



Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People: Guji Oromo in Focus
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to investigate the indigenous knowledge system practiced in the form of rituals by Oromo people at the time of difficulties and social crises with particular reference to Guji Oromo. The Oromo practice their own religion, which is a belief in a monotheistic, one-supreme deity, known as Waaq. In this study, what, where and why they practice indigenous practice was discussed and analyzed. The study employed qualitative research approach with exploratory research design because of the nature of the identified research problem that people experience in the environment, belief system and practices to be studied. Interview, focused group discussion method and purposive sampling techniques were employed. This research employed symbolic interpretation, feminist theory and cultural ecology for analysis of the paper. Data gathered through Interview and Focus Group discussion were carefully interpreted, analyzed and crosschecked against the reviewed documents to draw analytical findings and conclusions in the lens of the research objectives and research questions. Under Gadaa system, Guji Oromoo practices different rituals and ceremonies with symbolic meanings for different purposes. Most of the rituals have been performed to solve some kinds of problems facing both on human beings and on animals. The paper argued that for terminating harsh ecological disruption such as drought, disease, fertility and other social crises, they have been using indigenous knowledge. Based on this findings, the paper concluded that Guji Oromoo have been using indigenous knowledge for fertility problem, repeated death and accident.

Key words: Guji Oromo; malxachuu: ritual; waxaa

1. INTRODUCTION

Oromo religion is one of the very few indigenous religions that have not been dominated by foreign religions. “Unlike other people who have adopted religions from which were not indigenous to their societies, in the case of Oromo, the people and the belief system have evolved together” (Baxter, *etal*, 1996).

Waaqeffannaa of the Oromo is among such indigenous religions, which survived for a long periods. Of course, large numbers of Oromo have been converted to either Christianity or Islam religions, while significant number remained with their indigenous religion. This indigenous religion is practical in different parts of Oromia in varying degrees (Ibid). As Workineh (2011) stated, there is no creator of *Waaqa* because He is Omnipotent, no one is before him, and has no elder so that **he** has no creator. He is only one, the source of truth, likes truth, wise, omnipotent and generous. *Waaqa* does not have an elder. Nothing has power over *Waaqa*. In other words, He is everlasting. “The Oromo thus had the concept of the monotheistic supreme God from time immemorial, although their conception of God is quite distinct from the Western one.

The practice of indigenous religion in Oromia has two natures. The first is ‘Thanksgiving’ to *Waaqa* following end of rainy season and beginning of spring. The idea is to thank *Waaqa* for his ending of rainy, cloudy, muddy ground and replacing with sunshine and flowery environment. The second nature of *Waaqeffannaa* is request for intervention of *Waaqa* on some problems. The request can be for human or animal epidemic diseases, delayed rain, instability, repeated accident and repeated deaths in a family or in a community to *Waaqa* through ritual performance. As events happen unexpectedly, such form of *Waaqeffannaa* – requesting *Waaqa* for intervention performed irregularly unlike the abovementioned thanksgiving ritual. It has no specific time base unlike *irreecha*-thanks giving elaborated above (Mulugeta, 2017). In brief, *Waaqeffannaa* can be seen in two explicit ways. The former is thanks giving which is time based and has recycling nature while the later is request for help or intervention of *Waaqa* whenever needed (Ibid). Tadesse, (1995) explained *Waaqa* as: “*Waaqa* (high god/ Sky), who is said to have created everything, is at the center of Guji religion.

Like other Oromo branches, Guji Oromo have their own indigenous social organizations, ritual practices and cultural practices (Asebe, 2007). They have their own colorful ritual practices, which indicate their places in religious and cultural activities. These ritual activities are performed for both human and non-human nature in the Guji Oromo culture. These are *Dhibaayyuu*, *Malxuu*, *Hullunqaa*, *Uddoo Afataa/Waxaa* and *horooroo afachuu*. Through the ritual practices, they ask *Waaqa* to give solution for their problems and give thanks for things *Waaqa* delivers them. Their pray had been used as a powerful means of terminating harsh ecological disruption such as drought, disease and other social crises. They also pray for cattle, barren women etc. The women came for the ritual

pray, sing and dance together. Most of the rituals have been performed to solve some kinds of problems occurred both on human and animals. The problem might be fertility issues, epidemic disease, repeated accident and deaths in both human and livestock (Mulugeta, 2017).

There are specialized segments of population who are said to have knowledge of handling such problems. It is believed that they are *wayyuu* or “holy” who have been offered such extraordinary skills by *Waaqa*. According to Mulugeta (2017), *waaqa* is represented by *Qaallu* and selective holy individuals called *wayyuu* on the earth. The first *wayyuu* as human is *Qaalluu*. There are individuals, families and groups who enjoy the values attached to *wayyuu*. These individuals are firstly, the Great *Qaalluu*, followed by Abba *Gadaa* of the three groups (Uraagaa, Matti and Hokku) and *warra kallachaa* (phallic families), and clans in Alabdu and others from Metta of Galalcha clans from both Uraagaa and Hokku phratries.

