Symbolism and Social Functions of Wedding Traditions in Hara: A Processual Study in North Wollo Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia

Sindew Asmare

asmare.sindew@gmail.com

Woldia University

Beyene Feleke

Woldia University

Research Article

Keywords: Wedding traditions, Harra community, Symbolic meanings, Marriage rituals, Functionalist theory, Tichit and Qen Qoreta, Adar Du'a, Gureno ritual, Social bonds

Posted Date: June 12th, 2025

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-6801769/v1

Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Abstract

This study explores the processual aspects of the wedding tradition in Hara and its surrounding areas, focusing on the symbolic meanings embedded within each phase. Data were collected from actual wedding ceremonies through direct observation and participant interviews, supplemented by secondary sources such as books and articles. The analysis is grounded in functionalist theory, with additional interpretive frameworks applied where appropriate.

The findings reveal the Hara community's perceptions of marriage rituals, the values attached to them, and the underlying fears. The wedding tradition follows three main phases. First, Tichit and Qen Qoreta – a preliminary agreement phase led by male family members, particularly two key figures: the Amach, *who recommends a bride, and the* Shimagile *(elder), who mediates with the bride's family. Second, Public Recognition and Ritual Blessings – includes the* Adar Du'a, *where religious leaders and community members gather to bless the couple. On the wedding day, a ritual at the bride's house involves placing three symbolic wooden pieces (*Gureno*)—olive (*weyra*)*, wulaga, *and* arorosa*—each representing longevity, fertility, and resilience. The third is Hospitality and Family Reunion – a celebratory event that fosters family connections through gift exchanges and communal meals. While the bride's family handles preparations, the groom's parents host the event and welcome guests.*

This study highlights the deep cultural and symbolic significance of wedding traditions in Harra, emphasizing their role in reinforcing social bonds and shared values. To preserve and promote this rich cultural heritage, local authorities and cultural institutions should document and integrate these traditional practices into educational and cultural preservation programs. Further research could also explore how modern influences are shaping or transforming these traditions.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the most significant social and spiritual institutions in many communities across the world. Among the various cultural ceremonies practiced by societies, marriage rituals occupy an important place as they serve as a symbolic and practical bridge to a new phase of life. The word "wedding" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "wed," meaning pledge, which highlights the central idea of commitment and public acknowledgment in marital unions (Sims, M. C., & Stephens, M. (2005) and Reminice, R. A. (2012)). Public declarations and gestures like the kiss during a ceremony symbolize the social contract between the two individuals entering into marriage.

In the Western world, marriage ceremonies are commonly conducted with public celebrations and legal recognition. Although the rituals may vary, the ultimate purpose is the same: to create a socially and legally recognized union. Similarly, in Ethiopia—particularly in the Hara area and its surrounding communities—wedding ceremonies are rich with traditional customs. These practices not only reflect social expectations but also act as a gateway to family and communal identity (Rapport, R., 1992).

Marriage in Ethiopia often involves elaborate feasting, clothing, and symbolic acts that differentiate it from mere contractual unions. While the ceremonies may not always include elements such as public kissing, they do include activities that involve both families and communities, showcasing the collective nature of the institution. The preparation and conduct of the ceremony usually indicate the merging of two family units and the responsibilities associated with starting a new household (Munn, N. D., 1973).

Despite modernization and social change, traditional marriage rituals continue to be highly valued, though the processes and patterns are evolving. In particular, the community in Hara and its vicinity experiences a rich and dynamic set of practices that govern the journey from courtship to the actual wedding rituals. These processes are shaped by various factors, including social norms, religious values, the nature and number of participants, and geographical variations (Liefbroer, A. C., 1991, Kalmijn, M., 2003, Kalmijn, M., 1994).

However, although marriage ceremonies remain central in communal life, the ways in which they are practiced and the socio-cultural meanings attached to them are not sufficiently researched. In areas like Hara, where traditions are still deeply rooted, changes are increasingly observed in how these ceremonies are conducted. There is limited academic attention given to these local practices, especially the nuanced steps taken from courtship through to the wedding ceremony, including gender-specific roles, symbolic gestures, and cultural expectations.

Moreover, while Western marriage traditions are widely documented and popularized through various media and scholarly works, Ethiopian traditional marriage rituals—particularly in specific ethnic and cultural settings—remain under-explored. Without such understanding, valuable indigenous knowledge and cultural practices risk being misunderstood or lost altogether.

Therefore, this study focuses on documenting and analyzing the wedding rituals in Hara and its surrounding areas by tracing the processes that individuals go through from engagement to the actual marriage ceremony. It aims to explore the cultural meanings attached to these rituals and to identify the shifts occurring in traditional practices due to modern influences. Through this investigation, the study also seeks to preserve and promote the understanding of indigenous cultural heritage. To achieve this, the research is guided by the following objectives:

- To identify and describe the sequential processes individuals undergo from engagement to marriage in Hara and its surroundings.
- To examine the cultural, spiritual, and social meanings attached to each phase of the marriage process.
- To explore how gender roles are constructed and manifested in these rituals.
- To analyze the influence of modernization and external cultural contact on traditional wedding practices.
- To contribute to the preservation and understanding of indigenous cultural heritage through the systematic study of wedding rituals.

Methods

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research method, specifically field research. Qualitative research is commonly used in the social sciences and humanities to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups assign to social or human phenomena. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes numerical data and statistics, qualitative research seeks an in-depth understanding through non-numerical data such as words, texts, images, and observations.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection in field research can be conducted through observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources.

- **Primary Data:** Collected from community elders familiar with Hara wedding rituals, participants and spectators of the ceremonies, and specific incidents that triggered these ceremonies. Data collection involved attending actual wedding ceremonies, observing participants and spectators, and asking questions about the rituals. Additionally, naturalistic data were gathered during the North Wollo cultural festival, where the Hara community demonstrated the "Qoreta" and "Tichit" rituals.
- **Secondary Data:** Included books and documents obtained from libraries, online sources, and individuals knowledgeable about the topic.

Naturalistic observation played a key role in understanding the wedding ritual process, supporting Goldstein's (1964, p. 82) assertion that observing natural contexts allows in-depth learning about folklore processes. The study employed naturalistic observation on four occasions to gather comprehensive data about the ceremonies.

3.2.1 Observation

Observation was a primary data collection method in this study. According to Goldstein (1964, p. 77), observation involves obtaining data through direct physical presence. Observation can be participatory or non-participatory; the latter includes overt and covert observation.

