# Gelcha site-specific topic: Changes in the role of clans

Designed, researched and written up by Tefera Goshu

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## Clan leader 1

The clan is organised and traced through the fathers’ line. Clan members are individuals who are able to trace their descendants and relations through their fathers’ line. For instance, a wife and husband are considered as the clan members of their respective fathers. If a child is born she/he will be considered as a member of his/her father’s clan, not his mother’s. In Karrayu society, there are two moieties (Basso and Dullacha). Each moiety has its respective clans. Each clan has clan leader/s that is/are appointed by the clan members.

The clan assists its members during problems and dispute resolution and punishes the offending members of the clan. It also serves as social protection for its members. For instance, recently one of my clan children injured the eye of a child who is from another clan with a stick while they were playing. Then, the clan contributed money and livestock and take the injured child to Adama Hospital for the treatment.

Unfortunately, the boy became blind and my clan sent elders to negotiate with the clan of the injured child so as to resolve the grievance that would happen between the clans, particularly the family of the injured child. Then, the elders decided on a compensation payment of 6,000 birr and one camel for the affected clan. Hence, my clan again contributed money and livestock and paid the composition and resolved the problem. For medication and compensation the clan paid a total of about 12,000 birr (twelve thousand birr) to the clan of the injured child, which was given to his family.

The good thing about clan is that it deals with and solves difficult and complex problems that are beyond the efforts of affected individuals. The assistance and support through clan membership has no problems and doesn’t negatively affect its members.

However, orphans and vulnerable children and elderly and destitute individuals are assisted by their close family members. If a close relative of individuals refuses to assist them, the clan leader/members force him to assist his close relatives and also beat him in worst cases.

The clan has more than a leader depending on the number of members of a given clan. Even though it is untraceable, all clans have are through blood descendants and have good/peaceful relations between them. When there is a problem between clans, they resolve it peacefully through discussion and negotiation using community elders.

Recent change: some members of the community, particularly adults who have frequent contact with officials and the urban community are refusing to be bound by the rules and regulations of the clan. Moreover, many community members are reluctant to contribute livestock and other things as in as earlier time to assist the clan members who are in difficult circumstances. Hence, the extent of assistance and support through clan members during different social problems and other circumstances has decreased over time.

Different interventions in the area have impacts on the role of the clan. Interventions such as school, formal law, investment firms and urbanisation have negative consequences on the role of the clan.

The government officials (the police and court) usually warn clan leaders not to punish their members who deviate from the norms of the community. As a result, some individuals refuse to be punished and report to the police when the clan leader tries to punish them for their wrongdoing. For instance, recently three individuals reported to the police when their clan leaders tried to beat them for their wrong doing. Then, the police arrested three clan leaders and jailed them for some days.

Moreover, due to the expansion of schooling many girls are getting pregnant which is against the rules of the clan. In earlier time, clans forbade having premarital sex and getting pregnant before marriage. However, currently many school girls are violating the rule of the clan and get involved in premarital sex and are getting pregnant before marriage.

Urbanisation also has an impact on the behaviour of the community and influences the role of clan. For instance, the clan strictly forbid its members to pass the night in an urban centre and to waste their money on drinking and other urban expenses. However, with the urbanisation process and the closeness of Gelcha to the towns (Metehara and Addis Ketema), many youngsters and adult individuals have started to waste their money on drinking and stay overnight in the urban centres, which is against the rule of the clan.

The investment firms, particularly the sugar factory, also have an impact, as many of the clan leaders are busy in handling the factory work and do not have time for clan issues. Many of the clan leaders are employed in a factory and do not have a time to engage in clan activities. As a result, many of the clan leaders do not properly manage and deal with clan issues.

In the future, due to different government and other interventions, the role of clan will completely disappear and consequently the Karrayu Oromo tradition will be neglected. Hence, the government and other interested organisation should work hand in hand with the clan for social, economic and political aspects of the society.

## Clan leader 2

The clan membership is through the father’s line. When a child is born he/she will join his/her father’s clan category.

The recruitment of clan leader is done by the clan members. During recruitment, all the clan members and members of other clans are invited to attend the election process. Accordingly, a given individual will be elected as clan leader by the votes of the clan members. He (the elected leader) serves as long as he properly performs his duties related to clan issues without bias or differential treatment of the members. If not, the members replace the clan leader with another individual.

There is a good relationship between clans, as they are related through the descent line. When a dispute arises between clan members, the dispute is resolved peacefully through the elders.

