



Cultural Responses to Lightening: The Case of Maccaa Oromo

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated the cultural response of Oromo of East Africa to lightning and the socio-cultural factors affecting their performance. The paper examined and described different rituals and taboos in the study area and strategies used by the communities to minimize risk that caused by lightning. There are different spiritual and physical responses performed during and after lightning. These responses are full of different types of cultural rituals and taboo. Grieves and sorrows are expressed with more acceptable taboo words such as using euphemisms and metaphoric expressions. The paper also argues that, these processes are conditioned by the cultural and religious norms of the society. Each and every activity is directed by spiritual leaders and community elders. Explanation for why ritual is important and certain words and activities are considered taboos in the society and why certain taboo is accompanied by particular cultural rituals are presented. The ritual participants and types of sacrifice are also mentioned in this paper. During the ritual different community members are assigned as main actors. The roles of actors in performance ritual are mentioned. At the end the paper discussed about the changes and continuities observed regarding the ritual and its process or Araara Waaqaa.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Cultural rituals, performance, sacrifice, thanks giving; purification and other traditional events have connection with religion and the sacred in one or other hand. Ritual drama is one of the traditional performances that based on a religious environment or context. It is drama that has a broad popular appeal or setting. One of the most rudimentary kinds of ritual drama is the kind performance in the periodic worship of a local divinity or a family protective God in the God's shrine. Most of the it consists in the recitation of certain words of praise, thanks giving, and appeal movements to this side and that; the sacrifice of an animal such as a chicken or goat the sprinkling of the bread and certain food items on the shrine and recitation of further words. Ritual drama may be private kind, with a minimal audience and often no audience at all (Isadora Okpewho 1992).

For the Oromo *Waaqaa* is the unique God, creator of all things who gathers the clouds who scattered the stars, the master who has no master, He who has no order to receive Whose throne has no rival at all, who does not see any empire approaching his, who penetrates all as far as the depth of human bowels, where malice is incubated who holds in his hand the good and the bad, the scourge and the reward, who allows the enemy to do us harm... (De Slavic 1901:204). According to this idea the *Waaqaa* can bring bad or good to human beings based upon their work. Those live according to people's way of life and order of the elders receives blessing. That blessing helps them to live with *Waaqaa* in harmony.

In Oromo worldview natural disasters are caused by *Waaqaa*. It happens if human behave badly or if the *safuu* of *Waaqaa* is disobeyed. Natural disasters are believed as it is punishments for human misbehave. So the Oromo respond for

natural disasters spiritually by praying, sacrificing, libation, revealing one's own mistakes for *Waaqaa*, revealing hidden truth and paying blood price for shaded blood. By doing these, Oromo negotiates to their creature and save the self and their environments from disaster (Workineh 2001, Bartels 1990 and Kasam, and Gemetchu 1994).

Oromo people celebrate different rituals for the purposes of peace and prosperity. These rituals have their own setting. *Buttaa*, *Irreecha*, *ateetee*, *ingichaa*, *ifaanoo*, *dhibaayyuu*, and other rituals are celebrated timely. If these are done at right time the life of the people becomes smooth. Otherwise life turns into disorders and full of misfortune (Bartels 1990).

If drought stays for long time, speedy winds, thunder lightning, irregular heavy rain and ice happens continuously, animals and human suffered from untreatable diseases; sun, moon, stars and rainbow are visited at irregular positions and shown unobserved characteristics, (*ekera*) spirits of died are cry the people come together and pray, make libation, sacrifice rituals and search for solution.

According to elders from the community if lightning hit some body's home or properties the people response in both physical and spiritual. Like that of manmade fire, they try to minimize the risk by escaping movable objects from the fire and add soil to it which are physical. On the other hand, they did not add/spry water to the fire. It is believed that lightning fire is friend with water.

To avoid the again happening of lightning the owner of the fired property and his families did rituals and avoid working and borrowing different things at the date lightning happened.

Spiritual responses include rituals of purification. Language of clean/unclean, pure/impure, pristine/polluted plays a central role in the way many cultures classify people,

animals, and their habitats. Concern about pollution also features prominently in modern political discourse, but is usually distinguished from traditional concerns by labelling the latter, "ritual purity." The nature of a sacrificial ritual as well as that which was to be sacrificed could vary somewhat. According to Bassi (1995) when people or a group of people believes themselves injured by improper behaviour, the violation of *aadaa* can be contested by someone in an assembly, thus making it true judicial case.