This study used **overt non-participatory observation** to closely follow wedding rituals. Covert observation was avoided due to ethical concerns regarding intrusiveness. Using overt observation enabled systematic note-taking and photographic documentation of the ceremonies.

3.2.2 Interview

Interviews complemented the observational data by providing clarification, elaboration, and validation. Interviewees were selected among wedding ceremony spectators with diversity in age and gender to

capture a wide range of perspectives. The inclusion of varied participants aimed to obtain rich, nuanced, and in-depth insights into the wedding rituals and their meanings.

Data Analysis

The data collected through observation and interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This involved transcribing the interviews and organizing observational notes to identify recurring patterns, themes, and symbolic meanings within the wedding rituals. The analysis was guided by functionalist theory, which helped interpret how the traditions contribute to social cohesion and community values. Interpretive frameworks were also applied to deepen the understanding of the cultural significance and the emotional aspects tied to the rituals. Coding was done manually to ensure contextual sensitivity, and themes were refined iteratively to capture the nuanced meanings embedded in each phase of the wedding process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Prior to data collection, informed consent was sought from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study and their voluntary involvement. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and withholding identifiable information in the reporting of findings. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Special care was taken to respect cultural sensitivities and traditions during observations and interviews, particularly because the study involved intimate community ceremonies. The research aimed to represent the community's practices authentically and respectfully.

Result and Findings

4.1 The Role of Marriage in Preserving Heritage and Managing Youth Sexuality in Hara

In the Hara community, marriage is a way to control racial lineage and to preserve the generation. The purpose of the marriage ceremony is to give awareness to the community about the marriage and to bind the youth through preparations that range from preliminary awareness to full knowledge, all of which serve the marriage process. Each step has its own name and standard.

In the community, because a female child completes 16 years and a male child 20 years, they naturally develop sexual desires. To protect this natural feeling, it is a social obligation placed on parents within this age range of youth to arrange their marriage. If parents fail to fulfill this responsibility, the youth themselves may enter into sexual relationships either voluntarily or forcibly to satisfy their sexual desires. This, in turn, is rejected by society, and before this happens, the two opposite sexes are forced

by their parents, considering the age of their children, to enter into marriage, which is a life conflict arrangement. This system is carried out in a sequential manner. One of the customary life conflict traditions practiced in Hara and the surrounding area is the matchmaking and bride price system. This system has its own sequence and communication process. At first, it involves negotiation and consultation.

4.2 Cultural Symbolism and Marriage Negotiation in Hara

Within the marriage system in Hara, the primary role is played by the male family. In the selection of the suitors, the boy's mother and father assist their son to reach a decision, discussing the potential wife with their peers and relatives. Upon hearing this, the close family, carrying the social marriage negotiation criteria, begins preparations to present a better proposal or choice for their child by explaining the character, beauty, and family condition of the chosen girl. The suitor who is chosen to present the proposal is called "Amach" (negotiator) in the local language.

The family also selects a respected and reputable elder who can convey the marriage proposal to the girl's family without causing offense. The elder, together with the boy's parents, undertakes a process to obtain consent and agreement, known as "Dej Tinat" (hand examination), where they seek the girl’s family’s acceptance with a ritual of “Give me your child for my child.”

In the community, the roles of negotiators and elders differ. The negotiator (Amach) is the representative who gives a formal offer to the boy's family to marry their son. Different relatives who have close ties to the boy can serve as negotiators. Being a negotiator is not based on age, gender, or social status; it depends on the trust given by the boy's parents, usually his mother or father, who delegate this responsibility.

On the other hand, elders (Shimagile) are men, usually older and well respected in their community. Their role is to visit the boy’s family and negotiate the agreement made by the negotiator’s parents, facilitating the marriage by asking or pleading to arrange the marriage. One elder can represent multiple families and act on behalf of many elders in making marriage arrangements through negotiation and "hand examination."

As in any society, in Hara there are criteria that families seeking marriage must fulfill. Previously, especially the proposal and acceptance phases were based on research, inquiring about the lineage, behavior, appearance, family situation, management, and overall condition. This assessment determined the suitability of the prospective spouse. The lineage means a socially acceptable group, excluding those who are socially marginalized, of lower status, or beggars.

Now, the main criterion for marriage selection is similarity in religion and the parents' acceptance of their child’s marriage partner. Parents prefer a suitor who is known for good behavior and has no bad reputation or inappropriate physical relations. Marriage criteria place great importance on morality and behavior, followed by the child's beauty and physical health, which are considered part of the marriage requirements. In the community, it is said that

"God is the giver and taker," meaning that finding and losing a partner is believed to be God's work; thus, morality is the primary concern, and wealth has no place as a marriage criterion". (Group discussion, 28/6/2016, Hara)

In this matchmaking system, the abductor and the elders have distinct roles and responsibilities. The abductor, as explained above, is the first offender, while the elder represents the side that goes to negotiate with the woman's family. For this purpose, there are usually three elders sent, because the number three is symbolically linked to three knots, which is believed to perfect the elder's role. The elders are chosen on Sundays, especially between noon and 3 p.m. The reason Sunday is chosen is because it is a day of rest, and people think "we won't miss anyone if we go then." The afternoon is preferred because the road is less busy at that time. The people of Hara say that traveling at night is dangerous and brings misfortune, and there is a widespread belief that the road is safer during the day.

When the elders go to negotiate, they carry three sticks, called "qoti," which are about 1.75 to 1.85 meters long, made from the oil extracted from a tree called Arorosa. When the elders reach the woman's family, they hold the sticks tightly. After arriving, they plant the sticks into the ground as a sign of seeking agreement. Planting the sticks symbolizes a lasting and firm request for agreement.

The elders clearly state their purpose, which is seeking consent, by saying, "Give us your daughter for our son." At first, the woman's family responds politely, saying, "We will discuss with the elders and get back to you." During this time, the elders do not enter the home. Even if invited in, they decline because the agreement is not finalized yet. They will not eat or drink with the woman's family until the response to the request is given, as food and drink sharing only occurs after an agreement is reached. The elders then discuss among themselves when the woman's family is likely to give their response.

After that, when the woman's family agrees, the elders return on the appointed day, enter the house, and partake in a prepared feast. They eat, drink, and coffee is served. After the coffee ceremony, the elders leave separately. This system of separation has important social benefits; it reinforces agreement, establishes a relationship of consent, and gives dignity to the woman's family. It acts as a legal contract and a method of obtaining consent.

