

"The Magic beyond Ritual"

- Exploring Raaba Ritual and Ritualization among Arsi Oromos of Ethiopia -

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***Abstract:** The purpose of this (mega) research project is to investigate the Raabaa Ritual and ritualization, one of the indigenous beliefs and Gada system practices in Oromo culture, among the Arsi Oromo. The Raabaa ritual is indigenous ritual practices which exercised by Arsi Oromo according to their Baalli. To this end, the researchers observed the ritual sites where the Raabaa ritual takes place. Besides, an interview with 13 key informants and 5 FGDs were conducted to collect wider data on the subject matter. Methodological the researchers' were employee qualitative approach. The study found out that the Raabaa is being popular in the study area due to various reasons like: firstly, the practicing and living under the shade of Gadaa and belief in the ritual manifestation. The Arsi Oromo are believed to have possessed supernatural powers of empowering and performing various ritual rites to full fill necessary criteria's while passing in the Gadaa system. Secondly, the belief that taking part in ritual ceremonies at all ritual sites of Raabaa is one method of getting relief from these worldly problems such as physical and psychological disordered and to have blessing life. The practices at the Raabaa ritual site also prove the tolerance that exists among some adherents of different religious, Baallis, hookaa and political backgrounds in the study area. According to our finding Raabaa ritual is used to increase awareness of the values of tolerance and understanding. The involvement of the local people, awareness levitation through community serves or education on ritual and ritualization of Raabaa, the practice of ritual and its sites protected areas should be encouraged to sustain and keep the practice.*

***Keywords:** Arsi, Baallii, Bokkuu, Gadaa, Raabaa, Ritual*

Background of the Study

It is unclear when rituals first originated. Some assume that ritual, like dance, music, symbolism, and language, arose in the course of the evolution of primates into man (Bellah, 2003) or even prior to it (Staal, 1989). Be that as it may, biologists and behavioral scientists argue that there are rituals among animals, and this has important implications for our understanding of rituals (Baudy, 2006). Since the end of the nineteenth century, the study of rituals has made considerable strides in anthropology, sociology, and comparative religion (Weinstein & et al, 2004).

Dozens of definitions or characterizations proposed by scholars attest to the absence of a basic consensus regarding rituals and to their distinctiveness vis-à-vis other cultural phenomena (Weinstein et al. 2004). The number of definitions proposed is endless, and no one seems to like the definitions proposed by anyone else (Kreinath et al, 2006). Turner (1967), defined rituals; as prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technical routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and powers; Tambiah (1979), as culturally constructed system of symbolic communication; Kertzer (1988), as symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive; Kassam (1999), as action to be a form of social practice that emanates from the cultural knowledge system in the sense proposed by Bourdieu (1977); and Rappaport (1999), as the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.

In the case of these definitions, one might think that the ritual as it is culturally constructed, traditionally sanctioned behaviors, bodily actions and/or speech acts, having its performers as its own audience, marked off from the routine of everyday life, framed, taking place at specific places and/or times, collective, creating/organizing society/social groups, creating change/transition, purposeful (for the participants), repeated, standardized; rehearsed, religious, sacred, and guiding cognition (Kreinath et al, 2006).

It is practically impossible to distinguish the ritual from social action (Leach, 1968). For the followers of Max Weber, social action is nothing but a "meaningful orientation of one's own action to that of the action of another" (Tübingen, 1972). Social actions, if it is to be distinct from mere behavior, are always constituted in terms of norms and meaning that, also hold for ritual

praxis (Heidelberg, 2003). In every culture, a clear border separates profane behavior from ritual, which is consistently depicted as a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of socio-cultural integration, appropriation, or transformation (Bell, 1997). In a very preliminary sense, ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualization is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane,” and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors (Ibid).

Rituals often have a ceremonial presence, that is to say, they require preparation and a display of various accompanying elements (special garments, colors, olfactory materials, etc.) Ceremonies aim at drawing people’s attention to something that is worth noticing, something that is extraordinary in some way. They do not necessarily aim, as rituals do, at signaling to people that there are certain practices, which they should consider crucial to their life or existence (Gruenwald 2003). The work of Gluckman (1962), Turner (1969), and Bourdieu (1972) were emphasizes on the view that rituals express social relations through ceremonial activities.