Among the rituals that the Oromo people practice to reconnect with Waaqaa is the ritual of Araara Waaqaa is widely known in Maccaa Oromo. In this work the researchers are tried to discover the physical responses and spiritual rituals the people practice during and after the happening of lightning. Because the Maccaa responses in both physical and spiritual for natural disaster like lightning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Maccaa Oromo have practices, traditional beliefs and customs surrounding different purification rituals and cultural performances. Among the many Oromo cultural practices *araara Waaqaa* (ritual purifications) have received little scholarly attention. Scholars like Dejene (2002), Tablino (1999), Lambert, (1990), Warkineh (2001) Bassi (1995) directly or indirectly studied about Oromo worldview and Oromo religion and depicted the roles of rituals in people's entire life. But, the ritual of Araara Waaqaa is not discussed in these works. Therefore this study tried to fill the gap.

Despite the fact that *araara Waaqaa* is a common practice among the Maccaa Oromo, studies are not focused on its collective function in keeping harmony between people and nature. Research on the changing nature of the belief system and the changing people's living attitude towards traditional rituals seems to have received limited attention. The observation of the earlier researcher has been that of other tradition and cultural practice of Oromo when compared to *Araara Waaqaa*, and the way it is conducted. This study attempted to analyze ritual of *Araara Waaqaa* among Oromo particularly and its socio-cultural value in general.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this work is to conduct ethnographic study on rituals and performances of *araara Waaqaa* in *Maccaa Oromo* and to document indigenous knowledge of the people regarding the issue of *araara Waaqaa*. In addition this work addressed the following specific objectives:

- The meaning of *araara Waaqaa* in the context of building community welfare.
- The experiences and response of the Maccaa Oromo in study area on the phenomenon of lightning
- The meaning attached to the rituals and performance after lightning
- The people's feelings about loss of properties by lightning
- The participants of rituals and performance during the event of lightning
- The performance after the event of lightning and who exercises control in rituals

The research attempted to address the following questions

- What is ritual of Araara Waaqaa?
- What are the people's experiences and response on the phenomenon of lightning?
- What ritual of Araara Waaqaa does symbolize and what is the meaning of the rituals and performances after lightning?
- How do the people feel about loss of properties by lightning

- How does ritual frame the social experiences, and how do actors act during the ritual?
- Who are participants of rituals and who exercises control in rituals?

1.3. Review of existing Literature

As one of the founding concepts of Folklore discipline, ritual has long been a cornerstone of cultural thought: from the works of Emile Durkheim through Gregory Bateson, Claude Levi-Strauss, countless classics have been built upon this infinitely perplexing and thus fascinating aspect of human life (M. C. Sims 2005). It may appear that religion is a system of beliefs in mystical forces, accompanied by rituals that aim at making life significant. The biological cycle of human life: conception, pregnancy, birth, puberty, matrimony, death, is enhanced by religious beliefs and rituals. In this regard, Malinowski states that, —the very beginnings of human life are surrounded by an inextricably mixed-up medley of beliefs and rites. It may appear, then, that cultural rituals and myths can relate to religious beliefs (Monica O'Reilly Vazquez.2011). In everyday life of human being the religious belief takes the large role in guiding, and enforcing human daily activity. In Oromo belief system *Waaqaa (God)* circulate everything in the Universe and on the earth (Anessa Kassam and Gemetchu Megersa 1996). Among the Oromo every natural disaster occurs if and only if the people act against the law of Waaqaa. To bring peace among the people the sin actors perform pouring rituals and make peace with *Waaqaa*.

According to Julia (2009) a disaster should not be examined as an event in the history, but as a process, a continuum which embraces past, present and future. Correspondingly, the subject matter needs to be treated holistically, using cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approach.

According to Tablino (1999) in the Oromo culture impropriety activities are measured by *safuu* (social norm). Those who act out of social norm considered as offenders and unclean and they perform ritual of purification to run away from hurt of Waaqaa or filled with *nagaa* (peace) *nagaa* is peace, order, the absences of attacks by enemies, harmony, the deepest aspiration of soul, the greatest gift from God.