Although the timing of the return visit varies according to locality and leaders, within these visits there are traditional sayings such as: "The quick stone of the son of the house will not be wasted here! The heart of the daughter is not blind!" or "Give your food and meat; I will defend your enemy with a spear!" These sayings emphasize the seriousness and formality of the agreement. Finally, the families jointly decide on a meeting date to finalize the wedding day.

4.3 The System of Setting the Wedding Date

The system of setting the wedding date is the process of determining the day of the marriage. This system is a reciprocal traditional arrangement that involves preparation and support from the bride's family as well as the groom's relatives. It serves as a pre-wedding awareness and is considered a highly respected and honored ceremony. During the time of setting the wedding date, the father of the groom,

along with the mother, uncles, and other relatives—totaling between 20 and 30 people—visit the bride's family.

When they go to the woman's family, the three elders who lead the way receive clarified butter (kibe). Because clarified butter is liquid and the elders believe that once it touches their hair, it will never return (symbolizing permanence), they carefully take the clarified butter and apply it drop by drop to their shaved heads as a sign of respect, leading the way to the bride's family. From the woman's family, the bride's sister or a close female relative carries the clarified butter in a small container (narj kibe) and follows the elders.

Other family members follow behind and go along. When they go to the woman's house, they plan to arrive at the usual time, which is around seven o'clock, and so they leave their home accordingly. The family members who go to determine the wedding day each contribute 50 birr, while the mother and father contribute 100 birr, giving the money to one elder who holds it. Since there is no special preparation at the man's house, after being received at the woman's house, the money collected is given as a gift of appreciation.

When the groom's family goes to the bride's family to determine the wedding day, they do not enter the house directly. As usual, the three elders put their pots down on the ground, sit side by side, and greet each other with "Barkek" (a traditional greeting). The other family members follow behind the elders and sit down. Two selected elders from the woman's side carry their pots and sit on the pots placed by the men's elders on the ground. After about three minutes of sitting facing each other and greeting, the elders from the woman's family get up and lead the way. At this time, the men's elders follow them and enter the house. Throughout this, there is no sound or conversation at all. After entering the house, the woman's family serves the elders milk prepared in three gourds.

All the elders take turns drinking from the three or four "qeço" (traditional milk containers), pouring the milk onto the ground before drinking it. The main purpose of offering the milk in the "qeço" is known as a social ritual and "mouth washing" (a symbolic gesture of peace and agreement). If they do not drink from the "qeço" milk, it means they will not speak, thus the milk in the "qeço" carries the meaning of a social pact.

After this, the male elders who have finished their part ask the female elders, "How are you all?" as a greeting. When the female elders respond with a proper answer, they ask further, "Are you all doing well? Are you like fathers and children?" Then they inquire, "Who is whose child?" — referring to X, said to be the child of B, and Y, said to be the child of A.

The female elders respond by calling for the "zemed" (respected elder group), and surround the elders of the male family and ask these questions. The importance of this questioning is to ensure that the marriage creates a social connection and that before the wedding there is no conflict with the family of the spouse. In case of any conflict, they seek forgiveness and reconciliation so that the couple can live peacefully and harmoniously without complaints.

The female family members also unanimously declare that there is no conflict, and the female elders act as mediators and protectors of peace. The male elder then present two “was” (small gifts or symbolic tokens). The female elders say, “If there was any ongoing conflict, it has been resolved. We acknowledge that the Creator has given us our children.” The male family members also confirm this with joyful exclamations. After this, the first food served is rice porridge mixed with butter and honey, called “buqre.” In earlier times, the rice porridge was served in wooden bowls, but now it is served in factory-made wide bowls or trays, served in groups.

In the Hara area, rice porridge is a respected offering to the family and is also given to guests and visiting family members as an honor. Following the rice porridge, injera (traditional flatbread) and “buqre” (butter and honey mixture) are served. Finally, the bride’s sister presents the clarified butter (“qibe”) kept in a “nargez” (special container) as a token of honor and love to the groom’s family. This act symbolizes acceptance and a message of “From now on, you are our sister, and we love you.”

The groom’s mother also gives the bride the “qibe” as a gesture of true reconciliation and mutual love. This completes the social bond, and everyone declares their affection for one another. This entire ceremony expresses the hope that from now on, the couple’s lives will be peaceful, harmonious, and full of mutual respect.

After this, eating, drinking, singing, and playing continue, and the family members gather and agree on the final decision of the wedding day. They then proceed peacefully to conduct the wedding ceremony, completing the traditional wedding day rituals.

4.4 Wedding Preparation Roles

In the Hara community, the wedding preparation roles are distributed according to age, gender, and social status to carry out various tasks related to the wedding rituals. Among the tasks performed during the preparation are the following: preparing the house of the groom, welcoming and hosting guests, preparing food, collecting firewood for the cooking stove, and performing the Adar Dua (a traditional ritual). These are the main activities carried out during the wedding preparations. All the wedding tasks are shared and carried out by all members of the community, from the elders to the youth. The duties of preparing the "chagula" house (a ceremonial house) and the "mushra" (groom) as well as hosting the guests — that is, managing the "das" (guest accommodation) — are divided as work contributions among the local neighbors. When the mothers bake injera (traditional flatbread), children from the neighborhood aged between 10 and 15 years old help by carrying the firewood.

In food preparation, tasks such as chopping onions, preparing spices and seasoning, cooking stews, and sorting the various types of meat of "Frida" (a special meat dish) are all performed cooperatively without anyone giving direct orders, with each person doing what they know or are skilled at, sharing the work, and cooperating closely. Sisters and women who have close kinship and relationships with the "mushra (groom)" participants gather in the community and engage in "dquss" (a traditional group activity or conversation). Mothers who have a close relationship with the "mushra" participants prepare coffee and

roast beans for the "adär dua" (a traditional prayer ceremony for the wedding at mid night). The sorting and preparation of the various kinds of "Frida" meat are carefully carried out by the "mushra (groom)" friends.

Brothers, relatives, and male neighbors take responsibility for some tasks. Other food preparations are done by local neighbors. This mutual division of labor is a social custom that promotes reciprocal cooperation, strengthens social bonds, and fosters social solidarity within the community. Thus, the wedding ceremony is seen as a social institution deeply embedded in the community. Among the wedding activities, aside from social work, the highest significance is given to the prayer ceremony "dua" performed on the wedding day. Therefore, in the Hara community, the wedding is not only the duty of the immediate families but involves all community members. Each community member has a role to play. From the selection (presumably of bride/groom) to the conclusion of the wedding, everyone shares responsibility for establishing the new household. This collective effort is a demonstration of the social nature of marriage. Any event, whether positive or negative, that occurs within the marriage is considered a social affair of the entire community.

