

# *Analyzing Shared Cultural Values and the Dynamics in the Inter-ethnic Relations among the Sidama Gedeo and Guji*

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## **Executive summary**

*Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. It is commonly said that there are about 80 distinct ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Each ethnic group has its own culture and identity. For this reason Ethiopia has been called a rich cultural mosaic. This diversity of the peoples of Ethiopia Especially Southern Ethiopia has attracted a number of researchers. There are a number of research works done on the history, culture, local knowledge system on a number of individual ethnic groups. Most of these works elaborate the unique identity of a single ethnic group. Though these each ethnic group has their own identity and culture, they also have a shared culture that they share with one another. Their shared cultural practices may emanate from a number of two or more factors like geographical contiguity, shared ethno history (common myth of origin), more or less similar mode of livelihood, inhabiting in a similar environment (Zerihun2013). However, despite the existence of strong shared cultural values among Ethiopian peoples, the study of shared cultural values of different peoples of Ethiopia did not get the appropriate attention it deserves from scholars as the history and cultural study of a single society does.*

*Similarly, when we come to the study area of this research, the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji ethnic groups of Southern Ethiopia, they share a number of cultural values even when they have their own unique linguistic, cultural and historical facts. Linguistically, all of these groups speak a Cushitic stock. Guji Oromo and Gedeo peoples share a myth of common ancestor. Furthermore, the Gedeo people are closely related to the Sidama people. All three peoples more or less live in a similar climatic environment and do*

*have more or less similar mode of livelihood. The three groups of people have maintained close cultural and economic ties among themselves. Particularly the relationship between Gedeo and Guji Oromo is very strong. The Gedeo supply the Guji with enset food and coffee, and, in return, receive livestock and livestock products (Asebe, 2007, Taddese,2004). In Gedeo and Sidama the major land use system is enset based, with coffee as a major cash crop. These two groups are especially highly associated with enset agriculture, both having enset as a central crop in their diet and culture. The Guji people have also adopted the cultivation of enset and coffee from Gedeo people. In dry seasons, the Guji with their cattle used to seek refuge among the Gedeo who in return practiced share cropping with the Guji from the lowlands. The Guji in Wondo Genet area are fairly assimilated with the Sidama Culture, as they have lived there for centuries (Markos et. al, 2003). Besides, considerable size of Guji people live with the Gedeo in different rural kebeles of Gedeo Zone and vice versa. Because of these factors, therefore they share a number of cultural practices both in material and non -material cultural practices. For instance in terms of non- material culture, the three peoples have similar governance system and Gondoro tradition in their traditional conflict management.*

*The embeddedness of ethnicity in both objective and subjective realities contested as a concept. Ethnicity means different things to different actors. Such contestations further complicated the theorization of ethnicity. Currently, there are three competing theories-primordial, constructivist and instrumentalist. The mutually contradictory assumptions and positions of these theories contested the application of a single theory when studying ethnicity in the context of Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. Accordingly, this thematic project is intended to conceptualize the identity formation, boundary (re-)construction, and also the development of shared cultural values among the three Cushitic-speaking groups (Sidama, Gedeo and Guji) from a pragmatic perspective rather than depending on a single theory. Empirical data intend to be collected via mixed instruments: survey, FGDs, interviews, observation and elicitations from participants selected by multi-stage sampling. Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically and inferential statistics will be used to analyze quantitative data.*

**Box 1: Summary of research components (*Sub-thematic areas*) and their respective objectives**

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**Sub-theme I: Shared cultural values among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji**

*(Ongaye Oda, Yetebarek Hizekeal, Zelalem Temesgen, Abraham Asnake and Kederala Mohammed)*

- ✓ *analyzing shared indigenous governance philosophies and practices among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji.*
- ✓ *understanding trans-boundary socio-cultural aspects among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji.*
- ✓ *analyzing the common linguistic elements among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji*

**Sub-theme II: The socio-political and economic causes behind intergroup contentions among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji**

*(Ongaye Oda, Yetebarek Hizekeal, Zelalem Temesgen, Abraham Asnake and Kederala Mohammed)*

- ✓ *uncovering the socio-cultural causes of contention among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji.*
- ✓ *revealing the economic sources of contentions among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji*
- ✓ *investigating the political causes of contentions among the Sidama, Gedeo and Guji.*