The two main groups known and feared of their special abilities are the Shabolla families believed to be known for their control of lightening, whereas the Dalacha families are known for their release of trouble internal diseases to individuals respectively (Taddese 1995). Both were considered as *wayyuu*, because it is believed that, they were offered this ability by *Waaqa* purposefully. The latter groups are useful to punish individuals or groups supposed to be punished due to their failure to obey certain norms like failure to obey *Seera Waaqa* (divine laws) and *Seera lafaa/namaa* (earthly/human law). The Shabolla families are those who believed to control lightning to protect human from potential harmful disaster regardless of discrimination, whereas the Dalacha families believed to act against human by releasing terrible internal diseases particularly on people who are supposed to be corrected due to failure in applying rules, regulations and norms (Mulugeta, 2017). *Wayyuu* is interpreted in human aspects and non-human aspects. *Wayyuu* in the aspects of humanity refers to special skill and ability that extraordinarily individual display. This special skill is acquired innately. The second dimension of *wayyuu* is the non-human aspect. There are non-human nature such as birds, animals, plants, and places which are believed to be *wayyuu*. Small birds are believed to be *wayyuu* because it is believed that they are source of information to know *kaayoo* (omen) (Mulugeta, 2017).

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this paper, the authors used both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data were collected by reviewing published (books, articles and journals) and unpublished materials (thesis and dissertations) from internet. In this study, what, where and why the Oromo practice indigenous practice was discussed and analyzed. The study employed qualitative research approach with exploratory research design because of the nature of the identified research problem that peoples experience in the environment and belief system and practices to be studied. Purposive

Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

sampling technique was employed and the researcher selected the relevant respondents from the target group carefully and document was reviewed to get reliable and rich data. Interview was made with the key informants who have knowledge about the practices and who were selected purposively. Again, this study employed symbolic interpretation, feminist and cultural ecology theory for analysis of the collected data. The researchers crosschecked the findings from oral sources with other secondary sources. The written documents were also cross-checked to increase its validity.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Waxaa Ritual

Waxaa/uddoo afata is the ritual practice of Guji women, which was strongly celebrated for different purposes in Guji Oromo. In spite of its significance, the practice of this ritual is declined today. *Waxaa* is also called 'Jilaa' of women and the women who had a skill of healing *beefaa* disease were called *Haadba waxaa*. Therefore, *waxaa* ritual is conducted when *beefaa* affected the people. *Heefaa* is a disease, which looks like itch and affects the outer body of cattle and peoples. Not only the outer part, but also it affects the internal body of the cattle, make their milk test less and affect the reproduction system. This disease does not discriminate men, women, or cattle. Unlike the present time when modern medicine is available, the disease could be healed only through cultural medicine by intervention of skilled women. *Heefaa* disease is dangerous feared by the society because it resulted in the death of cattle and man. To cure the affected cattle's and peoples, *haadba waxaa* restricted them from doing bad things and this issue is given priority. For this purpose, women prepared it in the form of ceremony to chase that disease from cattle's and man. All women have no skill of healing the disease. Therefore, the gift of healing is only for those who kept strictly the culture of the society and speak the truth. They get this specialized skill from the God by doing good things, by respecting the culture and restricting themselves from speaking false.

How does the disease break out?

Haadba waxaa was strongly respected among the society and nobody insult her or made any attempt, which may affect her respect, dignity and honor. Therefore, the outbreak of the disease was related to the respect and honor of *haadba waxaa*. Therefore, if *haadba waxaa* is not respected by the society and if they insult her, disease might result to the death of peoples and their cattle.

(Bassu Gata , Orone kebele in Adola warada), one of the key informant who served on this knowledge for more than 40 year told us that the disease was very dangerous which resulted to death of peoples and cattle, which is only solved through intervention of Haadba waxaa. The way through which this disease afflicted the cattle and peoples are- when the people made bad

things to haadha waxaa, her torbii, and hayyuu. In addition, if people stand on women tree (uddoo) (yoo muka haadholii irra ijaajjan), if they touch, if sleep on it, if they cut down uddoo, if they burnt down the tree under which they made Dhibaayyuu without the permission of haadha waxaa. The researchers understand from this conversation that since safuu is in the heart of Oromo people breaking it is considered as breaking the law of waaqaa, which in turn resulted to bad fortune. Because there is safuu for human (Safuu namaa), safuu for nature (Safuu uumamaa), safuu for creator (Safuu uumaa/Waaqaa) etc. This Waaqaa-given safuu that governs the Oromo world, and especially the relation among human beings and between human beings and waaqaa.

Once the disease afflicts the cattle and the peoples, it is only solved with the interference of *haadha waxaa*. If people ask apologize for doing the above crime she forgive them and ask *waaqaa* for apologize. Because insulting *haadha waxaa* is considered as breaking the law of *waaqaa*. *Haadha waxaa* blow the disease saying (*dhugaan kee muldhatte deem*) your truth is revealed go from the cattle and go from the people. Immediately *waaqaa* give response for her.

Akkaataa cidheettiin itti cidhoomtu (How haadha waxaa does heal the patients)

The host families requested *haadha waxaa* for her specialized skill to intervene in the problem and give a solution for the problem they faced. *Haadha waxaa* does not start the process of chasing the disease from the affected bodies. There are different criteria, process and procedures that should be fulfilled first. Therefore, blessing the people and praying God is the first step and given priority. She blesses the peoples and praise God to make everything safe, make her journey peace and to see good *kaayoo* during her journey to the host's house.