The clan assists and supports its members in three broad ways:

* + - 1. When a given member loses his livestock/cattle to enemies (such as Afar and Argobba) which is locally called ‘Kan dinni dessee’
      2. When a given member is getting poor and unable to feed his family properly, which is locally called ‘Kan okooteen dessee’
      3. When a given members disputes with and kill someone, is jailed, etc. which is locally called ‘bitti’.

The neighbours assist individuals usually on small cases such as during illness, with food assistance, work etc while the clan is called on for larger problems, problems that are not usually resolved by the neighbours. Hence, the clan is comparable with and better than the government institution called ‘the disaster prevention and preparedness office’ for the community.

The clan also punishes/beats its members:

* When a given member does not respect, assist and listen to his mother’s and father’s advice.
* When a given member treats his wife unfairly.
* When a given member refuses to contribute to assistance of a clan member who has a problem.
* When a given member enters into dispute with his clan members or members of another clan without concrete reason.
* When a given member become extravagant and does not properly manage and use his property.

The punishment involves all or some of the following based on the seriousness of the offence;

* Advice, locally called ‘gorsa’
* Beating, locally called ‘dire’
* Slaughtering, locally called ‘mala’

Recent change: there are changes in many regards. Nowadays many individuals do not respect and abide by the rules of the clan. Previously, the clan members were happy and willing to contribute livestock and other things in order to assist members who were in problems. However, now the members are not willing to contribute to assist other members. There are even members who refuse to contribute livestock for assistance.

Previously, when the need arose to assist an individual member, the clan came together and decided the amount of livestock that an individual should contribute. Then the clan leader mobilised and collected the decided amount of cattle. A clan member who had three cattle contributed one cattle and another who had more than three cattle contributed more than one cattle depending on their holding. On the other hand an individual who had two cattle did not contribute while an individual with one cattle contributed what he had with the assumption that the clan would collect livestock for him in the second turn. This is because there was an assumption that one cattle is not sufficient for a given household to feed the family members properly so that giving assistance is a mandatory. However, nowadays only individuals who have three or more cattle contribute to assistance and there is no assistance for individuals who have only one cattle.

## Focus Group Discussion with educated youth

*Characteristic of participants*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age | Sex | Education/ grade |
| 18 | M | 12 |
| 19 | M | 12 |
| 18 | M | 12 |

The clan provides many advantages to youth in assisting during problems and shaping the youth when they violate the rules and norms of the community.

When youths misbehave and do not respect their parents’ and relatives’ advice, their father informs the clan leader for punishment. Then, the clan leader repeatedly provides advice to a given youth (at least two times) in order to makes him respect and listen to his parent. If he leaves aside the advice of the clan leader and does not improve his behaviour, the clan members arrange a programme and beat him. After beating the individual, if the person who has been beaten is already married and has livestock, the clan slaughter one of his best livestock to serve the clan members who participated in the punishment.

The clan also assists youths in difficulty such as when an individual gets poor and unable to pay bride payment, to pay blood price and other things. An individual also can’t carry out peace negotiation and pay blood price without the involvement of the clan. Hence, the clan plays a greater role in negotiating with the affected family and paying all the compensation needed.

The good thing about the clan is that it assists youths in difficulty and makes them (youths) have good behaviour through providing advice and punishment in worst cases.

The problem is that, the clan slaughter and eat the best livestock of an individual after beating/punishing him which negatively affects the economic situation of a given individual and his family.

Recent change: some of the clan leaders are not treating clan members equally. They favour their networks and rich individuals who are able to influence them, while the poor and an individual who has less contact and relations with the clan leaders get less focus in difficulties they face.

Moreover, many youths and other adult individuals refuse to abide by the rules of the clan due to the expansion of religion. The religious doctrine teaches community members to assist all individuals for being human rather than a member of a given clan. Following education from the religious leaders, many community members refuse to be treated on a clan membership basis which is negatively affecting the role of the clan.

The expansion of urbanisation is also another threat to the role of the clan. With the expansion of urbanisation and new technologies such as TV, different games (Pool, Carambola etc) in urban centres, many youths devote much of their time in urban centres to violating the rules of the clan.

In addition, following the expansion of schooling, many girls are attending schooling and get pregnant with their boyfriends violating the rule of the clan that strictly forbids any youths (boys and girls) to have premarital sex. Now, the clan is unable to control such activities (premarital sex and pregnancy before marriage) as many youths no longer obey the rule of the clan.