Believe in and celebrate a Supreme Being, or a Creator, which is referred to by many of names in various languages as Waaqeffataa Oromo do often say: Waaqaa maqaa dhibbaa (God with hundreds of names) and Waaqaa Afaan dhibbaa (God with hundreds of languages); thus in Afaan Oromoo (in Oromo language) the name of God is Waaqaa/Rabbii or Waaqaa tokkicha (one God) or Waaqaa guraachaa (black God, where black is the symbol for holiness and for the unknown) the holy God the black universe (the unknown), whom we should celebrate and love with all our concentration and energy Gemechu (2005) and Mario Aguilar (2005). Living according to the will of the Supreme Being and love also those who do have their own way of surviving by following other belief systems, which are different from that of the Waaqeffannaa. It includes keeping both *safuu* (moral ethics and) and *laguu* (taboo). Correspondence with the Supreme Being in times of a great need (i.e. in times of natural disaster, unexplained deaths) and try to walk always on the *karaa nagaa* (on the way of peace, on the way of righteousness, on the road of truth). If the society refuse to live according to *safuu* and *aadaa Waaqaa* will cause harm to the people and their properties. The lightning will happen soon and again on the properties of the sin actors, flood, heavy rain, whirlwind,

epidemic diseases and other natural disasters happen. In such like situation the community responds through their cultural practice. Traditionally, the religion fills all aspects of life and regulated the social relations of people.

The Oromo religions are closely associated with peoples' concepts of ethnic identity, encompassing beliefs in supernatural beings, ritual acts of worship, and all aspects of life, focusing on the eternal questions of what it means to be human, what is the meaning of life, and what are the correct relations among human beings, spiritual powers, and the natural world Asafa (2002). According to Takawira Kazembe (2009) African religious systems in general seek to explain the persistence of evil and suffering, and portray the world as operating with some degree of order and predictability. They uphold certain types of ethical behavior as expressed in sacred oral traditions, handed down from generation to generation through the performance of rituals and through intensive periods of traditional education, including rites of passage.

Similarly the Maccaa traditional religion has a strong foothold in contemporary as an integral part of the everyday lives of many communities in the area. Their strong belief in the existence of spiritual beings requires that they attend their day-to-day activities and relationships with concern, respect for human dignity and in peace with their creature. Offences, wickedness, violation of societal norms, and other sinful acts are not safe by God according to traditional belief.

2. Materials and Methods

In the collection and analysis of data, qualitative methods are employed. The study primarily focused on first - hand information gathered from elders and community. The researchers used qualitative research methods and it enabled to grasp a social phenomenon as well as to see in to the socio – cultural nature of Oromo traditional ritual and performance of *araara Waaqaa* from emic and etic viewpoint.

Different categories of communities asked about their perceptions of the *araara Waaqaa*, their views about the ritual and performance and those factors that encourage them for the ritual, the process and their effectiveness in restoring peace with *Waaqaa* (God) and order in the area. Accordingly 5 elders, 3 adults, and 4 women are participated in the interview in three sites. These interviewees are assisted the researchers to identify knowledgeable informant that participated in FGD. Key informants are selected purposively on the basis of their age and knowledge/awareness about their culture and society. The semi-structured interviews are focused on ritual practices of *araara Waaqaa*, the date, place, time, season, collection of participants and material needed for the ritual. In-depth interviews with key informants are conducted in order to have their description of events. In-depth Interview is mostly used as source of relevant information.

Moreover, focus group discussion is employed in which eight participants are participated three times in three sites. The group are included community elders, women and adults. The numbers of discussion held in a single site are decided based upon presence of the knowledge and information about the issue under discussion. Different aspects of traditional practices regarding *araara Waaqaa* and other related issues are raised during discussion. Focus group discussions are held to gain knowledge about the extent and dynamics of change in day-to-day life of community with relation to cultural rituals specifically ritual of *araara Waaqaa*. Initiatives are made to meet possible discussions on some general issues relating to living and their socio-cultural conditions. To get additional information and supporting ideas, ritual places, rivers, lakes,

shrine, mountains, and fields that have connection with the issue under discussion are observed during field work.

Finally the data that are obtained from field work are transcribed and analyzed. The validity of the information of the study is triangulated with that data which are generated by different data collecting methods during field work. The accuracy of data is assured by triangulation; and it is analyzed and interpreted, using the qualitative approach. Recorded (audio and video), field photographs and field notes are to substantiate the description and analyses of the subject matter

3. Result and Discussion

This part discusses about the cultural responses of Maccaa Oromo towards lightning in general and social justification for the cause of lightning and ritual performances for reconciliation in particular. Oromo believes that living in accord with natural environment and community brings peace and wellbeing. Those refuses to live in accordance of *safuu* (social norm) and law of *Waaqaa* (God) will face difficulties and will also condemn by the community.