Before her journey to the host's family *haadha waxaa* warned them and surrounding peoples not to do the following:

<i>Lola qe'ee keessaa</i>	not to make any kind of conflict in neighbor hood
<i>Haadha bantii hamachuu dhiisuu</i>	gossiping <i>haadha bantii</i> is forbidden
<i>Hayyuu ulfeessuu</i>	respecting the clan leaders
<i>Miseensa haadha waxaa ulfeessuu</i>	respecting the members of <i>haadha waaxaa</i>
<i>Diqqaa fi guddaan wal ulfeessuu</i>	children and elders should respect each other

Haadha waxaa mixed *Ashudaa* with honey. Then she dips *uddoo* to these mixed substances and wipes cattle and peoples by it. The person and cattle affected by the *beefaa* disease is wiped by dipped *uddoo*. In addition, *haadha waxaa* mixed milk, black *ashudaa*, honey, yoghurt, butter together, and feed the cattle. This is indigenous knowledge particularly to clean worm from the internal body of the cattle and *beefaa* disease from outer body of the cattle and people. After this, the *torbii* of *haadha waxaa* search for their *odaa* (*mokkonnisaa for women*) to put the *uddoo* they used for wiping the disease under it.

Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

According to Guji informants there is a great connection between Guji women and *Mokkonnisa*, which is considered as *odaa dubartii* (women sycamore tree).

According to Dejene (2009) when disease occurs, Guji women gathered under *Mokkonnisa* (*Croton macrostachys*) tree for prayers, known as *uddoo afataa*. They chant Oyoyo Garoyye, Akko Manoyye—the names of their legendary queens—and through them they ask their *Waaqa*, Oromo Supreme God, for rains, whereas the male group prays directly to *Waaqa*. It is said that the women make prayers under *Mokkonnisa* because Akko Manoyee was buried under that tree. Guji women revere their legendary queens, who are believed once to have led them and through them, they honor women as a community. They use Akko Manoyee as an intermediary between them and their *Waaqa* because they find her attentive to their cause.

When she heals the cattle from the disease there is a vow, which is vowed for her by the hosts. This vow is given to her from the cattle. They appointed her to come back to take what is vowed for her and conduct a ceremony. This appointment may be stay from one month to one year. There is no fixed time for this because it is based on the agreement of the host and *haadha waxaa*. However, most of the time this ceremony is conducted at the time of abundance when all things are available. Mostly they conduct during the season of spring. The spring is selected because it is a time when everything is available in and outside the home, the time of satiety and production reached for the society. It is also when living things on the earth feed and became satiety. Therefore, spring is the time when everything lives on the earth with happy. *Arfaasaa* (spring) is the time when the rain is rain, animals and man as well as every living things get cool. Therefore, this month is the time when God is reconciled with people. For this reason, they called their *Jilaa* and celebrate this ceremony at this time.

Until the day of the appointment, there is a special care for the vow cow given for *haadha waxaa*. She warned them not to beat, not to sell, not slaughter and not change that cow. In addition, according to her law, fighting each other is also impossible, made them out of culture, and may result to the outbreak of disease. Breaking of the above law may result to the outbreak of the disease.

Steps and sequences of *waxaa* ritual

On the day of appointment *haadha waxaa* and her *torbii* are invited with great respect and come back to the enquirer house. *Haadha waxaa* come to the host house to conduct a ceremony that gives them a confirmation for healing of their cattle and man. Everything should be safe in the host family. When they reach in front of the host families' house, they are anointed by butter. When *haadha waxaa* reach there the hosts family greet *haadha waxaa* saying:

Hosts family - *si muudee na muudi (I anoint you anoint me)*

Haadha waaxaa- ijarraa godaani, gurraarraa godaani, gola irraa godaani (go away from ear, eye, kitchen)

On this day, blessing the hosts and surrounding people is given priority before the beginning of the ceremony. *Haadha waxaa* blesses the society and thanks God for making their children, elders, and cattle peace. Again to start the ceremony *haadha waxaa* pray God to make safe and to accomplish successfully without any obstacles. The *waxaa* ceremony is celebrated under *Mokkonnisa (Croton Macrostachys)* tree. During the ceremony, the surrounding women come up with different materials, which are necessary for the ceremony and contribute different things for the ceremony. These are coffee, honey, *uddoo* and milk. They hold all these materials and marched to their *Odaa* to make *Dhibaaayyuu* (libation) there. Then *haadha waxaa* with other women come together under the tree and start the ceremony with blessing.

After the blessing, *haadha waxaa* spill the milk under their *odaa*, made *dhibaaayyuu* there and bless saying make our *jilaa* curdle and make *waaqa* for us. The women continued their song and dance at the home of the enquirer. She also blesses the people who come for the ceremony and make her journey to the enquirer safe. Also at the end of the *dhibbaayyuu* she blesses the entire participant. During the ceremony, all things are available including eating and drinking materials. The host family must prepare vow cow for slaughter. If the vow cow does not satisfy *haadha waxaa* and other participant, they have a song through which they express their dissatisfaction.

Seera qalma waxaa (laws for vowed cow)

Before slaughtering the vow cattle, the women erect a roost/nesting box. This roost is made from *uraagaa* and *mi'eessaa* trees. The spouse of the enquirer founded the *mi'eessa* tree in front of the house on the right side, which its distance is not more than 10-20 m from the host's house. The spouse erect a roost saying make our *waaqaa* for us, make our people and cattle flavor, mobilize our *jilaa* and make us fine. The *mi'eessa* and *uraagaa* tree are brought with their leaf and tied to the erected stake/peg by *gaalee* (dependent plant like rope). What is tied together is known as *qooxii/roost*.