The preference of the stage model in an action analysis and interpretation conducted in terms of performance theory (Conquer good, 1991) was selected to analysis the performances of all *Raabaa;s Baalli*. Above all else it directs attention to the meaning-constituting processes of speech and action within the framework of a symbolic order performed by culture and society (Roach, 1989). Concepts such as ‘plot’, ‘play’, ‘role’, ‘gesture’, ‘expression’, ‘mimesis’, ‘scene’, and ‘framing’, but also ‘ritual’ are—at least in the context of the old world theater tradition—constitutive elements of this model. The advantages are apparent, since this model provides recourse to an elaborate poetics of action, which in practically systematic fashion takes account of a great number of those factors that—in a complex interplay of institution, space, time, actors, observers, texts, things (props), and symbolic media—produce a delimited practice that can be related to culturally preformed and at the same time institutionally linked genre rules of action: a political or religious assembly, a marriage, a play, a banquet, a liturgy, a court proceeding, and so on.

Statement of the Problem

In Oromo, the term 'ritual' can be rendered as *jila*, signifying 'festival; feast; celebration' (Leus 1995). In the traditional Oromo world view, a

ritual activity belongs to the realm of uumaa, or the physically created universe. According to Megerssa's (1993), the universe is ordered according to the structuring principles of ayyaana, which determine the shape and destiny of all things in the world. Rituals represent the locus at which the concepts of uumaa (physical creation), ayyaana (principles of nature) and safuu (moral order of culture) converge and through which social order is produced (Kassam, 2011). It should be noted that the Oromo perform prayer ceremonies besides permanently flowing rivers and stagnant water, by the side of big mountains, hills, stones and trees. The land around the Galma and the natural resources on this land are viewed as sacred and are well protected. Oromo society like any society has been conscious of its cultural identity, its relation to nature, and the existence of a powerful force that regulates the connection between nature and society. The words of prayers, blessings and greetings continuously create and recreate connections between the organizational and the cosmological structures (Baxter, 1990).

The numerous studies were conducted on various types of rituals in various parts of the world. For example Sharon Strocchia's comprehensive study of burial rituals in Florence during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries raised a range of issues, such as significant cultural changes; Dianne Owen-Hughes notes additional dimensions, such as the confrontation between the mourning styles of men and women; marriage rituals by Weinstein at 2004 in Italy the case of Jewish Style, raised issues such as contents, trends, socio-cultural aspects; Arnold van Gennep (1960). ceremony on pregnancy in India; Aneesa Kassam (2011), studied on Ritual and Classification: A Study of the Booran Oromo Terminal Sacred Grade Rites of Passage; Hinnant 1977), studied about Guji ritual system; Sirna Gada rituals of Borana (Baxter1990; Megarsa 1993; Kassam 2011) and Asmarom Legesse(1973), studied on Gada three approaches to the study of African society; Alemayehu Haile (2009). Gada System: The Politics of Tulama Oromo; However as usual the above mentioned researchers have missed the *Raabaa* Ritual and Ritualization among the Arsi Oromo, Ethiopia. For this reason, we have chosen it. In other words, this can be considered as knowledge, theoretical and conceptual gaps of this study.

Objectives

- ✓ explore the concept of *Raabaa* ritual among Arsi Oromo;
- ✓ describe the folkloric elements and characteristics of *Raabaa* ritual among the Arsi Oromo;

- ✓ identify reaction towards *Raabaa* ritual and describe its natural setting;
- ✓ explore the socio-cultural significance of *Raabaa* ritual in study area;
- ✓ analyze the changes and continuities have been seen in the *Raabaa* ritual performance in the study area; and
- ✓ list out and describe the material culture used during *Raabaa* ritual and find out social roles and status among participants during *Raabaa* ritualization.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research is designed to be qualitative research. It is meant to describe the natures, patterns and contents of *Raabaa* ritual and ritualization among the Arsi Oromo. Besides, in order to analyze this topic in an in-depth and detailed manner, this study has logically been made to have qualitative study form.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sampling method chosen were purposive or judgmental sampling. This enables researchers to capture the necessary and detail information in study area. Thus, of the Oromo communities' only one .i.e. Arsi is purposely selected for the case analysis, as this site is among the relatively cultural conservative areas. Accordingly, one district and all five Baallis were selected for the sake of the widely functioning of the *Raabaa* ritual. Moreover, the participants these Baallis are neighborhood. So, they share a common laws, rules, and regulations under the Gadaa system and relatively intact till today. For the primary data collection, the sample size was determined by saturation point. While collecting the data from field the researchers were stay in community until they get enough information.

