JOURNAL OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
JIKDS 04(01)2022
ISSN (online) 2708-2830 ISSN (print) 2707 – 7640
www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

Ecological and Weather Patterns of Oromo Indigenous Knowledge: Analysis From African Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

Indigenous knowledge practices occur in socio-cultural contexts, and without consideration of these contexts, one cannot begin to deal with questions of function, meaning, and significance. The purpose of this study was to analyze Oromo's mentality of traditional ecological knowledge as viewed in the folk narratives of the Arsi and Bale-Robe Oromo society. The study employed an ethnographic qualitative research method and folkloristic perspective of data analysis. It specifically examined the data of the folk narratives collected through such techniques as semi-structured interviews, participant observation and focused group discussions. The study area was generally the Oromia region, and specifically, the data were collected from the Arsi and Bale highland societies using purposive sampling. The study was approached with narrative analysis as the main analytical tool to excavate the landscape of indigenous knowledge through folk narratives. The research findings revealed that indigenous practices related to ecology and weather patterns are experiential and based on the axiomatic relationship of the society with its nature and culture.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge, folk narrative, society, ecology, the natural world*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge practices are making evident the profound relationship between folk narratives and the universal value that more to learn about nature. This position accounts for the empirical fact that is established as a communalistic value of Africa, as opposed to the rugged individualism. African oral traditions, hence, need a critical theory to extract the best of indigenous thought of African mentality. In addition, an African-centred approach to indigenous knowledge entails several fundamental concerns. These usually include matters of creation, form, history, meaning, significance, and others (Igboin, 2011 & Okpalike, 2014).

According to Peet & Watts, (1996) and Ranger, (1989), in Africa, the pursuit of reclaiming indigenous knowledge dates back to the colonial era, when European colonizers expanded their

territories into the lands of Africa- in large part of eroding indigenous experiences. The enormous practices of indigenous knowledge of the local community were weakened or destroyed by colonial policies. Although Africans were informed to acknowledge the Western forms of knowledge for a better life, self-denial resulted in agony instead.

In the 1960s, as Igboin, (2014) posited, postcolonial nations struggled to catch up with the productivity of the industrialized West. The 'glorious' pre-colonial past was replaced by post-independence development- large conversions from African-like indigenous practices to a Western standard of development. The implementation of these policies, in addition to the effects of perpetuating colonial exploitation, caused growing problems of pollution, deforestation and other natural resources. The effect threatened the livelihood and modes of survival of small farmers and indigenous groups, displacing them from their indigenous lands. The Western capitalism that sidelined homegrown practices gradually tended to be replaced by environmental movements that challenged the post-colonial nations (Vansina, 1985; Rich, 1995 & Scott, 1998).

Indigenous scholars began to reclaim and regain that indigenous knowledge that resonates with indigenous societies' environment- to live in harmony with each other. Moreover, they sought answers within the rich treasure that has played such an important role in building their unity and dignity- the knowledge and teachings of the elders (Battiste, 1998).

Several studies in Ethiopia also confirm that the people's indigenous knowledge practices are playing a vital role in solving various societal problems. In contrast to other African countries, Ethiopia resisted the colonial imposition and its impacts. Consequently, along with its ethnic diversity and a long history of oral traditions, its peoples' social self-confidence and political self-consciousness helped to keep their practices of indigenous knowledge. Besides, the majority of the rural population relies dominantly upon the traditional way of life to sustain their livelihood (Alavi, & Leidner, 2001, Yigzaw, & Boudreau, 2010).

Oromo indigenous knowledge and its insinuations focus on the natural resources as fundamental an d integrals of their entire lives: forest, land, ecosystem, and weather conditions. Oromia, as a huge part of the country, is rich in practices of indigenous knowledge related to ecosystems and weather patterns (Alemayehu, 2012, Yosef & Yeshaw, 2020). These conceptions are an important component of the Oromo worldview and have a paramount significance in maintaining relations between the physical, the human, and the spiritual worlds among the Oromo. Their self-evident relations with their environment have internal moral superiority and a unified form of natural

cadence. The indigenous model of the ecosystem related to narratives canvasses the Oromo society's creative processes. Such creativity schemes in the production of folk narratives that the human and ecological realms intersect. When put with ecology, ecocultural creative acts and processes go beyond ordinary life activities to determine the people's use (of nature), perceptions, and implications (Melaku, 2016; Assefa, 2020).