After *qooxii* is, erected women in the neighborhood encircle it and dance and sing together. On the morning, they release the cattle to the field. The cattle are not released by the enquirer family but by the *torbii (servants of hadha waxaa)* of *haadha waxaa*. Starting from the morning, they continued their dance and play till the mid night. However, the men parts do not participate on dancing during the time. In the mid of the day around 6:00 o'clock they spill/sacrifice milk under erected *qooxii*. They eat and drink what is prepared for the ceremony. When the sun sets, they bring the vow cow for *haadha waxaa* to slaughter. The cow brought to *haadha waxaa* by *torbii dhiiraa* (male servants). They never catch the cattle by rope; it is caught only by hand. If the cow prepared for slaughter is very strong to catch by hand *haadha waxaa* wear her cultural cloth called *bonkoo* and

Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

beat that cow by her *siiqqoo* saying *laafi laafi*. After that, the cow does not move no matter how much strong and powerful it is. During night, fire is prepared at two places and they cook the meat by two saucepans made from clay. In one saucepan, the meat is cooked for *haadba waxaa* and her *torbii*. The slaughtered cow is not completely eaten in the nighttime. Half of the part of slaughtered cow meat spent the night without removing skin from the part and cracking/ bursting the stomach. What is spent throughout the night is known as *raqaa*. On the days of ceremony, *haadba waxaa* is queen, she does not do any work and her duty is commanding, a ordering and facilitating activities. On the morning, the left part is completely slaughtered, its stomach is cracked and some of the meat is given for the neighbors for those who brought the gift for the ceremony. The cow is slaughtered by the spouse or by a person reached for *baallii*. On the next day, again, the participants eat the meat left during the night and the remaining one is covered by the skin until the sun become over the head. On the day, dancing is continued as previous. Since it is *safuu* to return the container of neighbor, who brought gift for enquirer they return it with some meat. During this time, they imitate the sounds of calf and cow. Half of the part imitate the sound of cow while the others imitate the sounds of calf.

Qoqobi kee churraa bee (sound of calf) *baaa* (sound of cow)

Queenkee curruuqa bee (sound of calf) *baaa* (sound of cow)

On the morning, the women roast the coffee bean in the ash. The stick by which they roast the coffee bean is called *qajimaa*. After this, they collect this coffee from the ash by their hands through competition. This coffee is grinded and mixed with *ashnuddaa* and feed the cattle and the peoples. What is left from feeding is taken to their *odaa* (*mokkonisaa*) for *dbibaayyuu* and they anoint this *odaa* with butter. When they anoint *odaa* there is a saying: *waan kee kenninee lamuu warra kanatti hin deebi'in* (*we gave your own don't return to this family*). The constant use of butter in both rituals and daily life is intended to not only keep people healthy and give them a shining complexion, but also to keep them wet, that is, fertile. In terms of economy, butter as a symbol of abundance and has a deeper meaning in the life of traditional Oromo. The most common symbols of fertility in the Oromo are milk, butter, honey-wine (*bulbula*), hydromel/mead (*daadbi*), beads (*callee*), green grasses (*Irreensa*) and the blood of the sacrificed animal (Van de Loo, 1991).

Like in the other parts of Oromiya region, the Guji people also pray a God for fertility of the cattle. In different parts of Oromiya region the *Ateetee* ritual is conducted for the fertility of their cattle and prays a God to intervene in the problem. However, in the Guji Oromo women do not directly conduct *Uddoo afataa* ritual for fertility of their cattle. In fact, since *heefaa* disease is one of the problems that resulted to the infertility of the cattle, *uddoo afataa* ritual is conducted. Once the *heefaa* problem is solved through *uddoo afataa* ritual for fertility of their cattle, they invited the richest *yuubaa* to pray God. The person in need of intervention to his livestock fertility request *bayyuu* who

are famous and successful in livestock raising. Having large number of livestock is one of the core social prides in the Guji Oromo. This is true to the *Machaa* Oromo of Wallagga. Traditionally, the people considered their cattle as a symbol of status. The individual or a person who herded one hundred head of cattle including calves, at one time was expected to wear the rumen (*garaacha*) of the cattle after slaughtering a cow prepared for such ritual ceremony. The tradition was locally known as *garaacha uffate* (he worn cattle stomach) (Desalegn, 2010). According to the key informant for livestock fertility specialized, *hayyuu* in livestock requested to lead the ritual.

***Safuu sirna waxaa* (Norm in *waxaa* ritual)**

***Safuu haadha waxaa* (Norm of *haadha waxaa*)**

Safuu is at the heart of everyday lives of the Oromo. They speak of *Safuu* when they eat and drink, when they attend a wedding, when they celebrate any kind of ritual, when they praise their *Waaqa* (God), during farming and harvest, during war and peace, in their socio-political system, namely in the *Gadaa* system, there is a principle of *Safuu*. The laws of *Gadaa* system are derived from the basic principle of *Safuu*. Taking *Safuu* out of the scene, one cannot speak of Oromo religion, political system, and social structure. Simply *safuu* is at the center of whatever Oromo people do at anytime and anywhere.