4.5 The Wazema Blessing System

The Wazema Blessing system is a traditional ritual organized by the local community ‘elders,’ elders, and respected leaders in the village to warmly welcome guests and ensure that the opportunity for the visitors’ arrival will be a good one. The purpose of the blessing is to wish the visitors a positive and successful future life. After the blessing, the visitors are formally accepted. Within the community, the blessing represents a bright hope that brings peace of mind and contributes to psychological and emotional well-being. When the local elders perform the ritual, they say:

"May their flesh and flesh agree! May their blood and blood agree! May God cause their agreement! May the blood of our fathers and the womb of our mothers unite in marriage by God's will!"

They call this ritual God Mosole (a sacred agreement). If the ritual is not performed or the blessing is not done, the future life of the visitor is believed to be dark. Conversely, if the blessing is performed and the ritual properly conducted the visitor’s future is bright. This belief is widespread in the community.

This system aligns with one of the folklore study theories, which focuses less on the idea carried by the ritual and more on the pattern and relationship between ideas. This philosophy is deeply embedded in the society. In particular, following the research interest of Dundes, who studied with a critical eye under the title “Wet and Dry,” the ritual is used among Semitic peoples to reconcile opposing forces. This theory’s application can also be seen in the Hara community. Thus, the Dua is viewed as a bright hopeful blessing, while its absence is believed to darken and shorten life. Therefore, the Dua and the welcoming ritual carry great importance and are considered mandatory in the community.

Finally, after the Dua, they say:

Make the tip of the arrow that kills the visitor! Make the spear of the visitor’s shield!

This means that during the ritual, by tying and binding the visitor's left arm, any fear or harm that might come is prevented. The visitor's natural life struggle begins, allowing them to transition from childhood emotional vulnerability to self-confidence. This ceremony tells the story of moving from manhood back to motherhood during the welcoming time.

The pre-arranged marriage, which was established earlier, is also explained during this tselot as a way to unite the families. The previously established engagement is renewed at this ceremony, and if the engagement is suddenly disrupted, it causes emotional pain and the community responds by offering emotional and moral support to help resolve it. This is why the welcoming tselot is highly valued in the community as it ensures that visitors will not be harmed or abandoned in their future life.

After the Adar tselot (the night praying), a traditional dish called "Genfo," made with butter, is served as a reminder of the wedding night. Genfo in the community is a smooth porridge that is easy to swallow and not troublesome for digestion. It is prepared from barley flour. Barley flour is known as "Tazaz," and because it can be used to prepare all kinds of food, it is highly valued.

Thus, during the wedding, it is customary that one spouse becomes the "cook" for the other, symbolized by the barley flour. Similarly, during the wedding when meat is served, both the virgin bride and the groom's difficulties are eased through a similar symbolic act, which is considered a good practice. Since the butter (called "Retib") is the base ingredient of the Genfo, it is also said to make the visitors' future life smooth and prosperous.

4.6 The Day of Wedding

The Day of wedding is another ritual observed at the woman's home. Inside the bridegroom's house, at the entrance of the house and inside the compound, three types of wooden items are tied together. These tied wooden items are called "Gureno".

The three types of wood that are prepared are chosen from the Woyra (fig tree), Wulaga, and Arorosa trees. There is a symbolic meaning behind the selection and tying of these three woods on the fence. The Woyra tree is a long-living plant. For the newlyweds, it symbolizes a wish for their marriage to be lasting, for their relationship to be strong, and for them to have a long life together. The Wulaga tree, which bears fruit twice a year, symbolizes a wish for the couple to give birth, to prosper, and to be fruitful. Arorosa, on the other hand, is a type of tree that never dries out no matter how dry the season is, symbolizing a wish for the couple's life to be enduring and eternal. These woods were chosen with these wishes in mind as the data obtained from respondents.

The wood is cut and tied on the fence by a married man and a mother or father who are still alive and a young unmarried man from a respected family. Within the community, there is a belief that the person who cuts and ties the fence wood (gureno) must be a mature young person whose parents are still alive and who is unmarried. Therefore, the woods are tied by such mature individuals selected based on this belief. Conversely, a young person who is unmarried but whose parents have died is not chosen to perform the gureno work. The reason is that it is believed this brings misfortune. It is said that it causes

darkness and misfortune to the future life of the mushrooms. Hence, the community follows this belief in selecting who the gureno works as the data obtained from respondents.

After the gureno work, the mature and unmarried young person who performed the work eats injera with spiced butter (niter kibbeh). The symbolic meaning of this spiced butter, combined with the injera, is a ritual that brings hope and blessing to the mushrooms. Only the person who performed the gureno eats this food. After eating, the mushrooms believe that their marriage will be fruitful and enduring, and they leave the home to begin their married life. The message of this ritual is carried in the gureno fence trees, symbolizing long life, fruitfulness and prosperity as the data obtained from respondents.

4.6 The Custom of Asking “How Many Have We Come?” to take the groom

On the day of wedding (the day of tying the fence), that is, between three o’clock and four o’clock in the morning, three elder men from the male mushroom community sit at the gate of the women elders’ compound. Two women elders carry a koti (a traditional container or item) and accompany them. The gathering of the koti represents community, unity, and solidarity.

After this, during the Tichichit season (a specific seasonal period), two women elders go to the home where the elders will visit and enter the house. They first serve milk and then ask the mushroom elders, “How many have we come?” This question is about the number of mushrooms expected to arrive. Next, the mushroom elders estimate the amount of water needed for the grains and barley and agree on how many mushrooms are expected to come. If more people than the agreed number arrive without prior notification, it is considered a problem in the community.

This practice avoids unnecessary disputes and confusion on the wedding day. Particularly, since the mushroom families already know the number of guests expected and prepare accordingly, unnecessary disturbances are avoided. This is a social value agreed upon by the community to prevent unwarranted stress. The elders then honor their word and, with the agreed number, including the Zemed, Mize, Ajabi, and Abachida (titles or roles among elders), they proceed to the mushroom house.

4.7 The Role of the Abachida Shumet (Messenger)

Abachida refers to the young messenger of the mushroom community, typically a youth aged between 12 and 15 years old, who accompanies the mushroom from the day of the Sergu (tying the fence) until the Chugulna (caring) period. This child is considered a full member (miju/mulu) of the community, similar to other full members who are orphans whose parents have passed away. The Abachida accompanies all the activities on the day of weeding, whether going or sitting, and always stays in front of the mushroom group.