Data Sources and Methods of Data Collection

This study utilized essentially qualitative data generated from primary and secondary data sources of information. Primary data were collected via three mechanisms. The first mechanism is Key Informants Interview (KII): Accordingly, 5 knowledgeable local elders, 3 women, and 5 *Gadaa* leaders (*Abba Bokku* and *Abba Hookka*) of all five *Baalli* were respondents of study. We have selected these respondents, since it is believed that they are an engines of *Raabaa* ritual and ritualization. In addition, the researchers contacted experts of

culture and tourism office of district to obtain data related to status and trends of practices and reaction towards the *Raabaa* ritual and ritualization.

The second mechanism is Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Accordingly, nine (9) FGDs were conducted with local elders among which five (5) FGDs were hold with local elders those who participate in the Raabaa ritual and the others four (4) were with knowledgeable women in general and *Cifirees* (the wives of *Gadamoojjis*) in particular those who have great role in the stages of *Raabaa* ritual activities for all five *Baalli*. Therefore, a wide range of issues were discussed in line with the FGDs guide pertaining to the study objectives. The discussions were facilitated and led by the researchers taking notes, and the audio records for transcription purpose and further analysis.

The third means was partial participant observation: field visits have been made with all *Baalli* where and when *Raabaa* ritual practices take place in the study area; which have enable the researchers to understand the issues never obtained through other tools of data collection, but which has high value in this study. In addition, this means access the researchers to take field work photographs and video that have the real sense of the practice and ritual procedure.

Secondary data were collected from different documents and used as part of the literature review for further analyses of the basic concepts and theories involved in the study. These tasks were accomplished via reclaiming various written materials on the subject matter such as: books and journal articles as well as internet sources.

Methods of Data Interpretation and Analysis

After the translation of all of the data collected in Afaan Oromo was completed, interview, focus group, and personal observation answers were gathered and organized prior to the start of the analysis. Coding to extract the main themes and relationships in the data was the main method used for the qualitative data. Several coding strategies were used through an inductive, iterative process. An inductive coding process was chosen because of the simple, straightforward nature of the procedure in developing codes and themes directly from the data, whereas, a deductive strategy would have developed codes before analysis began based on a previous theory or assumption (Stellmacher, 2013). The lack of restraints and open nature of the inductive coding process was preferred for this case study because of the nature of the research. The data were obtained from the primary foundation of various

kinds were also transcribed, put in to thematic and analyzed rationally. Lastly, the validity of the information of the study were cross-checked in parallel with data which were generated from varies sources. Once the accuracy of data is assured, it was analyzed and interpreted, by-and-large, using the qualitative approach. Recorded (audio and video), field photographs and field notes were made use of to substantiate the description and analyses of the subject matter under investigation.

Description of the study Area

The research conducted study in the Dodola district of the West Arsi Zone and Oromia regional state, which are located about 320 km southeast of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. The land coverage of the Dodola district is estimated to 1,612 km². Dodola is one of the districts in the Oromia Regional state of Ethiopia. It is named after the administrative center of the district, Dodola. Forests cover approximately 37,500 hectares in the Dodola district (Oromia Forest and Wildlife, 2016). The environment is characterized by an Afro alpine ecosystem. A forest, one of the last surviving coniferous forests in the country, dominates the area with a slightly changing forest composition along the altitudinal gradient (Hundera et al., 2007).

