

**Traditional Clan based violence reconciliation process in gambella
(Chuot)**

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Introduction

Gambella people region is one of the nine ethnic divisions (kililoch) of Ethiopia. The region is situated between the baro and Akobo River which is the only navigates rivers for transportation in Ethiopia.

The region composes of 5 major ethnics that are divided in to sub clans within the 3 zones of the region.

Inter clan conflict in the region can be traced as far back as the early 19 century. With this token, inter clan reconciliation emerged as a means of aborting the very effect that the violence may cause toward the rest of the clans. Therefore this paper will discuss the method of gambella people traditional reconciliation process and frame the impotency of observing such a tradition in our modern reconciliation process.

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1 Portraiture of Gambella

Gambella region is located in south western part of Ethiopia. The region shares boundary with oromia region to the north, and east, southern nation, nationality, and people to the south, and benishangulgumuz to the north. Outside of Ethiopia the region shared boundary with the republic of south Sudan to the south and west¹.

Gambella is rich with various ethnic compositions. The major ethnic groups include the nuer, anyuak, mezeng, opo and commo. Although some of the ethnics are crop, hunting and fishery dependant the people that largely found along the akobo, jikow and part of a nuer zone are livestock dependant².

1.1 The Place Where the Traditional Reconciliation is Practiced

The practice of chuot in other word clan based dispute reconciliation is highly practiced in gambella regional state, nuer zone which is one of the three zones of the region. The zone is borders by the republic of south Sudan on the south, west and north, by mejeng zone on the east and by anyuak zone on south- east.

1.2 Language

The zone speaks nuer language which is Nilotic language of the western Nilotic groups. The nuer language is spoken in some part of south Sudan and western Ethiopia with Latin based alphabets⁴.

1.3 Cultures and Essential Futures of Nuer Community

The nuer refers themselves as naath, meaning “human being⁵.” Nuer life is center around the herding of cattle. Cattle have historically been of the highest symbolic, religions, economic values and play an important role in most areas of nuer. This can be perceived from nuer names they give after their children considering their favorite cattle color⁶.

The nuer organized as a number autonomous communities; great importance is placed on patrimony lineage that organized in clans and sub clans.

The nuer religion is said to be animalistic in contemporary but they also worship a creator called “kuoth.” Nuer believes that all life comes from and returns to “kuoth.” They prayed and sacrificed of cattle to kuoth, hoping for health and well being to-ward off danger and evil⁷.

Generally the nuer that lives in rural area live in nuer temporary circular mud house thatched roofs. They moves to higher ground during the wet season and moves to lower area beside the baro-akobo river during dry season.

2 Clan based dispute Reconciliation chuot)

As the writer mentioned above nuer are autonomously organized in to clans and sub clans. Each and every clan desires possession of cattle. Nuer life depends on cattle and thus nuer men risk their life to raid neighbor's cattle. The high dependability of cattle procures violence and chaos among nuer clans for nuer men defends it cattle from raiders as his primary obligation. The obligation perhaps amount to losing life in the hand of cattle raiders which in other hand inflict fraction among the two clans to the raid. Additionally the raids transcend instability, unrest and clan based violence among the party involved. Due to this the nuer elder gathers up from different part of the zone to discuss the means to tackle any clan based violence or unrest. They come up with the norm by the name "chuot." Or indemnifying the wrong did by the wrongdoer.

As the name indicate "chuot." Is basically used in the life lost during clan based violence or paying the amount of the raided cows or destroyed property to the victims by the clan from which the wrongdoer emerges from.

The process of "chuot." Involves four major stages:-

First, as soon as the violence irrupted between two nuer clans the rest of the remaining clans form solid unit that interrupt the repetition of violence among the two involved party. Their main task is to reassure the disputant to abort violence and vengeance that will affect their life as well as the life o their family.

Second, the unit pursues the disputant separately and convinces them to bring their matter before the rest of the clan and community leader. This is the most significant stage for it involvement elders from every nuer clans, fearless youth, traditional leader and families that are related to the disputant directly but didn't involve in that chaos to convince their keen.

Third, the unit arranges a date for disputant to litigate openly before the traditional leaders, respected nuer personals and the rest of the nuer clans. Every clan are represented and given a chance to express their view point in determining whose in fault through their representative after both of the disputant stated their fact.

Finally, the elders announce the wrongdoer. They instructed the remedy and measure to be taken against the clan that is found to be at fault without excluding members that did not participate in that violence. The remedies mostly involve confiscation of stated amount of cattle payable by the wrongdoer clan if they refused to hand over the cattle by themselves. The dispute is finalized by sacrificing cattle to "kuoth." This is used as means of inflicting fear among the disputant to abort vengeance.

3 Current insights toward chuot

The practice of chuot is widely practiced up to date. It's viewed as the mechanism of traditional reconciliation process that solved a lot of dispute among the nuer clan, as well as, deterring future conflict to arise due to involvement of confiscation of cattle of the wrongdoer and other societal remedies.