After the father of the Mushira (groom’s) circumcises the Abachida (messenger), before they go to the Mushrit’s (bride’s) house, a ceremony called the “Chida Ambule” is held inside the Chagula (a small temporary house for the bride and groom).

During this ceremony, the father of the Mushira (groom), together with three selected elders from the community, advises the groom inside the Chagula (temporary house for the groom and the bride). They bring a wooden container filled with clarified butter and make the Mushira (groom) accept the butter. The father of the groom and the elders take some of the butter and apply it to their hair, anointing themselves. Then the three elders, the groom, and the Abachida together hold the butter container with both hands and, in unison, sing:

“Chida Ambule! Chida Ambule! Chida Ambule!

They pray, and place a ring on the father of the groom’s hand, signifying agreement. The purpose of this ritual is that when the groom goes to the bride’s house, even if she encounters hardship, suffering, or gets lost, and her path turns right or wrong, this ceremony helps her to endure hardship with patience. The wooden container symbolizes strength; its lid represents the woman’s strength; the butter itself symbolizes fertility and fruitfulness. This tradition has been passed down through generations, is widely accepted and practiced throughout the community, and is upheld by fathers and elders. It carries out the entire traditional system. Within this context, everything progresses step by step. Any action or activity is learned carefully and gradually, so that the benefits and important practices of each stage are fully understood through the process.

4.8 Hair Cutting Ritual

Following the “Chida Ambule” ceremony, the ritual of hair cutting is performed. Before the Mushira (groom’s) goes to the Mushrit’s (bride’s) house, her hair is cut and shaved in the presence of the Abachida (messenger), accompanied by singing and ritual prayers inside the Bet Zemmed (a traditional house). The belief behind this ritual is that hair is associated with two opposing forces—wetness and dryness—which are considered fundamental to life. It is believed that losing the vital fluid inside the body, symbolized by the hair, leads to death. This idea is deeply embedded in the understanding of life and death and is emphasized during the ritual (Dunds, 1971, 273). Therefore, the act of cutting and shaving hair symbolizes the delicate balance between life and death.

When looking closely at the wood used to burn or hold the hair during the ritual, it is understood as a symbol of the foundation of life. Before the groom’s hair is cut, her father anoints her head with butter, which is then mixed with milk. The hair-cutting only happens after this anointing ceremony is completed. Within the community, hair and dirt before marriage are considered shameful and impure. Removing them is seen as a symbol of cleansing and purity. Thus, before going to the groom’s house, the groom must present herself clean and pure, symbolized by shaving her hair and removing dirt.

If the hair is not shaved and dirt is not removed, the community believes that the groom is unprepared to join the groom’s family and will not be accepted. Therefore, shaving the hair and removing dirt is obligatory. The ritual is carried out carefully, with each action being deliberate and meaningful. Every participant, the elders, and those responsible for the ceremony are well aware of its significance and ensure that everything is done correctly to maintain tradition and bring about the intended

transformation. For example, during the hair-cutting ceremony, the person who cuts the hair is a man who has not had sexual relations (a virgin male), and the person who trims the nails is a woman who is also pure and has not had sexual relations, symbolizing the sacredness of the act.

This also confirms the repeatedly stated idea that within the community, maturity or completeness is valued. Conversely, immaturity or incompleteness is considered a bad example. Furthermore, the act of cutting hair marks the transition from one social status to another. The hair cut before the wedding represents the removal of the previous unkemptness, transforming the individual from a state of immaturity, neglect, or incompleteness into a fully responsible adult role. The newly cut hair symbolizes the start of a new phase in life, as the individual moves from the former social level to a new one, beginning a new path of life.

The new hairstyle exemplifies this social transformation, signifying that the person has left their previous stage behind and embraced a new status with responsibilities. Similarly, the beard symbolizes a change in status, representing adaptation to new habits, systems, and integration with a new social rank, as the person grows and prepares to continue in their new role.

4.9 Journey to the Bride's House

Once all the preparations are complete, the bride who has left her father's home begins a journey with her life partner to join her new life. This journey follows its own set of customs and rituals. The local marriage process is based primarily on family consensus rather than on the explicit consent of all the participants, and no one fully knows who belongs to whom in this process. Because there is mutual understanding between the bride and groom, many acts of communication, mutual acceptance, and cooperation take place extensively between them.

For example, during the journey to the bride's house, the leaders who guide the procession are elders who act as pathfinders and advisors. There are usually three elders, all carrying 'koti' (traditional staffs). Following them are three 'mize / attendant' (male friends/relatives). The bride travels alongside her 'abachida' (a close male relative or guardian) while other male companions known as 'hay loga' (literally "strength loga") follow behind, forming a group. During this journey, the identity and role of each participant become clear and distinguishable. The elders are identified by the 'koti' they carry. The 'mize' wear traditional cloaks called 'demeke kul' and the bride holds a special cloth called 'alenga.' The 'abachida' is distinguished by his younger age compared to the elders. The companions and the 'betezemed in Amharic' (other helpers) all shout 'hayloga' as they proceed.

Therefore, because of the community's shared knowledge of their roles and relationships, it is easy to distinguish the bride, the 'mize / attendant,' the elder, and the 'abachida.' When the procession reaches the bride's house, they do not enter the house immediately as is customary. The signs and symbols carried by those who come as representatives show their allegiance to a different established protocol. The elders, leading the social group, uphold the tradition by planting their 'koti' firmly into the ground near the entrance as a sign of respect and to maintain order.

The ‘mize /attendant’ and the companions surround the bride and the ‘abachida’ to protect and accompany them into the household. After completing all the formalities, the bride, upon leaving her father's house, embarks on a journey to meet her life partner. This journey follows a specific traditional protocol:

- **Escort and Leadership**: Three elders, known as "Shimagilew in Amharic," lead the procession. They are distinguished by wearing a traditional garment called "Koti."
- **Procession Order**: Following the elders, the bride and her father walk together, with other relatives and close friends trailing behind.
- **Identification**: The identity of each participant is signified by their attire and position in the procession.
- **Entry to the Bride's House**: Upon arrival at the bride's house, the elders do not enter immediately. Instead, they pause outside, holding their "Koti" to the ground as a sign of respect.
- **Seating Arrangement**: The bride and her father are seated separately from the other guests. The bride's attendants, upon entering, rise to allow the male elders to sit.
- **Ceremonial Gesture**: The bride's attendants, upon entering, rise to allow the male elders to sit. The bride's attendants, upon entering, rise to allow the male elders to sit. The bride's attendants, upon entering, rise to allow the male elders to sit.
- **Traditional Significance**: This practice is known as "Yeju Hada," symbolizing the foundation of new life and the continuation of cultural traditions.