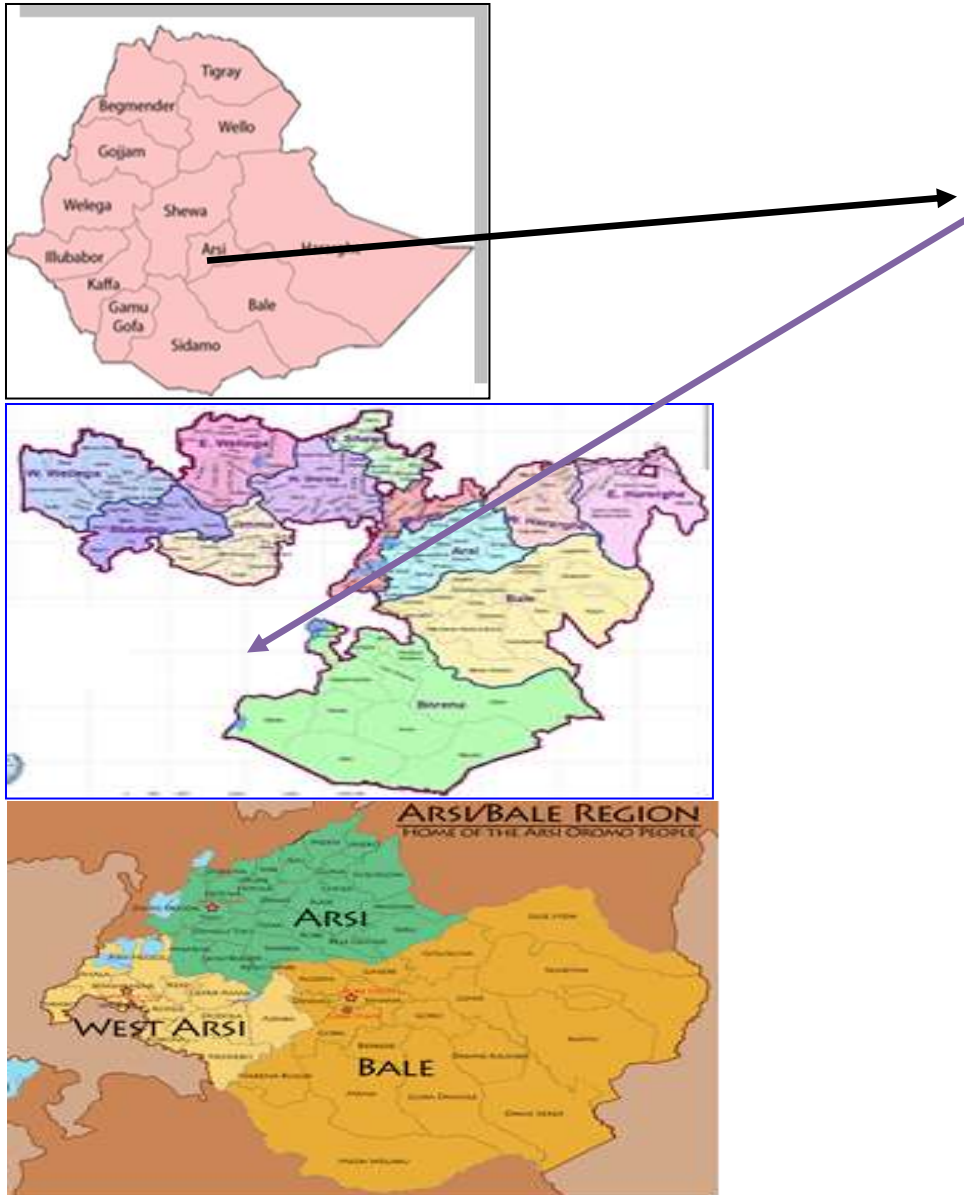
It was the capital city of Ganale *Awurajja*. Ganale's modern administration leadership was begun by *Fit Awurary* Woldemichael Buie Falama. He was a single charismatic leader who attracted both his nation and the last Ethiopian king, Haile Selassie. Because of his impact and legacy, thousands of Ganale Awraja residents still remember him as their transforming leader who thought ahead of his time. Because he transformed his nation, a nation which never had school, road, telephone, or airport, to test the modern services, by starting modern education in 1940s and the second school 1950s, airport (which disconnected by Dergu), road, and telephone. His nephew, Mekonnen Hassen Buie, who is best known as a great mediator, kept his uncle's legacy and helped to build the first high school in the Awraja Ganale (at that time Dodolaa, Adaabba, Nansaboo, and Kokossa were ruled under Gazei Awraja) in 1961 and get adequate drinking water for his city. But, currently Dodola is part of the West Arsi Zone and Dodola is bordered on the south by Nensebo, on the west by Kokosa, on the north by the Shebelle River which separates it from the Kofele and Gedeb Asasa, and on the east by Adaba. Other towns include Herero. Topographically, Dodola district is at 2400 m above sea level at the foothills of a mountain range with peaks of over 3700 m. The climate

is somewhat cooler than during summer time in central Europe. With increasing altitude the climate gets colder and wetter. Above 3000 m a.s.l. night frosts are frequent (www.baletrek.com , retrieved on 09 January, 2017).