The Guji Oromo women are not able to separate *safuu* from their daily activity. They are guided by *safuu* in their daily activities. No one can view the Guji Oromo society outside of *Safuu*. It has a special place and part of their daily activities. It is the law that creates smooth relationship between the creator and creatures, man and man, and man and other creatures. If *Safuu* is broken, the relationships will be disturbed. All these are true in *Uddoo afataa* ritual. There is *safuu*, which is directly attached to *uddoo Afataa* ritual and *haadha waxaa*. Gossiping *haadha waxaa* is *safuu*, doing bad things to her is *safuu*, laying *haadha waxaa* is *safuu*. Refusing to give the vow for *haadha* is *safuu*. Also cutting *mokkonnisa* under which *dhibaayyuu* takes place is *safuu* and cutting *uddoo* without the permission of *haadha waxaa* is *safuu*. This is considered as disrespecting *haadha waxaa*. Enforcing *haadha waxaa* on the day of the ceremony to work and prepare a food is *safuu*. She is queen on the day and she simply sits and orders the participant to do. Therefore, breaking the above laws are *safuu* and breaking the customary law in the society is considered as breaking the laws of *waaqaa*.

Norm in slaughtering the vow cow (*safuu qalma horii wareegaa keessa jiru*)

The hosts who call *haadha waxaa* for intervention in the problem vow a cow for her at the end of the pray. Therefore, refusing to give vow cow is *safuu*. The cow that is vowed for *haadha waxaa* should be prepared on the day of appointment for ceremony. The slaughtering of vow cow is not allowed for every person but for few one. A person who is preferred by *haadha waxaa* or reach for

Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

baallii slaughters it. The person who is selected to slaughter a vow cow should have acceptance among the society, speak the truth and be respected one.

Safuu sirba waxaa (norms in waxaa song)

In addition, *uddoo afataa* song has its own *safuu*. *Waxaa* has its own song which has great respect among the society. The people sing a *waxaa* song only at the time of *waxaa* ceremony. If the peoples sing the *waxaa* song simply wherever, the disease might happen. Therefore, they do not sing hardly the song of *waxaa* and they are advised to care of.

Safuu Uddoo kutuu (lows of cutting uddoo)

As previously discussed, *uddoo* is called *muka jila dubartii* (the place where women ceremony takes place). There is special care given for *uddoo*. In the past days when *uddoo afataa* ritual practiced, *uddoo* is not simply uprooted, because it has its own rule, regulation and *safuu*. They cut *Uddoo* only by the permission of *haadba waxaa* to swipe the disease from the cattle and peoples. Even cutting *uddoo* without the permission of *haadba waxaa* is like breaking *safuu*, which may result in the outbreak of the disease. This culture and *safuu* attached to cutting *uddoo* is not available today. Unlike the past time, the people simply cut *uddoo* as they get it. However, when this ritual was highly practiced, it was impossible for male to remove *uddoo*. Only women could cut *uddoo* and breaking the above makes the people out of *safuu*.

Required Cultural materials and cloths during ceremony

The women participated on the ceremony worn the beautiful cultural cloth decorated with different color. These are: *Bonkeoo*, *Borroo*, *kadhee*, *siiqqoo*, *maldayaa*, *samaxee*, *qophisoo*, *qoloo*, and *Gullee*. *Haadba waxaa* wear the cultural cloth known as *ruufa*

Siiqqoo-

Siiqqoo is a stick (*Ulee*) symbolizing a socially sanctioned set of rights exercised by women. The *siiqqoo* is a special stick, which a woman who gets legally married will receive on her wedding day. Informant describes the *siiqqoo* as ‘a women weapon’, symbolizing the respect and the power that a married woman has. The *siiqqoo* stick is given to a woman in order to protect her rights. Informant explained that ‘if a woman has a *siinqee* she has to be respected, nobody should fight with her’. Regarding the origin of *siiqqoo* informants state that this symbolic matter (*siiqqoo*) has handed over to *abbaa Gadaa* by the *qaalluu*. It is believed that the *Qaalluu* gave it to the *abbaa Gadaa* in order to hold the *Bokkeuu* for himself and the *siiqqoo* to his wife.



Fig.1 Guji women holding *siiqqoo* (Endalkachew, 2018)

Samaxxee

Samaxxee is one of the material cultures made from the skin of cattle's and decorated in a very attractive and beautiful way. Women whose husbands are *Abbaa Gadaa* use this beautiful cultural material. In addition, the elders and women's used it when they go to town and different ceremonies.



Fig.2 Guji women having *samaxxee* on their head (picture taken from shakiso culture and tourism office)

Bonkoo

Bonkoo is one of the well-known cultural clothes worn by Guji women. This cloth is made from the skin of the cattle. In addition to this, they wear it as *qoloo* by shortening its height. Especially in the past time before the introduction of industrial cloth and cotton cloth, Guji women had worn this cloth at the time of marriage, ceremony and rituals. Therefore, one of the cultural cloth worn by the Guji women during the *uddoo afataa/ waxaa* ritual is *Bonkoo*.



Fig.3 Guji women wearing *bonkoo* (picture taken from Shakiso culture and tourism office)

Kadhoo

This one is another cultural cloth used by Guji women. The women and female wear this type of cloth during ceremony. It is made from the skin of the cattle. The females worn this cloth at the time of marriage and the women worn it at the time of *ya'a Gadaa*, marriage and other ceremonies



Fig.4 Guji women wearing *kadhoo* on their back (picture taken from Shakiso culture and tourism office)

The women participated on the ceremony never come with dry hair and they should anoint a butter, release their hair and fumigate their body with smoke of certain plants that burn with a pleasant odor. On the ceremony, various types of materials, food and drink are prepared. These are milk, barley, *ashuudaa*, *buna qalaa*, gold, honey, *makkayii (injiree)* and ring for *haadha waxaa*. On the day of the ceremony *haadha waxaa* pray for cattle and a person affected by *heefaa* disease.