Some scholars show that for the Oromo, particularly the Arsi and Bale Oromo, indigenous knowledge is an organic experience that needs to be studied- though they did not indicate the role of folk narratives in 'passing on' of indigenous knowledge (Alemayehu, 2012, Workineh, 2001). Hence, in the interdisciplinary studies, the key aspects of Oromo indigenous knowledge in folk narratives have remained largely unexplored so far; even though, the social interaction of any society provides oral traditions which are the bedrock of indigenous knowledge. Therefore, this study made a modest attempt to shed a light on a wider concern of Oromo indigenous knowledge related to ecosystem and weather patterns as reflected in folk narratives.

1.1 African-centered Epistemological Attitude

African societies share common popular culture, knowledge, and attitude: knowledge about environmental understanding, ecology, and weather patterns. The African epistemological attitude is driven by the conception of lived experiences of its people. It is about the world or reality of the homegrown societies, which is holistic and ontological. Knowledge in the African tradition is, therefore, societal- implying that not "I" know, but "we" know. It is also the root of the social outlook attributing to the fact that the traditional African knowledge is given by the ancestors (Etta and Offiong, 2019).

Put differently, African knowledge is passed on to generations through folk narratives. Ancestors are roots giving energy to the trunk, the adults, who in turn supply the branches, our children. It means therefore that within African knowledge theory, what is known or taken as knowledge flows from the experiential of the spiritual and physical world (Okpalike, (2014). Africa's worldview emits from the organic experience of the people. Ploeg, (2007) stated Africa's paradox of the stylized facts of the natural resources linked with the absurd of the benevolence of the natural resources vis-a-vis the malevolence of poverty.

Explicating the African Mentality, writers like Soyinka and Ngugi asserted the term appears antagonistically with the Slave mentality. Soyinka in Frederick, (2009) and Ngugi (1986) understood this 'Slave Mentality' as a *Cargo cult mentality*, hindering the progress of African literature because most writers seem to be laboring under the yoke of western enslavement in their works; engaging in

the enterprise of shifting blames. Chinweizu (1978) hailed re-looting and miseducation, as the process which engineered the African mind toward the rear and into the nastiness of "African Mentality". Ngugi (1986) and Oelofsen (2015) dubbed that by decolonizing the enslaved mentality Africa regains African mentality-which works against true development in Africa. He warns that African indigenous knowledge should not only be seen as an alternative knowledge but as one domain of knowledge among others.

Local Africans understand indigenous knowledge is practiced better than anyone else and they know what works and does not work. Thus, traditional Africans have tried and tested different remedies and prescriptions, recommended by their parents, IK practitioners, homegrown technologists, and custodians. Ezeanya (2015) in (Khumalo, and Baloyi, 2017:8) goes on to highlight at the foundation of innovation and invention is knowledge, intimate knowledge of the environment within which the end-product will be utilized.

African indigenous knowledge is diverse in ecology, ethnic, and linguistic composition (Serpell, 1984). Moreover, Maquet (1972) and Diop (1960) cited in (Serpell, 1994) implicate how indigenous Africans perceived a cultural unity underlying, Black Africa's huge diversity, emerging from similar patterns of ecological adaptations and the historical repositories as opposed to inflicted cultural damage on Afrique Noire by slavery and colonization. African ideas, practices, issues, and social thought have blended into an African worldview which constitutes "a very different psychological frame of reference from that which informs contemporary Western developmental psychology" (Serpell, 1994, p. 18).

1.2 Oromo Traditional Ecological Knowledge (OTEK)

Since the 1980s, African and Non-African indigenous epistemologists have advocated the concept of Traditional Ecological Epistemology or Knowledge (TEK). The widely accepted definition was Berkes' and his colleagues (Berkes, 2008). Practice and belief, processed by traditional society and about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their nature or environment are the cumulative body of ecological knowledge. It is the knowledge base acquired by indigenous and local people over many hundreds of years through cultural transmissions.