The highest points in this woreda are Mount Ilale, Mount Korduro and Mount Somkeru. Rivers include the Keresa, Ukuma, Negeso and Gude Yerso which are tributaries of the Shebelle. A survey of the land in Dodola shows that 28.3% is arable or cultivable (5.1% of the total was part of state farms), 17.4% pasture, 48.9% forest (including 696.76 square kilometers of natural vegetation and 12.24 of man-made forest), and the remaining 5.4% is considered swampy, mountainous or otherwise unusable. Notable landmarks include the sites of Adele Angato and Hora Birialle. Linseed, onion, vegetables, and fruits are important cash crops.

Industry in the district includes 32 small industries using local raw materials, 25 grain mills, 4 edible oil mills, 2 wood works and one wheat flour mill employing 62 people, as well as 202 wholesalers' 420 retailers and 63 service providers. There were 19 Farmers Associations with 53,958 members and 9 Farmers Service Cooperatives with 7072 members. Dodola has 93 kilometers of all grades of road, for an average road density of 57.7 kilometers per 1000 square kilometers. About 40% of the total population has access to drinking water.

Fig 1: Map of Study area



Source: Adapted from Finance and Economic Development Bureau of Dodolaa district.

Demography

The 2007 national census reported a total population of this district is 206810 of whom 100,940 were men and 105,870 were women; 34,151 or 17.62% of its population were urban residents; which is greater than the Zone average of 13.5%. With an estimated area of 1,612.66 square kilometers, Dodola has an estimated population density of 112.2 people per square kilometer, which is greater than the Zone average of 27. The majority of the inhabitants were Muslim, with 88.98% of the population reporting they observed this belief, while 9.46% of the population said they practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, 1.29% of the populations were Protestant and 1.72% practiced traditional beliefs.

The two largest ethnic groups reported in Dodola District were the Oromo (91.76%), and the Amhara (6.14%); all other ethnic groups made up 2.1% of the population. Afaan Oromoo is spoken as a first language by 90.33%, and 8.78% spoke Amharic; the remaining 0.89% spoke all other primary languages reported.

Climate

On average, the annual rainfall in Dodola district is 913 mm. Temperatures in the high plain range between 10 and 30 degrees Celsius with an average of about 15 degrees. With increasing altitude, the climate gets colder and wetter. In elevations over 3000 m, night frosts are frequent (www.baletrek.com, retrieved on 07 January, 2017). The research area is characterized and affected by four different climate zones, which are Mountains Savannah, Alpine Forest, Erica Forest and Afro-Alpine Zone.

Culture overview

The Oromo of Dodola district have many marriage practices. These include *Gabbaraa*, *Walgara*, *Hawwii*, *Aseennaa fi Butii*. Even though *Gabbaraa* is highly acceptable and have cultural values. In these sense *Gabbaraa* marriage custom has its own procedural steps and criteria's to be contented by the groom families. The concept *Gabbaraa* also derived from the from groom families to bride in cash and materials. These gifts were so called *Gonfa* or *Gabbara* in the Oromo of study area. The Dodola community has various institution of helping each other. These include *Afoosha*, *Jigii*, *Qaboo* and *Uqqubii* associations. Among the Dodola Oromo *Gumaa*, *Bokkuu*, *Jaarsummaa*, *ulee gosaa*, *Qaalluu*, and *Siiqqee*

are active mechanisms of conflict resolution and managements. In addition, there are cultural dish such as *Caccabsa*, *Marqaa*, *Miccirraa* and *Finiina* and *Farsoo*, *Daadhii* and *Booka* in Oromo of study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Arsi Oromo's Conception of "Raabaa"

Raabaa is the concept which includes social, economic, and political aspects of the participants or members of the community in which it is practiced. Literally, it is a group of people with definite characteristics and objectives at particular time not uncommonly twice in a year at selected and sacred site. It is also the ritual process that practiced to full fill and transfer *Baallii* which symbolized power and or a system through which one engaged in *Gadaa*. Generally, *Raabaa* is considered as the sign of peace, productivity, development, unity, victory, courageous and healthy among their society throughout a given time.