Chuot still the measure traditional reconciliation process that entertains clan based violence without putting a clear cut to the nature of the dispute. Currently chuot is growing as the building bridge that brings the traditional reconciliation process to close link with modern law enforcement process. Their inter relation expand the legitimacy and acceptance of decision of chuot for the modern law enforcement process involve harsh measure in failure to observe them.

3.1 Acceptance of Chuot Among Nuer Youth

Chuot is based on values, norms, culture and beliefs as practiced by the member of nuer ethnicity for centuries. They involve the high set of rule and standard that is expected from diligent nuer youth. However, the partaking of rest of nuer clans, elders, respected personal and involvement of "kuoth." Left disputant youth with no room but to act accordingly and accept decision of the unit or they will face isolation from future decision making process and inter marriage to the rest of the clan. Due to this the youth view non compliance to the decision as an insult to the "kuoth." and disrespect to their elder. In addition to above mentioned point the process of chuot is widely accepted by most of nuer use for it flexibility. The process involves a direct confrontation and express of facts by both disputant. It is also cost-efficient and repressive. The former amount to non-payment of representation cost for every party to dispute expressed his own fact verbally and the latest amount from the set of uniformity of rules and remedies given for the same cause or violence.

3.2 Drawback of Chuot

Women constitute half of every community and difficult task such as reconciliation and peace building process must be done by men and women in partnership with men⁸. Women are the central caretakers of families and everyone is affected when chaos irrupted. However, the process of chuot does not involve women as partaker. Nuer cultural pressure against women is the main reason for they discourage women from engaging in importance community arenas.

➤ Solution for the drawback

Women played undeniable role in peace building process of horn of Africa. In fact, there is a lot of gain than loss that "chuot." Incur if women are allowed to be partakers. Therefore, supporting, strengthening women technically and empowering

women with means to participate in process of chuot is the ultimate remedy to confront the drawback.

4. General Perspective Toward Reconciliation idea

What to do as a country?

There are remedies for violence in our legal system. However, they are set of rules transplanted from other country to our country without due consideration of our own tradition, norms and culture which were practiced by our ancestors. The transplanted set of rule are not known nor practiced widely since majority of the population lives in rural part of the country. In this regard the law making body in collaboration with reconciliation council should push for recognition of our traditional reconciliation mechanism and codifies a common set of rule that is commonly shred, practiced and known by the vast majority. In addition to this, there is a need for reallocating chain of reconciliation process from urban to rural part of the country. As far as the reconciliation involved, most of it process are conducted in urban area without setting foundation in rural area. The writer suggests that there should be a peace building chain that started from the bottom (rural area) to the top (urban area).

What should we Learn from Chuot?

It's notable from initial stage of "chuot." That people who did not partake in clan based violence are the one that play significant role in aborting chaos. They pursue the party to the conflict separately until they reach the point of seeking a better way to solve their issue than violence as a means. Coming to our country Ethiopia, we are in a middle of a chaos and gross tensions among ethnics were people are targeted and killed due to their ethnicity. "Chuot." Should be ultimate confront for ethnic based violence. When two ethnics start violence among themselves the rest of the ethnics should step in and reconcile them than setting down and watch them butchers each other.

What do you feel about this Project?

Ethnic based violence has rocked Ethiopia since 2018. Although there is no agreed reason for the rise of the violence ethno-nationalisms; state and party fragility have created an environment conducive to the proliferation of violence. This project could be the melting point that feels the vacuum that instigated violence for it composes of different youth from different ethnicity. The youth are the party that always affected by violence. Thus, they can easily bring the solution to the very problem that affects their life. Therefore this project could be an arena for peace building and reconciliation process.

5 Conclusion

Cattle raid and repeated clan based violence among nuer clans are the factor involves for the introduction of “chuot.” The process involves the interruption stage, the persuasive stage and litigation stage.

Chuot still practiced among nuer and viewed as an ultimate solution to clan based violence or fracture. It includes confiscation of wrongdoer cattle and his clan’s men until the agreed amount is reached.

Since the process of chuot based on known set of rule, norms and cultures the nuer youth accept the decision that is made without hesitating for they believe that acting in contrary is an insult to kuoth and disrespect to the elders.

Women are left outside of a circle that makes decision in litigation of chuot. This is the major setback of chuot. Insuring women participation in decision making, strengthening women technically and empowering them is a solution for the major setback.

As a country we went through a lot of violence that have ethnic based nature. Therefore, we need to act in a way that reconciles the two disputant just like elders of chuot and other uninvolved clans men that play important role in interrupting the existed violence.

Traditional reconciliation process should be observed in peace talks for they are the norms that have strong bunds with our identity. They could play a significant role in bringing ever lasting peace in our country Ethiopia. Hence, our traditional reconciliation process should be codified and ratified as part of our legal system.

6 References'

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