4.10 Milk Ceremony Ritual

The rituals previously discussed were ceremonial. The groom arrives at the bride's home and, upon receiving permission, proceeds to the designated area to rest. The subsequent ritual involves both parties coming together and becoming acquainted. In this ceremony, the selected items serve as symbols of respect and goodwill. It signifies the community's hope and good wishes for the couple's future.

The groom's house, as a place of honor and affection, is represented by milk. Three women from the bride's side, acting as intermediaries, present the milk to the groom's representatives. This gesture conveys a message of "May you speak and engage in conversation." Initially, their conversation and discussions are intended to ensure a smooth and harmonious life together, serving as a model for their future. The ritual begins when the groom arrives at the bride's house. After receiving permission to enter the prepared area, the next ritual involves both uniting and introducing the couple. In this system, the selected items serve as symbols of purity, hope, and good wishes. The bride's family presents the groom with milk from three cows, symbolizing respect and love. The groom then drinks the milk, and the message conveyed is one of purity and blessings.

The groom's family, upon receiving the milk, expresses gratitude and acknowledges the significance of the gesture. This exchange is accompanied by a message emphasizing the importance of purity and

blessings in their union. The groom's family also acknowledges the significance of the gesture and expresses gratitude. The absence of the milk signifies a lack of purity and blessings, which is considered unfavorable. The groom's family, upon realizing the absence, expresses concern and seeks to rectify the situation. This highlights the importance of the milk ritual in ensuring the purity and blessings of the union.

The milk ritual is an integral part of Ethiopian wedding traditions, symbolizing purity, blessings, and the unification of families. It is a practice that underscores the cultural significance of marriage and the values upheld within Ethiopian society.

4.11 The Ritual in the Das /Cultural house during the Wedding

All of this is done, but the system does not conclude. At each social gathering, all the rituals are performed together, and the comfort they offer is evident. The groom, after entering the das, is allowed to stand in the designated area. Traditional behavior is not observed in this area. Everything has its own process and system. Initially, a male participant rises from his seat and, by shouting "Abet! Abet! Abet!" three times, requests the "Lord's Seat." A female participant then brings the "Lord's Seat." The groom and his companion sit in the provided seats. At this point, the groom rises from his seat and, by shaking his head, shouts "Abet! Abet! Abet!" three times, saying "Our mother has passed away." The message conveyed here is one of respect and remembrance.

The groom's mother is aware that this question will be asked, and she prepares accordingly. She prepares 30 injera, one bowl of butter, and one bowl of honey. This preparation is known as 'Gurgudo.' It is a significant part of the wedding ceremony, symbolizing the sweetness and richness of the union. The groom's family, upon receiving the milk, expresses gratitude and acknowledges the significance of the gesture. This exchange is accompanied by a message emphasizing the importance of purity and blessings in their union. The groom's family also acknowledges the significance of the gesture and expresses gratitude. The absence of the milk signifies a lack of purity and blessings, which is considered unfavorable. The groom's family, upon realizing the absence, expresses concern and seeks to rectify the situation. This highlights the importance of the milk ritual in ensuring the purity and blessings of the union.

The milk ritual is an integral part of Ethiopian wedding traditions, symbolizing purity, blessings, and the unification of families. It is a practice that underscores the cultural significance of marriage and the values upheld within Ethiopian society.

4.12 Bride's Hair Dressing Ceremony

The bride's hair dressing ceremony is a significant cultural tradition. The bride does not arrive with her hair already styled; instead, she arrives at the designated location, such as a community center or a relative's home, where the hair dressing takes place. This event is typically overseen by experienced hairdressers who coordinate the ceremony. The bride is accompanied by female relatives and friends,

including her mother, who ensure she is properly prepared. Upon arrival, the bride is seated, and her hair is styled according to traditional methods. The process is accompanied by songs and dances performed by the attendees, creating a festive atmosphere. The ceremony serves not only to style the bride's hair but also to celebrate her transition into married life. During this ceremony, the bride's hair is styled in intricate patterns, often involving braiding and the application of natural oils or butter. This practice is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs about beauty and purity. The styling is done with great care and attention to detail, reflecting the community's respect for the bride and the significance of the occasion.

The bride's hair dressing ceremony is more than just a beautification process; it is a communal event that reinforces social bonds and cultural identity. It is a time for the community to come together, celebrate, and support the bride as she embarks on her new journey in life. The bride does not arrive at the ceremony with her hair braided; instead, she is brought by her attendants to the designated location, such as a hall or community center, where the hair braiding ceremony takes place. The purpose of this arrangement is to ensure that the bride's hair is properly braided during the ceremony. The ceremony is conducted with the presence of female relatives and attendants, while male relatives remain at a respectful distance. The male relatives are expected to chant traditional songs during the ceremony.

After the hair braiding is completed, the bride returns home accompanied by her female relatives, who are responsible for escorting her back. The ceremony symbolizes a new beginning and hope for the bride's future.

4.13 Ceremony of Gifts and Time for Receiving Butter

Initially, the bride's family presents the prepared gifts to the groom's family and the guests. Subsequently, the following individuals receive their respective gifts:

- The groom's father receives a *gabi* (a traditional Ethiopian garment).
- The groom's mother receives a *gufita* (a traditional Ethiopian garment).
- The groom's older brother receives a *gildim* (a traditional Ethiopian garment).
- The groom's younger sister receives a *gufita* (a traditional Ethiopian garment).

These exchanges are accompanied by the phrase "Ilellelle" as a form of blessing.

Initially, the family of the bride prepares the butter and presents it to the groom's family and guests. Subsequently, the groom's father, Gabbi, the groom's mother, Gufita/traditional cloth mostly used by women in the market and social gatherings /, the groom's sister, Gildim/Shirt, and the groom's younger sister, Gufita, are honored with the butter ceremony. This is done with great respect and is referred to as "Ilellelle" in the local tradition.