Likewise, Oromo environmental appreciation is a tradition that is regarded as a local experience or indigenous way of learning. As the environmental philosophers, Devall and Sessions (1985: 65) explain, knowledge related to ecology requires the acceptance of this new vision and a new

realization: "But the deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world".

As such, Oromo society figures out that nature-oriented ecocritical understanding is represented in folk narratives and it provokes thought processes to the natural world. Ashenafi (2014) stresses on folk literature, in its diverse form, portrays the meaning, value, and integrity of Oromo indigenous people towards their nature as experienced by their lived contexts. Owing to this, Oromo folk narratives serve as a repository that encapsulates the indigenous beliefs, knowledge, and values about nature (the physical environment) and the role of the people in preserving it. In this sense, nature does not merely serve as human needs provider, it is also centered in society's belief system, it has the potential to guide their behavior and instruct how they should interact within the realm of the universe.

Such epistemological conception of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) covers several key attributes (Berkes, 2008; Fernandez-Gimenez, 2000; Inglis, 1993). First, the indigenous way of observation is drawn from skills of social and cultural relationships. Second, TEK is longstanding and transferred from one generation to the next as experiential knowledge and worldviews. Third, within the processes of transmission, folk narratives: myths, songs, proverbs, legends, and ritual practices embrace their sense of originality; and fourth, it represents an entity of local knowledge and practices of a specific group, in a specific location.

Oromo traditional ecological knowledge is a complex system encompassing knowledge, practice, and belief systems. TEK system is the local knowledge of plants, animals, landscapes, and/or climate. To sustain traditional ecological knowledge, people have social organizations or systems, a set of rules in use, and codes of social relationships. In a wider domain, cultural beliefs and knowledge systems shape environmental perception and give meaning to observations of the environment and cultural expressions and world views (Assefa, 2020; Henderson, 2000; Inglis, 1993) These values and worldviews are part of the traditional ecological knowledge that traditional societies possess through their folk narratives. The literature on traditional ecological knowledge has established the importance of community narratives for capturing and communicating complex environmental information. From this literature, we learn how complex environmental information can be captured in narrative forms and how, in turn, these forms facilitate effective communication within a community and sharing across generations and cultures.

OTEK is a valuable source of environmental information that allows communities to realize their expertise, and apply their knowledge and practices to help protect their way of life (Inglis, 1993; Sogolo, 1993).

To this effect, the study was based on the research gaps that comprise the following research questions:

1. What is Oromo societies' mentality towards ecology?
2. How is the practice of indigenous knowledge related to ecology and weather patterns and reflected in the societies' folk narratives?
3. How the indigenous peoples define the weather and natural world from appreciation perspectives.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed an ethnographic qualitative research method. This type of research is concerned with the inquiry and analysis of social phenomena and it uses detailed descriptions as a means of examining specific issues of social phenomena.

Likewise, a qualitative approach was employed in this research with such techniques as the interview, and participant observation. The interview targeted elders who are meant knowledgeable about society and observation was conducted during induced and actual settings. Although consecutive data were collected through the stated tools, for this scoped research, only selected data has been included by purposive sampling technique. Samples are often purposively selected to fit the purpose of the study (Harwati, 2019).

As far as the analysis of data is concerned, the study was approached with narrative analysis as the main analytical tool to unearth ecological and weather-related knowledge (the desired end) through folk narratives (the desired way. To conclude the topic under investigation, the study specifically examined the data of the folk narratives collected from the Arsi and Bale elders. The respondents were elders from both zones and both gender considered. Although a large amount of folkloristic data was collected from the elders, relevant data has been selected along with the theme of the work.