Waxaa vs Ateetee

In the case of Guji Oromo, *waxaa/uddoo afataa* ritual is different from *ateetee* ritual which is practiced in other parts of Oromia region. In the other Oromo area *ateetee* ritual is conducted for the barren women, cattle fertility and for thanks giving. According to (Benti, 1999, Jeylan, 2004) *Ateetee* is exclusively women's annual ceremony through which they ask 'Maaram' to give them birth and believed to regulate their reproduction. *Maaram* is the spiritual mother who was believed to order fertility in the Oromo traditional religion. The process in Guji Oromo is different which is only conducted to heal cattle and peoples from the disease called *beefaa*. In fact, like *ateetee*, women dominate almost all activities of *uddoo afataa*. However there is a case at which the male participate during the ceremony. Unlike in the other areas of Oromia region where the women come together to pray for barren women, in Guji Oromo, the senior member of the *Gadaa* system, the 'Yuuba,' blesses for the barren woman saying, "Gadaan tee baa jiiitu," literally 'may your *Gadaa* be wet.

The Culture of *Malxachuu*

***Malxuu* for fertility of women**

Malxuu ritual is one of the Guji Oromo purification ceremonies performed to clean, fertility problem and lack of son or daughter in birth, less productivity in livestock production at individual or household level, repeated death at household level, repeated accidents at household level are among the reasons leads to *Malxuu* ceremony (Mulugeta, 2017).

To pray for the barren women in Guji Oromo they call *yuuba* and the elders who have a great respect among Guji Oromo. For this purpose, a *daadhii* is prepared. The family who prepare the program invite the *yuuba* to pray God for them. The *yuuba* look at *kaayoo* when they exit from their home. They check the environment whether or not all things are safe or not. When they enter into the home, they take the *mijuu* from the host families. The *yuuba* take *mijuu* from them and sip turn by turn. First, the elder *yuubaa* take the *mijuu* (*qorii*) from the hosts.

Then *yuubaa* sip *daadhii* and puff to the earth and house. When he puff it, he says *kaayoon si baa qajeeltu, aadaan si baa bareeddu*, (may your omen be good, may your culture be beautiful) and give it to the next *yuubaa*. Every person come to the house and first sip *Mijuu* (*qorii*) before touching any things. Then after the spouse requested the invited guest to tell them what he observes during their travel to know the *kaayoo*. He asked them by saying: *qorii faanaa unteetta, siif kenneeraa* (lit, meaning I gave you *mijuu* you sipped *mijuu* milk) tell us know what you see/observe when you come to here. The invited guest turn by turn to talk to them what they observe during their journey to host family.

Kaayoo is like testing something or activities planned to be done whether it is on the right track or not. *Kaayoo* is a kind of precondition to any activity, which includes *Gadaa* ritual, war, marriage related issues, travelling to house of a person in need of solution for fertility problems. On the

Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

other way, *Kaayoo* is the way of cross checking whether *Waaqa* knows the issue, and approve or disprove the plan or activities going on. *Kaayoo* is known as *milkee* in other Oromo branches in western Ethiopia. Therefore, the interaction of *kaayoo* played among three bodies, Human-non human nature-*Waaqa*. The positions where the small bird/s are (on the left or right) and as well as types of other animals crossing the road have symbolic meanings in *kaayoo* analysis. The sounds of the birds are also observed when they exit from their own house. It is believed that small song birds carry messages concerning the future from *waaqaa* to man, if a man sets out on a journey and hears one of the small bird song chirping from the right, he know that all will be well. If the bird perched to his left, it is a bad omen.

Hayyuu interprets sounds of birds to predict *Kaayoo* either good or bad luck. They interpret sounds of birds to predict *Kaayoo* either good or bad luck. Tadesse (1995) has stated that to what extent *kaayoo* plays role in Guji Oromo daily life as:-If *kaayoo* is not promising, *hayyuu* suspend, sometimes cancelled, if felt bad luck and the person in need advised to look for more solution with complex ritual.

Then after the completion of buffing activity, the *qorii*, which is prepared for four *yuubaa*, is given to them. The host's family gives *qorii* first to the elder *yuubaa* saying,

Spouse-*hoo qorii kennadbaa*

Yuubaa- maaliif kennata

Spouse -*lubbuu na leellistaaf kennadba, iddoo ofii geese na geessiftaafan kennadba*

Yuuba- lubbuu san le'i, iddoo ani ga'e ga'i

Next *qorii* is given to the next *yuubaa* by turn. At this time the spouse says

Yuubaa-maaliif kennatta

Spouse- *horteeff kennadba*

Yuubaa-hori, akka ani hore hori, sa'aa namaan hori, iddoo ani ga'e ga'i.

This process is continued up to the fourth *yuubaa*. Again, for the fourth *yuubaa* they present similar question to get confirmation. Again, the conversation is continued between them.

Spouse- *hoo daadhii kennadbaa*

Yuubaa- maaliif kennatta?