Additionally, the reason for the bride's father and mother being honored is because, in the future, their daughter will be integrated into the groom's family. This symbolizes the establishment of a relationship of love and mutual respect between the families. The groom's sister is honored because, before entering

the groom's home, she is adorned with a silver necklace and is expected to accept the groom's family as her own. This responsibility is symbolized by the butter ceremony, which is conveyed through their gifts.

4.15 Ritual of Receiving Butter

Upon leaving her home, the bride receives butter and is adorned in the traditional attire of the elder community. She carries milk to symbolize purity and enters the groom's home with grace. Upon arrival, she is welcomed with traditional bread (injera) and a beverage, accompanied by a message of sincerity and respect. At the end of the ceremony, as she departs, she is honored with a wooden spoon as a symbol of her new role in the family. This ritual is known as "Chidabule" in the local culture.

Journey to the Bride's House:

The bride, having been properly seated, is approached by the intermediary (the matchmaker). After receiving the bride, the matchmaker announces, "Hoo!" and the bride's family responds with, "Warda!" indicating the time for the bride's return home. The groom's family, led by the matchmaker, begins their journey back, singing traditional songs. The bride, feeling anxious, is comforted by the matchmaker's reassuring words. As they approach the gate, a female relative of the bride sings a farewell song. The bride's uncle enters the house, calls out to the bride, and leads her out. Before leaving, the bride applies a traditional skin ointment known as "Net/Walo/Mas," which is smeared on her face, and she sits down. Her friends advise her on how to behave and what to do upon entering the groom's house.

The matchmaker leads the bride, and during the journey, the bride carries the skin ointment she had applied earlier. The bride's family prepares a horse for her to ride. However, due to cultural beliefs that riding a horse may cause harm, the bride is not allowed to ride. Instead, she walks to the groom's house, where she is warmly received. When the groom arrives holding the bride, saying "Ho," as he reaches the bride's house, the male relatives—meaning those waiting anxiously for the groom's arrival—upon hearing the bride's arrival, everyone comes out to welcome them: the men with ululation (war cry-like cheers), and the women with songs. They receive the bride and groom warmly.

They sing songs such as:

"I ate grapes, I am now sober,

Come now, quickly, get in,

You are beautiful and lovely," and so on, addressing the bride with these songs.

Three older women, along with the bride’s mother, come with milk in a container to receive the bride. The bride enters the groom’s house. Once inside, the bride’s mother anoints the bride’s body with butter. This act is a traditional preparation intended to ease the bride’s fear and help her become comfortable and accustomed to her new home.

The bride, after being anointed with butter by her mother, leaves the house quietly and goes to the designated temporary house prepared for her. There is no interruption of ululations and songs. When the bride reaches the *temporary* house, she does not enter immediately; instead, she hesitates and fidgets. This is to show that she is following the advice given by her elders to be cautious and respectful. While hesitating at the door, the groom's sister places a ring on her finger. The ululations continue, and after this, the groom arrives and embraces the bride with a traditional cloth called "*Alenga in Amharic"*. At this time, the bride is taken inside the temporary house. The *Alenga* embrace is considered a gesture of love and acceptance meant to comfort the bride and ease her fears.

4.16 The temporary house couples ("Chagula" in Amharic)

The temporary house is usually constructed not far from the parents' house, often made from wood and grass, and decorated with ribbons and ululations during the wedding ceremony. After the bride enters the temporary house trembling with hesitation and praying, the wedding songs and ululations continue until late into the night. The bride and groom stay together with a secret keeper (called *Mirza*) in the temporary house. The other ululators leave. The ululator who stays is a highly trusted and popular secret keeper who oversees the customs of the temporary house.

The bride and groom become aware of their mutual presence. After seeing each other, in the evening, except for the secret keeper and the *Abachida* (a trusted helper), all the other ululators leave to gather firewood from the surrounding area. They cut branches from two specific trees called *Korasma* and *Butign*. These trees are specially chosen for their pleasant smell, especially enhancing the bride's beauty and bringing a good fragrance.

When the ululators who went to gather firewood return in the evening, the bride's mother eagerly awaits their return with joy and excitement. The ululators bring the firewood and place it neatly, continuing the preparations. The ululators then collect money and give it to the *Chagula* house caretaker, named *Frida*. Frida takes the money and helps provide a seat for neighbors to gather and share the celebration. The neighbors also cooperate by bringing firewood and contributing to the preparations for the ululations. The ululators eat, drink, and sing together with the bride and groom. This time is considered very precious and enjoyable for both the ululators and the bride and groom. The mothers who brought money are celebrated and praised with songs, and everyone enjoys the festive atmosphere.

As the celebration continues, the ululators also have specific duties. The main secret keeper (*Mirza*) is the leader of the ululators and the chief secret keeper. Because of this, the *Mirza* warms the firewood day and night for the bride. The *Abachida* assists in various duties such as washing hands and other rituals due to their age and status. Other ululators play, sing, and participate in various joyful activities.

4.17 Clothing Care and Family Ritual System

When the mourning period is about to end, with three days remaining, three messengers from the women's group go to the house of the bereaved. Among the three messengers, one is a woman who is a close relative of the deceased and is skilled in applying *narge* butter; after the washing ritual, she braids

the deceased's hair. The other two messengers, men, carry water and grains for the morning ceremony. After preparing the *narge* butter and the dry goods and placing them in the mother and father's house, the messengers convey the message that the ritual of "bride," "attendant," and the "Betazemedo" (family council) has been summoned. The mother and father then inform the *attendants* and *bride* groups about the message.

To go to the "Melash" (reply or response ceremony), all the *attendant* members, together with the *bride* and *Abachida* (elders or leaders), accept the butter and go down to the river. They go to the river to wash their clothes and clean themselves. During the washing at the river, the *groom* (female mourner), who was previously washing in *butegna* (a traditional cleansing substance made from soapwort), comes to the river as a messenger, and while washing, braids the deceased's hair as a sign of close relation.

After the clothing care ritual, the *bride* and *attendant* clean their bodies and throw the *bride's* torn cloth into the river. This act symbolizes the washing away of the *bride's* impurity and marks the completion of the mourning period. After this, the *bride*'s name is considered complete and "Abawera" (one who is no longer in mourning). One of the signs of the *head of household* is to wear a *gabi* (a traditional cloth).

At this time, the *attendants* and neighbors choose a comforting and special name for the mourner. Among the possible names given are *Sichu*, *Asafishu*, *Be'anchi Yirga*, and others that cause laughter and joy among the *groom* and the family council. This ritual is a significant social event with a strong element of entertainment and reconciliation.