Effective research requires some procedures and classifications of data. Likewise, the researcher involved some required procedures. After the basic step of extensive reading of related literature to find out the theory, data were collected using tape- recording, and note taking. After Primary data in Afan Oromo were transcribed and translated into the target language, English, data were categorized according to their thematic similarity. Finally, analysis was held to draw a conclusion based on the data interpretation and findings. The researcher identified and gathered kinds of literature from different works of related studies, existing data from secondary sources such as oral narratives, collections of archived folk narratives, and related research works (Rahiem & Rahim, 2020)

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Folk Knowledge and Customary Devices: Physical Weather Attributes

Based on data collected, this local postulation appears to originate from the collective knowledge that rain is driven by wind and, as a result, moves following the route of the wind. They practically observe as winds usually blow from east to west. In line with this assumption, when people want to foretell the possibility or the impossibility of rainfall when they feel that there are potentially dense clouds, they directly cast their eyes eastward and, then, make their guesses. From their observations, they would make their interpretations as follows: An analyst (forecaster) may interpret like:

Duubaan banatee,	*Clouds have opened window*)[1]
Roobni gumgume:	*The rain is thundering*
Roobni dhufe,	*The rain is coming.*

As the above narrative excerpt indicates the target societies of this study, use wind as an important means to make simple forecasts. The speed and direction of winds are used as indicators of the absence or presence of rain. In their understanding, winds blowing at a high speed suggest the absence of rain. Winds at a high rate of speed are defined as *Bokkaa ari'aa*). This is to mean the wind forces the clouds to move swiftly without giving rain. On the contrary, gentle winds are taken as indications of calm atmospheric phenomena which could result in rainfall.

The direction of winds is also helpful to foretell what weather condition is likely to follow. When the wind blows from east to west, societies term it as *(Bubbeen qajeele*, *blowing rightward*); whereas the

[1] To mean, the packed clouds are moving apart to opposing directions, and a gap is created between them.

movement of wind in the opposite direction is described as (*bubbee deebise*, *blowing from the front direction or leftward*). The right direction usually connotes the usual pattern of movement. According to the local analysis, the right-blowing wind follows the movement of the sun. This is the regular direction, however strong or weak the wind may be.

The pressure and the strength of *east-to-west* moving winds is not always the same. It varies from season to season. During wet seasons, for example, the wind would exhibit low pressure or, even become very calm. But in winter it reveals moderately high pressure. High speed is an important natural tool for winnowing the threshed crops; it helps to separate the grains from the straw and the chaff. The *east-to-west* moving wind is locally defined as *dry wind*. The dry wind is not expected to bring rain to the area.

But in rare cases this direction is reversed: winds blow from *west to east*. When winds blow following this course, what societies describe it as (*blowing from the front direction*), it suggests that rain is approaching. The wind is named so in folklore because it moves following a reversed trend.

According to Ombati (2017), the local people tell that the '*west-to-east'* wind implies that rain is approaching though there may be variations in amount and degree. Societies have their mythological explanations for this. According to the explanation they make, rain is poured from an imaginary big well (i.e. the sea) found somewhere in the west. The *east-to-west* moving wind drives away the whole water from its natural source (found in the west) or prevents rain. As the '*right-blowing'* wind (*east-to-west* moving wind) is swift and stronger and blows for a long time (for three months, for example) the imaginary well would subside very rapidly and, consequently, there is little probability of getting rain. To obtain some amount of rainfall in the future, therefore, the wind must bring the rainwater back. This is done by the '*left-blowing*' (*west-to-east* moving) winds.

The mechanical customary system the societies use to make a rough estimate on the immediate conditions of weather is also related to clouds. Societies interpret the general tendency of the atmosphere by observing the physical aspects of clouds. Clouds have different features and form varied shapes. According to local knowledge, clouds change their thickness ranging from *duumeessa gurracha* (dark cloud) *ifa Waaqaa* (clear sky).

As the knowledge of the societies goes, *duumeess gurracha* suggests that it is about to rain unless accompanied by east-to-west swift wind. It is a very dense and fearsome type of cloud with different shapes. It covers, by and large, some parts of the sky perpendicular to the vicinities where rain is about to fall. It appears as a thick blanket and results in atmospheric darkness. This cloud appears in

summer and is visible in the afternoon. Particularly when it is preceded by burning sunshine it automatically suggests a heavy shower characterized by storms. In between the two, there is a kind of dark cloud. It usually appears at about dawn. A dark cloud forms no particular shape since it stretches just across the sky blanketing the whole atmosphere above the vicinity. It is a heap of white clouds that seems very close to the earth. In Bale, just from the narrative collected, Oromo women assert their audible voice before their Creator.