3.1 Concept of lightning and Social Justifications for the Cause of lightning among Oromo

Oromo peoples possess important worldview about lightning with significant religious dimension that equally further the community ideal. They include public wellness. This implies important religious beliefs, supernatural power and authority, and serves as a vital channel for inculcating and promoting the ideal of harmonious living in society by the people.

Lightning hit people's property if the owner breaks law of *safuu* (social norms). *Safuu* is law of *Waaqaa* (God) it is the boundary between what is good and bad, what is culture and what is not, what is of *Waaqaa* and what is of evil ghosts. If it is assumed that the root cause of lightning is misbehave of the people the reconciliation ritual revolves around the offence of the individual. The individual should depict his/her offence for elders and the elders pray in place of the doer. The performer tells its offence to the elders and *Guulaa* (people who passed through politico- social organization of Oromo or Gadaa) and stay passive then after.

3.2. Araara Waaqaa (Ritual Performances to Seek Reconciliation after Lightning)

Araara Waaqaa ritual is usually administered by the elders; especially administered by *Guulaa* or *jaarsa biyyaa* (local elders). They are specialists in leading the others in rituals as well. Traditionally, specialists in ritual administration followed the profession from father to son; through several or even many generations, handing down their steps and forms their typical experience and habitual shrines where application could be made to the *Waaqaa* (God). Because it is believed that rituals and rites are a means of bringing into the attention the experience of a group of people and it constitute some kind of religious expression it is done carefully according to forefather's experience, since it is a mean of concretising one's belief system and expressing one's experience of the super sensible world and the supernatural beings. In short and simple terms, it is acts or forms of worship or communion and communication between one and one's worship.

According to our research participants there are different ways to perform ritual. There are steps to follow during ritual of reconciliation. To start the process of reconciliation the victims' family go to neighbourhoods and relatives to collect contribution in kind, mostly grain that used to organize food and drink for the ritual feast.

The contribution is collected from everybody that has biological and social relation with the victims. On the market day family of the victim also plead for contribution that helps to make the feast. While doing that they hold *Coqorsa* (ritual grass) to declare that the contribution is collecting for ritual purpose only. Since *Coqorsa* is symbol of ritual and spiritual. During the ritual date the contributors may or may not participate on the ritual depending up on the blood relationship and the extent of social relation they have with the victim family. Most of the time only biological relatives and those who have high social integration are allowed to partake on the purification ritual.

Materials like *Qottoo* (axe) / *dhagaraa* (broad axe) *haamtuu* (Sickle), *qonyee* (bended or carved metal: one of ploughing tools), *marashaa* (Metal plate), *lilmoo* (needle), *mutaa* (awl) are metal tools that presented on the ritual stage. Because the sources of these metals are accounted to lightning they are very important for ritual wholeness. The first black metal is expected as it comes from sky in form of lightning and buried or engraved under hearth. On the ritual date two categories of elders are invited for the seek of fulfillments of norm; these elders are from *Guulaa Gabbaroo* (elders from *Gabbaroo*) and *Guulaa Boranaa* (elders from *Borana*). Sometimes *Guulaa Dhalotaa* is used instead of *Guulaa Boranaa*.

The feast is presented for the audience; one black striped ram should be presented for sacrifice. The ram is not slaughtered instead it is released over the meadow with bell on its neck. The bell is symbolizing medium of communication. It is believed that the bell has tongue and the sound it make communicate their praying and sorrow to *Waaqaa* (God). If the ram departed no body looks after it, anybody interested can take it for what every function. Normally the ram is ignored by people nobody desires to take it. Because it is believed that the one who took it will face the same case and even more. The victim puts over the ram his own offence, his families' and his clan mischievous' and offence over the ram symbolically and sends out the ram. Thus, receiver of that ram is expected as he/she received these mischievous and offence to his home and his clan. For this matter people do not receive it even for single night. But economically weak social groups are receives this ram.

3.2.1 The way the reconciliation is made

On the ritual date feast (cultural foods and drink) like *farsoo* (local beer), *buqqurii*, *marqaa*, *daabboo*, *qixxaa*, *mulluu* are prepared from grain collected for this purpose. Cultural drink filled in *siilettii gurra sadeen* (new pot that has three buttons) at presence of *Guulaa* and *jaarsa biyyaa*. On the ritual spot coffee, *Faajjii*, (a ritual banner) (pillar of banner must be made up of ritual trees like *hindhee* (juniperus procera) or *shimala* (bamboo)). The stage is started by praying and blessing of the elders.

