theoretical professed equality.
3. Demonstrated Blended conflict resolution mechanisms were imperative.
4. Revealed that land has polysemous meaning to indigenous people/Borana.

5. Showed that the Borana had an expansive definition of peace – peace with the whole ecosystem – no binaries or hierarchies.
6. Showed that reconciliation is a community event which includes the environment community, the violator meant to restore relations more than being retributive.
7. Showed that social justice to the Borana means to each according to their needs.
8. Showed that Borana people engaged in social networks to deliver social justice and to respond to humanitarian needs of community members.
9. Showed that Borana people using their indigenous knowledge had efficient methods of developing sustainable ecosystems without destroying it.
10. Showed that some elements of IK are no longer useful or relevant in the contemporary circumstances because, it has been superseded, or violets human rights – (Snake shading its skin)
11. Demonstrated the importance of consulting with locals before undertaking any project in their community
12. That indigenous knowledge on its own is not adequate. (Consistent with some research.
13. The Role of the Land in Findings

Another key finding discussed was the concept of land. Land was discussed extensively in this thesis due to its multiple meanings and role in the life of the Borana people. The research revealed that the Borana were dissatisfied with the dispossession and subsequent distribution of land, which they perceived as exceedingly unfair. They also felt that the marketization, corporatization, and *elitization* of land affronted their sovereignty and religious sensibilities and contributed to their impoverishment. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015:19-20) notes that sovereignty was closely tied to land and that colonial projects relied on land possession for

material survival. For indigenous people, land was fundamental to their livelihood, encapsulated in the belief that "land is life – contents for life" (Wolfe 2006:387). Land held spiritual, economic, cultural, and political significance for them. Economically, it was essential for social and economic development and poverty reduction. Culturally, it was crucial for the political stability of their ethnic group and social harmony until colonial disruptions. Scholars emphasize that the survival of indigenous peoples hinges on dismantling colonial structures (Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 2012:7). The ecologically unsustainable, coercive dispossession and extraction of natural resources further highlight the conflict. The contrasting views of land as a familial asset versus a commodity, derived from fundamentally different realities, illustrate the deep-seated conflict. This incommensurability of interests often leads to intense and intractable conflict, a common plight for indigenous populations living among settler societies or former settler societies and within diverse traditional communities.

Summary and Conclusion

In this study I have theorized models of conflict resolution, emphasizing the importance of understanding the history, culture and metaphysics of the people involved in conflict, beyond understanding their contextual realities. I highlighted need for the inclusion of indigenous conflict and peace processes models to form a blended paradigm and invited legitimate critic of indigeneity. Further, I discussed Indigenous critiques of settle institutions, which generally espouse linear and authoritative, paradigms based on the thinking that Africans are a monolithic group, which undermines their own claims on the democratic ethos. Also, I mentioned the need to be cautious of our qualitative research methodologies, suggesting that they be in alignment with the culture of people we study. Additionally, I underscored the importance of understanding how indigenous people's (people in general) identities and cultures are adversely impacted by

the pollution of the environment. I cautioned that that the byproduct of blending should be such that the relationship between or among the models be that of parity, however with the dominating principles being of that the host county.

I showed how the application of the liberal peacebuilding model in inter-ethnic conflicts has failed to achieve the desired outcomes of establishing sustainable peace, and that in some instances, it has even exacerbated tensions, as seen in the Kenyan ethno-political conflict. Also pointed out that a significant shortcoming of the liberal approach is its failure to create space for the involvement of local actors, agencies, structures, and institutions. In other words, traditional and indigenous methods of peacemaking, along with their resources, are often excluded from peacebuilding efforts driven by the liberal peacebuilding model. The Marsabit conflict, which has been recurring in NFD, illustrates the challenges of sustainable peacebuilding within the neoliberal framework.

I also discussed the centrality of land in the Borana community, and the role it played in the constitution of the Borana in connecting them to Waqqaa, spirituality, environment and peacemaking. The study also touched on the incommensurability of interests between the Borana community on one hand, and marketization, overconsumption and capital as they are considered a basis of intensive and intractable conflict. I included in this portion of a discussion on the fate of indigenous populations living among settler, and sometimes former settler societies, and pointed out the causes of that conflict still exist post-colonial as legacies of colonialism which continue to spur intra and interethnic traditional communities espousing different views.

Recommendations

I make eleven recommendations emanating from the study.

1. Incorporating IK into the legal framework should go beyond mere mention of it in academic papers and not reinscribing neoliberal values.
2. Making the traditional concept of equity central to Kenya's jurisprudence and social policies and practices
3. Infusing indigenous knowledge and strategies into government environmental policies and practices.
4. Prioritizing restorative justice over punitive sentences.
5. Incorporating and implementing tangible gender parity policies and practices.
6. NGOs to consult with the communities among which they are working before and during the implementation of projects for those communities.
7. The government needs to provide a statutory framework that enables the Gada system to work to its full capacity, especially in peace building processes.
8. The traditional system needs to incorporate modern formal gender equality that promotes and protects gender rights.
9. Government to incorporate traditional land tenure practices in its policies
10. Traditional jurisprudence should eliminate collective punishment and replace it with individual accountability for crimes committed.
11. Eliminate language that undermines gender parity in all social spheres, particularly in religion—specifically Islam and Christianity—and challenge repressive traditional attitudes. This can be achieved through community education about songs, stories, jokes, plays, and social practices that demean women. Collaborative efforts should involve traditional leaders, NGOs, and state institutions working together to promote gender equality. These changes and reforms should be guided by the proposed blended conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanism.

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Appendix

Madogashe Peace Declaration A.pdf

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