Horri Sabbaqqoo, Waaqa abbaa dhibbaa
Sabbaaqa buunee dheebuun duunee nu roobi,
Clouds of the rainbow, God of plenty
We come to you, with all our thirst, give us your rain.

The above folk narrative indicates the socio-cultural settings of women's representation in the system. The important elements of the socio-cultural practices of the community are in one way or another related to practices of indigenous knowing mechanisms. In whatever direction a cloud appears, the rainfall falls in that direction. There is a relationship between the generosity of their Creator and the comings of rainfall when it says, "Clouds of the Rainbow, God of plenty". As they see the clouds on the skies during the season about to rain, they urge in their prayer for the cloud to be turned into rainfall just in the moment of their prayer.

3.2 Mythological Devices: Climate Weather Patterns

Following the yearly measurement systems, around Arsi-Robe, the climatic patterns of the four seasons, the societies expect the ideal weather phenomena, which they assume, as a rule, favorable for their socio-economic life. In Bale, generally, seasons reach up to five seasons- that *Badhessaa* is a season between common spring and summer (Yosef, 2017). It is based on this speculation that they try to plan farming activities and set socio-economic schedules (like preparing feasts, for example). But they have also a frequent fear as far as their weather-related expectations are concerned. Their expectations could be denied as they have learned from their past experiences. Weather fluctuation breaks the usual course of the atmosphere. Such a denial would cause a climatic disorder and, as a result, a socio-economic crisis.

McGregor (2004) states that the teachings of African local peoples come from observing and learning from the water, the moon, the plants, the animals, the stars, the wind, and the spirit world. This local reality suggests that there are some fixed mythological devices that societies use to address their desire. Most of the devices are symbolic signifiers including interpretation of dreams, states, and conditions of the moon, explanation of states and conditions of animals, etc. These devices

originate from the spiritual life of the community and, at the same time, require essential talents as well as skills to interpret following the patterns of some recognizable symbolic meanings. Below is given a short account to elucidate this point.

Likewise, the traditional way of separating one season from the other is a significant component of traditional ecological knowledge in the practices of traditional society (Berkes, 2008). The indigenous society of Bale Oromo is acquainted with practices of indigenous knowledge about the changes occurring in inter-annual variability in the timing and amount of precipitation. It is a matter of great importance to them since they live where rain is generous. This is through very old familiarity with their folk narratives about seasonal patterns of climate changes or changes in precipitation and temperature. A set of local or traditional signs help to identify one season from the other.

The people's traditional ecological knowledge consists of a set of personal observations conducted over a prolonged period and reinforced by the observations of other traditional practices. When this information is collected over annual cycles, it provides the basis for the seasonal calendar. On the surface, the calendar may be viewed simply as a timetable that divides the year into seasons and describes likely weather conditions and resources available. Traditional astronomy also includes diverse kinds of narratives or observations by an indigenous person or group. These narratives, in turn, can provide intergenerational observations of various kinds of natural resource phenomena.

According to Yosef (2017), the symbiotic relationship between the natural elements and the various indicators provides the local community with a wealth of folk knowledge and perspectives for understanding the distinctive seasons found in Bale. Unlike the 'modern' classification of seasons, in Bale, there are five typical seasons, each separated by experiential local knowledge: *Ganna* (rainy and wet season), *Birraa* (flower season), Bonaa (dry season), *Badheessaa* (windy spring) and then *Caamsaa* (rainy spring).

Among the Arsi-Robe society, the following two texts may serve as examples of what specific facts could be detected in the understanding of weather conditions.

Horii bonni ajjesee ganni maqaa fuudhaa.

It is summer that murders cattle, but people blame winter.

The above proverb points out the folkloric knowledge of the society, which seems easily observable, and a bit implicit. In its explicit meaning, the proverb underscores that the cattle are directly affected by both *rain* and *winter* or *drought*. In the sarcastic tone of the poem, one can sense that it is the

excessiveness of rain or *winter* (prolonged or untimely dry weather) that largely determines existence in the peasantry. Wind or frost is not mentioned, for example, as a cause of the crisis. This implies that the societies' knowledge revolves around the two weather conditions: rainfall and winter weather.