Steps/Stages of Raabaa Processes

Raabaa's process has various sequential and remarkable steps. According to data gathered from FGDs the basic step to practice *Raabaa* ritual is the discussion and decision among *Abba Bokku*, *Abba hookka* and *saddetta* about setting of *Raabaa* and what ought to be or not. Even though it is not obligation, others would also participate and share their ideas and details. To sum up, discussing and deciding about how, when, where, who, whom, and what should be taken on the upcoming *Raabaa* by front runners and/or leaders is a typical and considerable fundamental stage in the *Raabaa* processes.

Fig 2: The get-together of *Raabaa* ritual



Source: Photograph, taken by researchers, February 05, Dodolaa.

Along line the decision of leaders and pervasively practiced, the first step is *Korma Walargii*. As it understandable from its name *Korma Walargii* is the official opening of the *Raabaa* ritual. After they slaughter *korma walargii* stake *Xiribbaa* and *Jila bulchuu*. This small peg is the symbol of ownership and the mechanism of avoid bad spirit from community. During that night all gosaas (clans) and *Baallii* participate in blessing one another and praying *waaqaa* for peace, unity and fertility. Then in the early morning they move to ritual site and practice '*sirna ulee dhabbannaa*' the ceremony of ritual stick.

Fig 3: Gugsii Raabaa (Riding Horse at Raabaa ritual)



Source: Photograph, taken by researchers, February 05, Dodolaa.

After they finish the *ulee dhaabbannaa* ceremony they proceed to *gugsii* (riding horse). The stage of *gugsii* also very appealing and a full of folklore elements such as folk song, *geerrarsa*, folk-music, *eebaa*, *dhibayyuu* and *daddarbaa* as a means of purification. Besides the participants of *gugsii* can be categorized in line with age, status and roles they have in their community. As a rule the *Raabaa* horse must be castrated since it is conditionally forbidden to ride uncast rated horse during *Raabaa*. Finally, the *gugsii* is concluded by *eebaa* and close the ritual by blessing each other according to *Seera Gadaa*.

The second step is slaughtering *korma Cawwaa* at *caffee* land at another decided time as of the first stage. It isn't allowed to eat conditionally the meat of *korma cawwa* as it represents *cawwaa* clan because there is vivid and deviant attachment with the

clan though nowadays they are being considered in Gadaa system¹. Likely to korma *walargii* there is blessing and praying by staking *xiribbaa*. In addition the Arsi Oromo connect *korma cawwaa* to the time when faced drought and famine in history of Oromo that is why they slaughter the bull at 'Caffee' swamp land.

Afaan Oromo

Equivalent English

<i>Oromoo gadi dhaabi</i>	Stable the Oromo
<i>Hidda keenya gadi dhabi</i>	Plant our root
<i>Hirpha Arsii gadi dhaabi</i>	Plant the Arsi Hirphaa
<i>Yaa raaba kottee lubaa</i>	The Raabaa of kottee luba
<i>Kottee keenya cimsi</i>	Strength our leg
<i>Walitti nu itichi</i>	Strengthen our unity
<i>Raaba raaba kuufaa gabbinaa nuuf godhi</i>	May our <i>Raabaa</i> be wealthy

Following *korma Cawwa* ceremony, the next step in the *Raabaa* processes is called *mana annanii* and *Korma fuuloo* rituals which is taken place commonly in identified home. The ceremony is moderately associated and decorated with milk and milk products. Full of *okolee* with *annan* milk and *dhibayyuu* is attached with staked *xiribba* which represent being stable like *annan canaa*². "*Canti man keessanii hin bahin*" to mean that be blessed or stable like milk. On the day of *mana annanii* the *Raabaa* go to the ritual site and ride the horse to finalize the ritual of *mana annanii*. Besides, on the same occasion, there is a slaughtering of "*Korma Fuuloo*". The ritual messages of *Korma fuuloo* slaughtering ceremony is symbolized the ownership, belongingness and controlling their destiny. Generally, at this stage the focus of *Raabaa* is stability and having identified boundary of social, economic, geographic, and political aspects with their counterparts and/or other communities though others detail activities including foods and drinks are almost the same throughout all stages of the *Raabaa* rituals.