Following pray and blessing three *Guulaa's* comes in front the audience and announce *Tumaa* (decree) to insure that the reconciliation is already made between the family and *Waaqaa* (God). The *guulaas* are handle *hororoo* (ritual staff carried by married men on ceremonial occasions). The *Hororoo* symbolize that ritual under taking is perfect and according to the law of *Waaqaa*. All of them bring the tip of their stick and hold jointly to show their unity regarding every aspect. Blessing is begun by elders from senior clan. Seniority considers the clan seniority and their *Gadaa* grade. Those who performed *buttaa* ritual and completed their ruling period are called *Guulaa*. If there is no *Guulaa* from senior clan at the

ritual place other *guulaa* from junior clan may open the blessing at the presence of non *guulaa* senior clan member.

The participants hold ritual grass on their hand. The grass symbolizes the wish of peace and prosperity. During pray all participants touch ground nine times. There is no clear-cut answer for the question why they do it nine times. Rather they say it is number of *salgan Booranaa*¹ (nine Booranaa sons). It passed down from our fore fathers. *Aadaa abbootii keenyaati* (forefather's tradition). If one asks "*sagal maaliif ta'e?*" (Why nine?) Everybody answer simply by saying "*salgan booranaati kaa!*" (It is *Booranaas* nine). Still the issues of number nine need further historic and linguistic investigations.

The decree as follows:

	<i>Equivalent English</i>
<i>Tumame Seera</i>	It is declared this is law
<i>Araamee seera</i>	Reconciliation is made
<i>Qe'ee warraa kanatti lammata hin deebi'uu seera</i>	
	It never hit again what belongs to this family
<i>Seerri Kun hin jigu hin dhangala'u seera</i>	
	This law never fails and never terminate
<i>Seera kana darbee warra kanatti hin deebi'u</i>	
	He (Waaqaa) will not cross this
law	
<i>Kenni isaa kennameera</i>	His offering is offered
<i>Kenna isaa hindarbu</i>	He may not cross to them the offering
<i>Waaqni irraa araamee.</i>	Waaqaa by now reconciled to this
	family
<i>Sa'asaaniitif araameera</i>	Waaqaa by now reconciled for
	their cattle
<i>Namasaanii araameera</i>	Waaqaa by now reconciled for
	their total family
<i>Sa'asaanii ni tola</i>	May their cattle reproduce better after now
<i>Namasaanii tola</i>	May their family reproduce better after now
<i>Waanti Kun warra kanatti hin deebi'u</i>	
	They will never hurt after now..

Amma harreen gaafa baastutti

amma dhagaan daraarutti sinitti hin deebi'u.

Until the day donkey grows horn and stone flowers
it never comes back to this family.

The last line gives guarantee and mental rest for the family. It shows impossibility of reoccurrences, since donkey never growth horn and stone never flowers.

Following the decree the elders according to their clan seniority pray for the prosperity and well being of the community. Prayers play an important role in the promotion of the sense of community. Most traditional prayers are intensely communitarian in content and orientation. Whether offered by the individual elder in front of his family, or by a *Guulaa* or other ritual experts in public ritual, prayers contain a lot of references to the community. The elder in societies begins the ritual by offering prayer and entreaty for himself, members of the relatives and the entire community. He would pray to the *Waaqaa* (God) for his health, that of his family, for progress of members of the lineage, both the young and the old, for peace and harmony, for protection from the attack of evil forces, sorcerers and witches, and finally for the elimination of enemies and evil doers in the community.

The praying addresses the following issues

Nuufi dhalaafi dhalcha keenyaa nagaa nuu kenni

May we all be in good health always, all our children
Waan ittiin jiraannu nu hin dhoowwatiin

¹ Borana is senior Oromo clan

Provide means of livelihood for us

Rakkoo fi iyyummaa nurraa faggeessi

May problem be far from us, May poverty be far from us
Dhibee fi du'a nurraa fageessi

May sickness be far from us; May death be far from us.