In its deepest meaning, the poem illustrates that weather in general, be it rain or drought, in moderation or excess, is arranged by seasonal fluctuation. Everyone bemoans their fate and accepts their destiny of misery. In brief, as the poem discloses, society's knowledge of weather is fundamentally based on the concept that 'weather' gives sense in terms of the two opposite variables: rain and sunshine.

It is possible to notice a similar fact. The researcher talked to elders concerning the underlying meaning of the proverb. Many of the respondents gave similar answers. The central idea of the proverb, according to the elders, is that both summer and dry seasons can influence the entire life of their cattle, in different circumstances and degrees. During summer times cattle suffer from *laaqii* (bog) and *corroqa* (ground with watery mud) unless the owner treats them with great care. He must take his herd to *godaanttu*[2]. Cattle suffer from *laaqii* during summer, however, nourished with good fodder they are, would lack good resistance to the *bona* (dry season), when there is a high shortage of fodder. From the message depicted in the proverb, one can dig out some additional social views that societies are greatly concerned with the weather conditions of two seasons that are characterized by rain and drought.

From the short glimpse, one may conclude that the folk knowledge of the societies about weather and its attributes, centers on the anxiety about rain and sunshine. Therefore, people constantly talk and worry about moderate sunshine and rainfall, and the absence of excessiveness of rain in their life. In other words, weather-born successes or disasters are consequences of the two phenomena. Other weather elements like wind, hail, and frost, are considered either as a signal as accompanying features or as the results of the two governing conditions.

3.3 Interpretation of Dreams- Forecasting Weather

Ombati, 2017 contends dream is an important tool to understand the two basic aspects of atmospheric phenomena: sunshine and rain. Generally speaking, the community believes that dreams are very important devices to know about the destiny of people or the future conditions of events in their environment. It is thought to be one of the best network systems stretched between

[2] A tradition of taking cattle to a better area of grazing and favorable weather

the supernatural power and this world to communicate distinctively essential messages concerning the destiny of individuals and the probable future happenings in the environment. The need for forecasting the conditions of weather by dream analysis arises from this fundamental belief (Bauman, 1986).

Depending on this general assumption, individuals, particularly elders, try to extend the functionality of the dream to weather forecasting lore. A local dream analyst uses different symbolic representations of dreams that indicate the condition of rain, for example. In this case, a respondent told the researcher the following:

> Bofti abjuun yoo du'e, raabni battalatti roobuuf
>
> If one sees a dead snake in a dream, rain is to come sooner.

A dead snake is one of the recurring symbolic representations in dreams. If a dreamer relates, in her/his dream, an incident about the death of a snake, s/he interprets it that rain will be falling in the immediate future. On the contrary, as a respondent contended, if the person relates that a snake has escaped from the attack of a person, it is interpreted as there will be no rain; rain is escaping from the area. According to some informants, weeping in dreams also means heavy rains.

3.4 Interpretation of Lunar Phases- Signaling Intuitions

The situation of the moon, observed at different phases of its revolution, is another important source of folk knowledge to explain the probable tendency of weather conditions in the surroundings. There are specific moon-related signals used to define atmospheric phenomena. The crescent and the full moon phases are important in this respect. Elders, who are believed to be gifted in their lunar interpretation, keep their eyes on the sky and search for the 'newly born' moon and observe its position very carefully. The elders carry out this observation on the first day of the moon's crescent phase. Some informants reported that it is very difficult to see the exact feature of the crescent moon for ordinary people. The community believes that the position of the crescent foretells what atmospheric condition may occur in the next phases of the moon which covers about four weeks. When the new moon with a thin silver-like curve makes its first appearance turning its arch-face southwards, it is believed to be a rain-moon, locally known as (*addessaa bookkaa*). This means that the atmospheric condition would be characterized by rainy weather. The opposite of this position is identified as rainless-moon, (*addessaa caamaa*), which signifies dry weather.