¹Interview with Baatii Furi, Dodola, Jaunary, 07/2017

² Interview with Amaan Haajii, Dodola, Jaunary, 06/2017

Fig 4: *Korma Fuuloo* slaughtering ceremony



Source: Photograph, taken by researchers, February 06, Dodolaa.

The fourth step is *Korma Harmoo Raabaa* rituals. The objective of it is to strengthen the unity among members so as to keep themselves from hostility. The elders say “*Kormi harmoo harmooma, Arsooma*” to mean that the strong kinship among the Arsi clans. *Korma Harmoo* ceremony also seen as stage of knowing each other and harmonization. In other words, it is the stage where the focus of ceremony is founding and strengthening the fundamentals like

marriage and so forth for further belonging members or “we” integration. Finally, a *Korma harmoo raabaa* ritual is the stage of harmonization.

The fifth step is *sangaa godaa* which slaughtered at identified and commonly known cave. The unique activities besides others pervasively known activity is *dhadanna* saying “*Raabni kagodooti*” to mean that *Raabaa* belongs to *godoo*. *Godoo* means the indigenous cave at which the former Arsi Oromo have designed and formulated *seeraa gadaa*. According to *Raabaa* ritual the spinalcord of slaughtered *sangaa godaa* is never touched or eaten because it represents unity and kinship. Rather, it is given to the *abbaa sangaa godaa* saying “*Quufni mana keettii yaa hafu!*” (Let be prosperity in your house).

The six stages in *Raabaa* ritual processes are known by the name of *Re’ee dhawaa* which is accompanied with *ulee dhabbannaa* (staking stick). After the goat is slaughtered, its myriad parts are used for prediction (inner parts of the goat, for instance intestine), blessing (sense organs of the goat (eye, ear, horn, skin, and noise of the goat), and forgiveness (blood of the goat) in their life accordingly. For example, Arsi Oromo takes a part of skin of slaughtered goat which they call it ‘*Meexichaa*’ and put it on the stem of selected large tree (*dhaddacha*) to finalize the rituals associated with *re’ee dhawaa*.

Then the *Raabaa* go to forest area and cut *ulee* from *Goraa luluffee* and then return back to the river. The number and type of *ulee* is determined by the number of children and status they have in *Gadaa* system. Then after, all of the participants of the *Raabaa* rituals stake the stick following *Abba bokku* and *Abba Hokka* while calling the name of their *Baalli* as ‘*Hii roobalee godoo *5*’ In Arsi Oromo belief system it’s not good fortune if the *ulee* failed thus it should be stand straightly. Finishing it, they return to their each house up to the next step of *Raabaa*. The following is some of their *Geerrarsaa* during

Afaan Oromoo

Birmajii godoo,cumaan kun
 Yoo misa deebisuu dhabattee
 Aaannan deeisuu dhabattee
 Yoo finna deebisuu dhabatte
 Yoo cinii balleessuu dhabatte
 Yoo Oromo cimsuu dhabatte
 Yoo gadaa cimsuu dhabattee
 Situ bilaasha *3
 Situ duwwaa *3

Equivalent English

Birmajii godoo may this waste
 If it fail to return development
 If it fails to return milk
 If it fail to return development
 If it fail to detect the parasite
 If it fail to strengthen the Oromo
 If it fail to make stronger the *Gadaa*
 You are nothing
 You are empty

The seventh step in the *Raabaa* ritual is the slaughtering of 'Re'ee *Muxuxxee'* accompanied with staking 'Ulee luugoo' at intentionally identified 'Malkaa' which is geographically found at the edge of the boundary. This helps them to control their land and expand if possible so as to keep the balance between an increment of the people and the demand. It is also the last stick a *Baalii* do at the end of their power thereby transfer power to another *Baalii*. Overall, the step of *Raabaa* ritual where the *Baalii* starts to prepare for the transmission of the power to another *Baalii* at the last stage or step of a single *Baalii's Raabaa* ritual.