These prayers are very contextual. They reflect the concrete needs, aspirations, values and relevant life-situation of people making the intercession. The above prayer is a good example of the keen interest and concern for both the needs of individual and the general well-being of the entire community. The individual's need for protection, good health and material wealth has its full meaning within the context of the need of the entire community for overall well-being. It does not focus simply on the individual as such. It is asking for the health of the entire lineage and for a large community with abundance of children. All after prayer and blessing the pot is opened and the drinks and foods distributed for the audiences. Every participant should have to served food and drink.

3.2.2 Medicinal Aspect of Resources hurt by Lightning

In the research areas most of things that hit by lightning used as medicine for different disease and illness. If the wet trees fired up by lightning the remnant peace of that tree uses as folk medicine. Especially, for animals like horse and oxen if they are attacked by *Budaa* (evil eye) peoples putting a piece of tree in fire and the evil eye chased away by its aroma. In addition if a piece of the trees placed near home it protects lightning, it serves radar.

The soil extracted immediately from the place fired by lightning is also having medicinal value. It is serving as medicine for evil eye and evil spirit entered to human being. Most of time if somebody is attempt to hung him/her or tries to kill him/her self for insignificant things it is presumed he/she is driving by evil spirit. For this kind of individuals the soil extracted from a lightning point is given. The individual should have to drink the juice of the soil. If edible animals killed by lightning the meat of the animal are have medical significance. Mental illness, nightmare, irrational fears of different things are cured by eating meat of animal killed by lightning. The meat cut in to a piece and dried out and kept for long time, if someone is stained by evil eye or evil spirit a meat is boiled and the patient drinks the soup of the dried meat. The evil things rush out from the patient soon. In addition the meat is serving as medicine for disease called *Dhukkuba Waaqaarraa/biduu*. This disease is caused if somebody urinated or laughs facing *sabbata Waaqaa* (rainbow). It caused to the one who disregard rainbow.

Culturally it is believed that during lightning a bundle of metals send down from *Waaqaa* (sky). These metals are considered as hot, fast and like rocket shot. They are immediately run to the heart of hearth so that one can't access to them. To get those metals one has to pour fresh milk at the spot. The cow that gave milk and her calf should have identical colour. It is expected Milk will cool down the fire of the metal and then the speed to down to heart of hearth will reduced.

According to the research participant experience nobody has got these metals. Different peoples tried their best level and unable to discover the metals. Ideally these metals are considered as medicine for evil eye and it will protect coming lightning.

3.2.3. Hoolaa Araaraa (Sacrificial Ram)

For sacrifice black strip (*Qaxxaamurree*) ram is most wanted. The *qaxxaamurree* symbolize the lightning come to human crossing cultural law. Culturally it is believed Waaqaa

did not hurt his creation unless it breaks *safuu* (moral law). Lightning is so considered as the result of breaking *safuu* (moral law). The word *qaxxaamurree* comes from *qaxxaamuuruu* means crossing. '*Qaxxaamuree waan namatti dhufuuf qaxxaamurree dhaan namatti araarama*'. Meaning 'lightning comes to human crossing *safuu* and reconciliation must made by *qaxxaamurree* (striped)'.

The ram is expected take the mischief of that family. Because of this they did not look after it if it departed. Even the departure of the ram is considered as good news because it their misdeed that gone out of their idea. The one who received the ram is indirectly received the misdeed anointed on ram. The reason why people did not accept the ram is the fear of the consequence of the mischief on it. Those who receive it are also ready to welcome the coming result on them self, their family or clan.

3.2.4. Believe and Taboos about lightning

The victims go to *waabeeka* (fortune-teller) to identify where the date should specifically on same date the lightning is happened or to choose possible date. The fortune-teller decides the date of ritual favouring of the benefit of the victims. To identify possible dates the fortune-teller use different time recalling mechanisms. Watching hand palm of the victim, observing coffee cup, observing moon and stars position are few among the mechanisms.

It is believed that interment/burying in animal dung is primary aid for lightning harm. Where it is human or animal it recovers soon if it is buried in dung. Putting it in water will aggravate the damage and even it can cause to death. At the moment when lightning happend no body cry out to get help from community. Instead they ululate and say '*isaa бага*' literary to mean 'it is *Waaqaas* will; his will is always for good reason'. To quiet the fire water is not used. Milk and soil is preferred in place of water. Water and lightning are believed friends because lightning comes during rainy season and lightning happen in rain. Fire caused by lightning can flame in heavy rain, so adding water on it will change noting. Spiritually milk is believed calm down the firing lightning.