Spouse-*bara kana sodaadbeen jira bara kana na qaxxaamursi xinnaafi guddaakoo, jaarsaa fi jaartiikoo, ollaa fi qorbaa koo waliin akka na qaxxamursituufin kennadba (I fear this year so I give you to transfer my youngsters, elders, neighbors).*

Yuubaa- qaxxaamuri si qaxxaamursee

The four *yuubaa*'s turn by turn blessed them and puffing *dadhii* to spouse and his wife. *yuubaa* sip *daadhii* and puffing it above their head to their back saying; *sirra dabarseera*.

The barren women and her husband drink *daadhi* from the hands of *yuubaa*. *Yuubaa* also puff *daadhii* to the thigh of the women and husband, which is called *malxuu*. They anoint the thigh of the husband saying *gudeedni si baa jiidbu, ilmaan si baa jiidbu, intalaan si baa jiidbu* (*may your thigh wet with boy and daughter*). Again the same to the wife they anoint the thigh of the spouse with butter.

The *yuubaa* and elders who observed the environment when they came to the area know what type of son she will get and what he/she will be. At the end of the ceremony the barren women who invited them anoint *yuubaa* 's with butter turn by turn for blessing.

Then they take the butter from her hand and anoint her two hands and bless her saying; *harka kanaan hammadbu* (*bug by this hand*), *harka kanaan qoradbu*, *harka kanaan elmadbu* (*milki a milk by this hand*), *waaqni sitti mufateera yoo ta'e sitti baa araaramu* (*May Waaqaa forgive you if he disappointed to you*). The *yuubaa*'s *borooroo* is already anointed with butter when they enter in to the house and put outside in front of the hosts house. When they returned to their own house, they observe everything to know whether the *kaayoo* (omen) is good or bad. However, unlike the first observed *kaayoo*, this one is observed to know whether it is good or bad omen for themselves.

When that barren woman gets a child, they prepare a celebration and thanks God for her peaceful delivery. She washes her body on fourth day if she gets a boy, but if she gets a daughter, she washes on the third day. Every things including eating and drinking materials are prepared for the celebration. The women in the neighborhood are gathered at her home to accomplish the activities and to give thanks for the God. They marched to the area holding *okolee* and *buqqii* (*baarree*). To bring water for her body, they go to a river holding the flower of *uddoo* and *hiddii*. These flowers are boiled with the water to wash her body. She never washes her body in the nighttime but on the day approximately around four o'clock. The most common food prepared on the celebration is known as *hamakoo*, made from *enset* and barley mixed with butter. After the guests and surrounding women feed it, they put the left one in a big *qorii*, call all the children around and ordered them to feed the left *hamakoo*. The children feed it with great competition, which shows their wish of children's for the host families. At the end of the celebration, women who are participated on the celebration are anointed and blessed. Not only for the barren women but also the *yuubaa* pray for the family those who faced repeated death. People who face repeated death in his family request for intervention and prepare *Bookaa/Daadhi* local wine made from honey and invite three *hayyuu* or elders on agreeable fixed date. The ritual procedure is known as *malxuu*. They carefully see and analyze *kaayoo* when they are traveling to the house of enquirer. When information is scanty to predict *kaayoo*, *hayyuu* can see and estimate what would be the *kaayoo* during *malxuu* (puffing). *Bookaa* filled in to three wooden containers called *Qorii* given to each *hayyuu* from senior to junior by repeating the following phrases.

The enquirer who invited *yubaa* gives them *daadhii* saying:

Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

Ilma koo! Dhala dbabuun rakko! ----- My son! Lack of children is a problem!

Ilma dbabuun rakko! -----Lack of son is problem!

Kaarra dbabuun rakko!-----Lack of livestock is problem! (*karra* is traditional fence of livestock, it represents livestock)

Duuti baayyachuun rakko!-----Increase of (in number) death is problem!

Lubbuu dbabuun rakko!----- Loose of life is problem!

Gujjiin kanaaf fala falata.--- Due to this Guji seeks solution. (For this, Guji look for solution)

Rakko kana manguddoo dhiyeeffata--- (Presents these problems to elders/*hayyu*.)

Maanguddoon Waaqa kadhatti, ---elders pray to *Waaqa*

Waaqaan walitti araarsiti.-----mediate with *Waaqa*.

Malxachuu ritual for repeated death

Ritual procedure of *Malxuu* for repeated death in a family, performed in such a way that the person who faced repeated death in his/her family and in need of intervention seeks solution to his problem. The enquirer holds one of the three *qorii* (wooden container filled with *bookaa*- local wine made of honey) and distribute to the three *hayyuu* as per their seniority. Then he holds the container with his two hands with the *hayyuu* and repeat the following phrases.

Enquirer: *Hoo'u... kennadhe!*

Hayyu/ elder ..Maa kennatte!

Enquirer “*Qorii lubbuu kennadhe!*

1st hayyuu Sip the *bookaa* stare up and say:

Anattaa kennatanii... ani Waaqaa sittaa kennadhee!

Waaqaa sun sooradhu!

puff up to *Waaqaa/ sky* :

2nd sip and puff down to the ground and say

lafa sun sooradhu!

3rd, sip and puff side away and say:

Gadaa sadiin sooradhu!

Doorii sadiin sooradhu!

Raaba sadiin sooradhu !

4th , sip and puff to the *kallachaa*-fore head of the enquirer and carefully observe the flow of the *bookaa* down on his face for analysis.