## Household who benefited by being assisted with social problems by clan

Four years ago, my brother killed a boy in a car accident and was jailed. Then we informed our clan leader in order to assist him with blood payment and other expenses required. The clan leader mobilised the clan members and collected about 6000 birr for the first round and gave it to him (my brother) while he was in prison to cover different expenses. Then our clan leader started negotiations with the affected family clan so as to settle the case and to release my brother from prison. The elders also decided on 7000 birr for the blood price to the affected parents. Hence, the clan members contributed livestock and money for the second time and covered the required payment i.e., 7000 birr, and my brother was set free from jail. Altogether, our clan assisted us with about 15,000 birr in order to solve the problem that my brother faced.

The good thing is that, had it not been for the assistance of the clan our family would have been unable to cover the money and get my brother freed from jail.

The problem was that, first, all the livestock and the money collected from the clan members were not given to us. Rather, some of the money was used for the invitation of the clan leader and some other members and second, some clan members were forced to contribute to assistance against their will which negatively affected their livelihood, particularly for poor households.

## Person(s) who benefited by being assisted

I got married this year. My wife’s parents requested 4000 birr from me for bride payment. However, I did not have this money to pay. Hence, my clan members contributed livestock and paid the bride payment without difficulty. Moreover, they gave me some additional money that I used to purchasing equipment and cover the marriage ceremony.

The good thing is that, without the contribution and assistance of the clan members, I couldn’t have married as I did not have money for bride payment. There was no problem with the assistance.

## Person harmed (Punished young man)

My father had two wives (my mother and another). When I was a child my mother died and I and the rest of my brothers and sister grew up at the hands of the stepmother. Later on my father also died. Then my stepmother was given to my uncle (my father’s brother) for marriage. In addition to his first wife, my uncle inherited three wives from his brothers. However, he couldn’t treat us (my family) properly. As a result, my elder brother started to assist all the family members and raised us without any assistance from others.

An elderly man who had lost his wife requested my parents to marry my sister. My sister was following her education and she had a hearing problem. As a result, my brother refused to give her for marriage and made her continue her education. My sister also refused the marriage. Then the clan of the person informed our clan that we (the family) refused the marriage. Our clan repeatedly requested my brother to allow my sister for marriage. However, my brother and other family members kept on refusing the marriage. Then the clan members came to our home and beat my brother and me and nagged us to agree. After they beat us, they took us to the Awash River so as to immerse us in it. While we were on the way to the Awash River, the clan members disagreed about their decision. Some members agreed to immerse us in the river and the other group rejected the idea and debated to turn us back to our home. Finally, they took us back home before we reached the river. My sister flew away to our aunt’s house to hide herself from the clan members so as not to marry. However, after they punished us, our clan forcefully took my sister and married her without her and the family’s consent. Later on (after they made my sister marry), our clan asked us to excuse them for all the wrong deeds they did and created peace with my brother and the rest of the family members.

Soon after her marriage, my sister disagreed with her husband and her husband divorced her without sharing any property with her when she was pregnant. Hence, she left her house and delivered her first baby in a relative’s house. Later she married another person. However, none of the clan members tried to punish her husband for his bad treatment.

There was no good thing from the punishment but the clan members affected the life of my sister and also affected the family members, violating individual rights.

## Young man who refused to be punished

I couldn’t manage to have discussion with the young man who refused to be punished. Even though, I fixed appointments with two of the young men who refused to be punished, I couldn’t find them on the appointment date.

## Interview with wereda police

The number of cases concerning clans is increasing over time. Previously, people did not complain about mistreatment by their clan but now particularly in the last two years, we have handled 4-5 cases related to marriage which have taken place with the enforcement of clan leaders.

Last year, the police provided training for all community members and the clan leaders about human rights so as to enable them to report any cases that violated their rights. The training creates awareness for many community members and some of them have started to report to the police when they are unfairly treated by the clan or others. However, there are still many individuals who are afraid to report to the police when they are mistreated by clan members for fear of discrimination from their clan members.

Usually the clan participates in marriage negotiation without the consent of the girls. As a result, many girls refuse the marriage and report to the police to take measures. Following the expansion of schooling and continuous provision of awareness by police, many girls have started to defend their rights and report to the police when the clan forces them to marry and do other things that violate their rights.

Other adult people have also started to report to the police when they are unfairly treated. For instance, last year three individuals complained and report to the police when they were punished by their respective clan leaders. As a result, we (the police) arrested 4-5 clan leaders who were involved in the punishment. Then we jailed them for two days and released them after providing them training about human rights so as to make them not repeat the act again.