The societies explain weather changes with the phase of the *full moon* as well. This phase of the moon is called *goobana*. This is the time that the full moon appears clearly in the sky, i.e. when it becomes visible with its full-disc shape and would shine brightly from evening to dawn. This duration covers a period from five to seven days. Under normal circumstances, rain normally stops (even in summer) during *goobanaa*. As a result, the sky becomes clean during the phase of *goobanaa*. According to society, particularly, farmers' mythology, this happens so because the moon is required to shine with its full face so that it provides its light to the creatures of the world. Consequently, clouds are expected to give their way to the shining moon. But if this ideal natural law is violated, if rainfall occurs, the community terms it *rooba gannaa* (*rain occurs in the rainy season*), which connotes the rainy weather would continue for a longer time than expected; moreover, the weather would be characterized by heavy rainfall that may cause storms and floods.

3.5 Perspectives towards Nature

In Bale Oromo, the discourses about gifts of nature and their significance to their existence are informed daily by experiences. They follow everything about the water, land, plants, animals, and landforms. The observations of seasonal signs and changes in their surroundings have cultural meanings that are communicated to the traditional people. Ideas are shared with gestures, silences, implied meanings, and metaphors. Elders tried to share their experiences of the day watching in the forest and night listening around their residences in their villages.

The narrative after day- watch: Nature has a voice. Birds' singing has a message. The withering of leaves has its lesson. When leaves fade, their compost serves as fertilizer for trees. As it is said, *lafa hin buutu lafeerra buuti,* "It doesn't just fall on soil; it does fall on bone". The roaring of the river is because it falls; and it is that water, that grows the trees; it is these trees that attract rain; and it is that rain, makes wet the land.

The narrative after night listening: Night listening has a large concern in our culture. After cattle are gathered in the barn, and food is prepared storytelling lake part; riddles and jokes continue. After children go to bed, the elder (head) of a household stays out of the house and listens to night voices. He identifies the direction of winds to sense seasonal fluctuations, Identifies the steps of wild animals, and listens to the voices of wildlife and things around the environment.

Among Bale Oromo, elders develop practices of traditional knowledge from their attachments to the elements of natural movements they observe and voices they hear. They interpret the voice of primal nature and translate it into the extended narrative of exploration. The motif of constructing meaningful messages has its roots in folk traditions. They create a dialogue between humans

themselves and nature. Storytellers have recounted the wise words spoken by wind, rivers, mountains, trees, and animals that guide the human heroes through not anything other than what (Butterfield, 1970) says, through day-to-day interaction with nature.

The practices of traditional people's story-making are through "the gateway to knowledge and the understanding of cosmic significance". The watching and listening of nature and speaking to nature are the narrative device that emphasizes the audience's interrelationship with the living landscape, including respect for its inherent value and the harmonious relationship of human with nature which directly affects human beings' survival.

4. CONCLUSION

The homegrown African societies are always and already entrenched in their indigenous knowledge practices of ecology and environment. The Oromo society's perspective towards ecological and weather patterns originates from their axiomatic bond with their own life, nature, and culture. The indigenous forms of life created by the Oromo society are influenced by the system of livelihood around their natural elements like plants or forests, rain, weather, and natural phenomena.

Their local experiential knowledge is reliant on folk narratives that appreciate nature regarding reflections on the fact that all dimensions of the socio-cultural life of the inhabitants are entirely nature dependent. The elders developed practices of traditional knowledge from their attachments to the elements of natural movements: the voices they hear, the dream they interpret, and the activities they observe. Based on their organic epistemological understanding, they interpret their primeval nature and decipher it into the extended narrative of exploration- and the motif of constructing meaningful messages has its roots in folk narratives.

The traditional practices of ecological indigenous knowledge are viewed in a lot of reflections in the discourses of folk narratives of the society. The practices of knowledge are acquired from the ways of habitats living in the climate areas and the events that happen among the natural phenomena. Among the Arsi and Bale Oromo society, natural elements and the changes that are enacted among themselves are sources of their indigenous knowledge. The cultural expressions or narratives are part of the society's meaning to protect them from the peril of being luckless and hinge on alive in their ecosystems. For them, it is worthy to weigh up their lifestyle with the natural observable facts. Their folk narratives express the complexities of the ecosystem and how society makes use of it through the day-to-day interactions of organisms together with the environment.

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