In other hand long term taboo exists for ever last with the family. Regard short term taboos there are limited time. For instant on spot of lightning crying and shouting are not allowed. Crying or shouting considered symbol of anger or irritation. So those who cry for harm of lightning are expected anger for the damage caused *Waaqaas* (God) work. This called disputing with *Waaqaa*. In other hand adding or spraying water on flame of lightning is considered as taboos and forbidden. As aforementioned this causes to severe the damage.

Long term taboos are stay with the practitioners in their life time. They remember the day weekly, monthly and yearly. By their nature rituals further commemorate significant events in the life of our communities and provide a means for renewing the meaning of those events among us. Rituals can be exciting and dramatic, engaging all of our senses. Rituals help us individually and communally to make sense of life's transition, providing some structure to ease movement from the familiar to the unknown.

They did not give their pack animals and oxen on that date. Even they are not allowed to go far from domicile. If probably there is neighbours' material or cash in their home and the owner needs on next day or on the taboo date they put it out side home before sunset. Money or material that spent night in home every given for nobody where is their or borrowed from somewhere. Journey, marketing or

social interactions are restricted. But there are some exceptional social issues like death and life rescue activity. If close relatives died the families are allowed to participate on the funeral. As well as if there critical emergency problems among community are not restricted to take action.

In everyday life the name '*bakakkaa*' (lightning) is prohibited on every stage. There are euphemistic names like *rooba isaa* {Waaqaa} (his rain), *tiifuu* (Spatter) *dheekkamsa Waaqaa* (his anger), and *angaasuu* (lightning) *fincaan Waaqaa* (his urine). These euphemistic names are soft and they did not shock and causes fear. In reality they are reverses of *bakakkaa*. Cursing like *bakakkaan si dhahu*, *bakakkaan sittu haa bu'uu* and *bakakkaa afaan bu'i*, 'let lightning hit you' or let you face lightning' are serious curses. These kinds of curses are targeted to someone who disobeyed *safuu* or communities social norm

3.2.5. The problem of organizing the feast by own grain

It is not norm to organize feast by own property; if the victim is rich and have whatever wealth he cannot organize the ritual without collecting feast grain and cash from relatives, market or neighbours. If the ritual feasts are organized by the victims' wealth only it is believed reconciliation will not complete. Contribution collector holds *Coqorsa* (ritual grass) on their hand during collecting the contribution. The grass is symbol of peace and seeking peace and reconciliation, in addition it is to notice the community that the collectors is not begging for economic problem. Any kind of gift or contribution maybe forwarded from community. The collectors have no right to choose. He/she receive whatever forwarded where it is kind or cash. Except *gayyoo* (soya beans), *talbaa* (Flax seed) and *caxee* (finger millet). These grains are considered as cursed and they are not incorporated in feast because of that they cannot reconcile with Waaqaa. Even if one of the three is added to the feast it is believe that as the ritual is imperfect.

There is logic or justification behind the ban of these three grains. But in general it said, these three grains are cursed by *Waaqaa* (God).

3.2.6. Rituals and Rites: An Issue of Functionality

The sense of community and humane living are highly cherished values of traditional Oromo life. For Oromo, the community is basically sacred, rather than secular, and surrounded by several religious forms and symbols. For the Oromo, community is much more than simply a social grouping of people bound together by reasons of natural origin and/or deep common interests and values. It is both a society as well as a unity of the visible and invisible worlds; the world of the physically living on the one hand, and the world of the ancestors, divinities and souls of children yet to be born to individual kin-groups. Rituals in general and *Araara Waaqaa* ritual in particular have religious, social and cultural function. Ritual of *Araara Waaqaa* in research area is considered as means of reconciliation with their Almighty God (*Waaqaa*).

3.2.7. Contemporary practice of *Araara Waaqaa* ritual and The Factor of Radical Change

Cultural change is a concept that denotes some internal and external factors leading to change in the cultural pattern of societies. It can be material as well as non-material in nature. Cultural change may come from many sources but most of them come through contact with other culture, inventions and internal adjustment of culture. In contemporary time in research area society is changing in different aspects. Regarding the culture change in western Shewa which is the

focus in this study there are three main factors: Social contact, technology change and geographical and ecological factors.