The reason is that the neighbors or family council members deliberately give humorous and unexpected names to lighten the atmosphere and entertain everyone. The new names are recorded and registered on the way to the "Melash" (response ceremony).

In the community, the *Melash* ritual means giving full awareness of the marriage, and it is also the occasion where all previously absent relatives gather and the two family councils come together. The ritual includes a strong mutual understanding and engagement with the past and future of the couple.

This means that at the start, the *attendants* dress simply, and the *bride* wears a *gabi*. This is recognized as a sign of the end of mourning. The *groom* who bathed in *butegna* and *korasma* soap butter becomes radiant like the moon. Hair that was damaged is combed and arranged before going to the *Melash* ceremony, which takes place at the mother and father's house joyfully and without fear or shame.

During this ritual, the family of the *groom* prepares the feast. However, the newly appointed *Abawera* and *Emawera* (possibly a female mourner or related role) are those who welcome the visitors and take care of the ritual. According to community opinion, when *Emawera* begins to manage the process, there are feelings of anxiety but also hope and social acceptance. (Source: Group discussion, 28/8/2009, Hara)

After eating and drinking, coffee is served. The coffee ceremony offers relaxation. In the community, relaxation provides hope and experience. On the other hand, it is said that tension can reduce life. This expectation is often expressed and to achieve it, the newly appointed *Abawera*, *Emawera*, and family

council elders give encouragement. May your meal be blessed! May your prayer be answered! May God make you wealthy! You belong to each other! May God make you one! God is merciful.

Discussion

The described ritual of clothing washing and family purification (□□□□ □□□□) reveals a rich and complex cultural practice deeply embedded in social and symbolic meanings. The involvement of specific community members such as the three messengers, including a close female relative skilled in hair washing, alongside male participants bearing water and grain, underscores the gendered division of ritual roles and communal cooperation.

The sequence of activities — from the preparation of aromatic butter, the symbolic washing in the river, to the ceremonial renaming (□□□ □□□□) — highlights the integration of cleansing, renewal, and social identity restoration. The renaming ceremony, which involves giving playful, sometimes humorous names, acts as a communal form of entertainment but also serves to reaffirm social bonds and collective memory.

The ritual's emphasis on full knowledge transfer regarding marriage readiness (□□ □□□□) and the ritual cleansing of both bride and groom's families illustrates its pivotal role in preparing individuals for marital union and reinforcing familial alliances. The mixture of reverence, humor, and social scrutiny during the renaming and cleansing rituals reflects a balance between tradition maintenance and social cohesion.

The post-ritual coffee ceremony (□□□□) further supports social bonding and symbolizes hope and continuity, reinforcing the importance of community participation and elder involvement in preserving cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The wedding traditions of the Harra community represent more than mere social ceremonies; they are profound cultural processes that embody the community's worldview, social structure, and collective identity. Each phase—from the initial negotiations led by trusted family figures, through ritualistic public affirmations, to the communal hospitality that unites families—serves as a vital mechanism for reinforcing social cohesion, cultural continuity, and shared moral values. The symbolic elements, such as the Gureno ritual, are not only expressions of hope for longevity, fertility, and resilience but also metaphors for the community's aspirations and the enduring nature of social bonds.

Through a functionalist lens, these traditions reveal how marriage functions as a cornerstone of social stability and integration in Hara society, mediating between individual desires and collective expectations. The embedded fears and values highlight the tensions and negotiations inherent in maintaining cultural heritage amidst changing social realities. This study underscores the urgent need to document and safeguard these intangible cultural practices, which face increasing pressures from modernization and external influences. Preserving such traditions is essential not only for cultural

survival but also for sustaining the social fabric that they so meaningfully uphold. Future research should critically examine how these practices evolve, adapt, or resist transformation in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendations

1. **Cultural Preservation and Documentation:** Given the richness of the ritual and its social significance, there is a need for systematic documentation and preservation efforts. Local cultural institutions and scholars should work together to record the variations and meanings of the unity to ensure its transmission to future generations.
2. **Community Education:** Incorporate the understanding of such rituals into local education curricula or community awareness programs to foster pride and appreciation among youth for their cultural heritage.
3. **Support for Elders and Ritual Experts:** Elders and ritual specialists (such as the female messenger who washes the hair) play a crucial role. Providing them with social and possibly financial support would encourage continued practice and teaching.
4. **Encouraging Positive Adaptations:** As societies modernize, some ritual components may evolve. Communities should be encouraged to adapt practices in ways that preserve core cultural values while responding to contemporary needs, such as sanitation or gender inclusion.
5. **Further Research:** Additional ethnographic research is recommended to explore variations in the ritual across different communities, its impact on social cohesion, and its potential role in broader conflict resolution and cultural identity frameworks.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest/Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest or competing interests related to this study.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank **Hara town officials** for their assistance in data collection time. Special thanks to ***respondents*** for providing valuable information during the study period.

Funding

No funding was received for this study.

Ethics Approval/ Ethics Statement and Consent to Participate

This study was reviewed and approved by ***Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Community Service Ethical Review Coordinating Committee***. All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institution.

References

1. Goldstein, J. (1964). *The nature of human conflict: A social psychological study of international tension*. Free Press.
2. Kalmijn, M. (1994). *Gehuwd of ongehuwd; ontwikkelingen en verklaringen van samenwonen sinds de Tweede Wereldoorlog* [Married or not; changes and explanations of cohabitation and marriage since World War II]. *Sociale Wetenschappen, 37*, 34–64.
3. Kalmijn, M. (2003). Country differences in sex-role attitudes: Cultural and economic explanations. In W. Arts, J. Hagenaars, & L. Halman (Eds.), *The cultural diversity of European unity* (pp. 311–337). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
4. Liefbroer, A. C. (1991). The choice between a married and unmarried first union for young adults: A competing risk analysis. *European Journal of Population, 7*, 273–298.
5. Munn, N. D. (1973). Symbolism in a ritual context: Aspects of symbolic action. In J. J. Honigmann (Ed.), *Handbook of social and cultural anthropology* (pp. 579–612). Chicago: Rand McNally.
6. Rapport, R. (1992). Ritual. In R. Bauman (Ed.), *Folklore, cultural performances, and popular entertainment*. New York: Oxford University Press.
7. Reminice, R. A. (2012). The symbolic significance of ceremonial definition among Amhara of Ethiopia. *American Anthropological Association*.
8. Sims, M. C., & Stephens, M. (2005). *Living folklore: An introduction to the study of people and their traditions*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.