The remaining elders do the same thing and disclose the result of the ritual performed on the spot if the findings are good, as a good news, if not, propose more alternative ritual believed to be appropriate.(Mulugeta 2017).

The upper meanings of *malxuu* is appeal to *Waaqaa* takes place through the mediation of *Hayyuu* and response is expected from *Waaqa* until then, the enquirer gains some sort of psycho social support. The deep meaning comes after analyzing the flow of puffed liquid on the forehead of the enquirer. There are notes taken during travel to the enquirer's house on the way while they were checking *kaayoo*. These notes form *kaayoo* coupled with *malxuu* and analyzed carefully to draw conclusive recommendation to enquirer. Elder would cancel and return back from traveling to enquirer's house if *kaayoo* is not promising at the very beginning. It is only when the tendency of *Kaayoo* is more on good side than failure that elders continue to the place of the ceremony hoping the remaining process may give either good solution or clue to the solution. The enquirer and his family including neighbors feel happy soon they see *hayyu* because it is believed that *kaayoo* is good. They would not come if *kaayoo* was not good.

Malxuu for cattle fertility

The person in need of intervention to his livestock fertility request *hayyuu* who are famous and successful in livestock raising. Having large number of livestock is one of the core social prides in Guji Oromo. This is true to the Machaa Oromo of Wallagga. Traditionally, the people considered their cattle as a symbol of status. The individual or a person who herded one hundred head of cattle including calves, at one time was expected to wear the rumen (*garaacha*) of the cattle after slaughtering a cow prepared for such ritual ceremony. According to my key informant in Guji Oromo for livestock fertility, specialized *hayyuu* in livestock requested to lead the ritual. "*Okolee kanaaf, ka okoleen isaanii bonaa-ganna hingogne, finnaan isaanii jiidhaa-dheeraa ka ta'e kadhatan*". For livestock fertility, *hayyuu* or elders whose milk container never dry throughout the year, their livestock urine is wet and long, who were known for their well-nourished and productive livestock and well skilled to be invited for conducting fertility.

Milk prepared in three leather containers known as *Okolee*. All processes on the way to enquirer like *kaayoo* checking takes place until they arrive to host house. The arrival of the *hayyuu* has a symbolic reflection of promising of *kaayoo*, which makes the host successful in his plan. No reading, no complicated symbolic activities in fertility of livestock except appropriate advise to enquirer how and what he has to do for good livestock production in the form of chatting.

Enquirer --- *Hoo kennadbe! (take it)*

Hayyuu/elder- *Maa kennatte? (What you gave me)*

Enquirer --- *Hortee -Qorii Kenadbe! (I gave you a container of the milk for fertility)*

Okolee - *Gaadiin horsiittaa kennadbe! (I gave a milk container and milking strip for fertility)*

Raadaa - *Jibichaan horsiittaa kennadbe! (I gave you for fertility of heifer and bull)*

1st, Sip the milk and puff up to sky and say: *Anattaa kennatanii, ani Waaqa sittaa kennadbe (you gave me I give to Waaqaa).*

**Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:
Guji Oromo in Focus**

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

2nd Sip and puff to ground and say *lafa san sooradhu!*

3rd sip and puff to the stomach of the enquirer and say:

Bonaa-Ganna hori! (Be fertile in winter and summer)

Okolee- gaadiin Hori! (May your milk container and milking strip wet all the time)

Raadaa- jibichaan hori!(may your heifer-bull are fertile)

4. CONCLUSION

Like other Oromo branches, Guji Oromo have their own indigenous social organizations, ritual practices and cultural practices. They have their own colorful ritual practices, which indicate their places in religious and cultural. These ritual activities are performed for both human and non-human nature in Guji Oromo culture. These are *Dhibaayyuu*, *Malxuu*, *Hullunqaa*, *Uddoo Afataa/waxaa*, *boroaroo afachuu* etc. Through the ritual practices, they ask *Waaqaa* to give solution for their problem and give thanks for things *Waaqaa* deliver for them. Their pray had been used as a powerful means of terminating harsh ecological disruption such as drought, disease and other social crises. They also pray for cattle, barren women etc. Most of the rituals has been performed to solve some kinds of problems occurred both on human and animals. It is believed that they are *Wayyuu* “holy” who have been offered such extraordinary skills by *Waaqaa*.

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Some of the Ritual Practices in Oromo People:

Guji Oromo in Focus

www.bhu.edu.et/jikds

Glossary

Abbaa Gadaa- the head (leader) of *Gadaa*

Abbaa bokkuu- Holder of Scepter / Traditional Oromo Gadaa leader

Ardaa Jilaa – Sacred sites

Ateetee- ritual / Ceremony performed by women

Bonkoo- Women cultural cloth made from skin

Dhibaaqyyuu- libation

Gadaa-Oromo “democratic” indigenous political Administration System

Haadha bollaa- title given to the wife of Abba *Gadaa*

Hayyuu- a knowledgeable person elected to lead each clan

Hulluuqaa- a ritual used to review bad *kaayoo* or bad luck in Guji Oromo

Jila-ceremony

Kaayoo- Bad or good luck in the Guji Oromo

Kadboo-Women cultural cloth made from skin

Malxuu- puffing ritual to clean fertility problem, repeated death and accident

Qaalluu- Oromo indigenous religion leader

Safuu- the indigenous Oromo moral system

Uddoo Afataa-a ritual performed by women in Guji Oromo

Waaqeffannaa- Oromo indigenous religion