The contact between two societies will obviously change the culture of both the societies through the process of "cultural diffusion" and "acculturation". In the case of Oromo there was long time contact with non-Oromo neighbouring groups especially with Amhara people. The Amhara when come to Oromo, their living style, religion and language are also introduced to the Oromo. The introduction of this new phenomenon in Oromo land caused socio-cultural changes. The contact with non-Oromo and introduction of new living style, especially Christianity loaded the community to forget their culture. From aged Orthodox Church priest discourse to present time protestant Christian cold war on Oromo culture in area. Lots of culture changes are observable time to time. In introduction of Christianity Oromo cultural rituals including ritual of *Araara Waaqaa* is labelled as 'paganism'. The experiences of Christian missionaries' activity and Christian religious campaign have given rise to a radically different socio-political and religious background in the research areas. It created a new social and religious order with diverse in area. Urbanisation has given rise cities in different parts. Most communities are not homogeneous. They are heterogeneous and plural in virtually every aspect of their life. A wedge has been driven between the sacred and the secular aspects of life.

It is true that the traditional religion still has considerable influence in the life and culture of many peoples of research area, it no longer enjoys exclusive dominance and control over the life of the vast majority of the population. The prevailing social and political orders in the area resemble Christian way of life. Plurality of religions is now the existing with Christianity being the dominant faiths. In some cases the world-view with which people explain and control reality is no longer the traditional one which is religion-dominated. Certain traditional beliefs, customs and practices associated with the idea and promotion of community-living have been outlawed. This is as a result of the combination of several factors, including Christian missionary preaching against it, better health-care services, and changing economic circumstances. The traditional belief in ancestors and other spiritual patrons, as well as the vital role they were believed to play in fostering community-living, have been seriously suppressed in contemporary societies. And schools have largely displaced traditional initiations as the main channel for formal education and socialisation of youths. The dramatic changes in the socio-political and religious aspects of life bring considerable pressure on the people's sense of community. With the progressive revitalisation of the traditional religion, the traditional role of the latter in inculcating and promoting harmony and peaceful co-existence become more and more diminished.

The profound sense of the sacred and feeling of awe which the traditional religion brought to life in general and different institutions in traditional societies have become greatly circumscribed. The ability of Oromo Traditional Religions to promote the community ideal of peaceful and harmonious co-existence in contemporary society is in a state of progressive declining in the area. The trend is much more noticeable in urban cities than in rural villages. The rate of displacement of the traditional religion by the forces of radical social change in area is generally slower in rural areas than in urban cities.

In other hand any technological evolution in the country in general and in research area in particular also brought

changes on people culture. In introduction of formal education in area changed the mind of the people. Those who attend school are fan of written materials rather than culture stored in the mind of elders. Following the expansion of means of communication and changes in the means of transportation information and peoples experience started flow faster and wider. These in turn mixed cultures from different background. Mean while ritual practices, including *Araara Waaqaa* marginalized and considered as 'backwardness' among the educated and 'paganism' and 'sin' among the Christians.

Summary

The Oromo people have always looked at the harmony with *Waaqaa (God)* as a very important and inseparable part of the human community. For them, the harmony is important to the well-being of the individual. Thus, the communitarian nature of Oromo society can be understood in the context of the moral relationship that is strike between the individual and the *Waaqaa* through the observance of *safuu*. Such teachings complement and strengthen a good moral relationship between the individual person and the *Waaqaa*.

The individual or the communities among the Oromo actually live, and must live, according to *safuu* (moral law) and in harmony with the *Waaqaa*. Therefore, Oromo rituals, just like those of any other social grouping, must be understood as moral rules that regulate human behaviour, especially it has impacts on the spiritual life. In this regard, ritual and taboos are meant to make the individual adjust his interests so that they conform to those of the society world view at large.

As they are endowed with specific culture, tradition and ethical norms, Indigenous people of the study area, which are the *Oromo*, have their own ways of making harmony with *Waaqaa* in case of different natural disasters that are culturally assumed as human punishments for misbehave of human being.

This study discovered that people of the study area have different depth and width of knowledge and cultural practices of *Araara Waaqaa*. This ritual is with wide and varied use and values. Local peoples know generation thought religious, spiritual and cultural related practices has played a significant role in conservation of tradition of the community. Among the people of the study area ritual of *araara Waaqaa* is a ritual process in which the community reconcile with *Waaqaa* for their misdeed. Sacrifices are regarding spiritual symbols. The People are conscious in protecting their culture in what one may described as unscientific, but in effect. We believe that there is the need to revisit the past and integrate traditions and customs with current and to safeguard tradition for sustainable development.

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