The final or the last step of *Raabaa* ritual is known by the slaughtering of Dullacha Guurii ceremony. The *dullacha guurii* is the ceremony which slaughtered to call jila *Raabaa* and all *Baallis* to transfer power from one *Baalli* to another. On the night of *Dullacha guurii sadeeta*, *baallii hookaa* and *bokkuu* and others myriad participants gathered at identified setting by *Abba bokkuu* and all ceremonies of transferring power held. Identifying the strengths and weakness of the *Baalli* who has power in their hand, giving information and other required materials for the *Baalli* who is going to take the power, forgiveness for all mistakes as the rules of Gadaaa system, blessings by *Abba Bokkuu* and others, praying, *Geerrarsaa*, and other activities are found at this stages extensively and widely. Finally, *Inni angoo fudhatu isa kennuf uffiseel gonfee bokkuu irraa fudhata*. Gadaa kee *fixxee jirtaa dabarsi jedhuun*³. The ceremony of giving Gadaa is followed by *sirna dhibayyuu and gonfaa*.

Afaan Oromoo

Gadaan gadaa nagahaa siif yaa tatu
Gadaa

Ati mandooyoon bulfadhu

Kallachi siyaa bulfattu

Ani si ofkalche

Gadaan siyaa ofkalchu

Ani malkaa siif kenne

Karaa siif kenne.

Equivalent English

May your Gadaa be peace

You rule the *mandooyyoo*

May *kallachaa* rules you

I have blessed you

May Gadaa blessed you

I have gave you the river

I have gave you the road

Generally, the *Raabaa* rituals of a single *Baalli* is finished within eight years of one Gadaa system following the above steps and transferred to another *Baalli* which is done repetitively and accordingly throughout all five *Baallis*.

³ Interview with Shuree Baatii and Lammii Roobaa, Dodola, Jaunary, 07/2017

The Folkloric elements in Raabaa ritual

As Ritual ingredients *Raabaa* includes various elements such as folk games, sports, and even some actual combat; we might even view simple at ritual sites. In broad *Raabaa* can become a ritual for its three parts. These parts are action, performance, and intention. But scientifically we can classify these elements under folkloric genres as the following:

Spiritual Culture

The ritualistic sign of *Raabaa* is that the scarifications of valuable things and sacramental entertainments. According to Arsi Oromo elders *Raabaa* ritual is a full of scarifications at all steps and ritual sites. For instance slathering bull, goat, *dhibayyu* and *daddarbaa* are the common sacrifice. Even unfortunately if there is financial problem (Drought, famine and social instability) occurred to the community during *Raabaa* ritual; they will enforced to the next year/or easily full fill *Jinfuu* by milk. In addition the ceremony in which the validity of the *Raabaa* group internment is recognized; not much evidence is exchanged, but the ceremony requires sacrifice in the form of *Raabaa* ritual purpose. Although *Raabaa* ritual is embedded in spiritual atmosphere that more complex and none-observable.

Oral poetry

On the stage of *Raabaa* ritual all participants perform oral poetry to express their social status in the community and to thank their *waaqaa* (God). For example, one of our key informants told us the following poem which indicates the *Raabaa* and its participants.

Afaan Oromo

Equivalent

English

Ijoollee culee magaalaa ooluun saalaa	The sons of <i>culee magaalaa</i>
Ijoollee bokkuu magalaa ooluun saalaa late is shame	The sons of <i>Bokkuu magalaa</i> being late is shame
Raabi soyyee <i>Raabaa</i> siifaa	The <i>Rabii</i> is <i>soyyee Raabaa</i> is good
Gadaan geenyaan wawarraqxee active	The Gadaa came began to be active

Material cultures

The *Raabaa* ritual is full filled with different materials which symbolize and attached to Oromo world view. These are *Waraana* (*spear*), *Bokkuu*, *Kallacha*, *Ulee*, *Kalloo*, *Wantee* (*Shield*), *Erboora*, *Machallaa*, *Shore*, *Warraaqaa* and *Baallii*. The symbolic expression of *waraanaa* (*spear*) is war and self-defense; *Bokkuu* and *kallachaa* indicate power. In the process of *Raabaa* ritual all material cultures

have been used to enrich the stage and it serve as the indication of human status.

Performing folk arts

Although *Raabaa* ritual requires performance folk art as another rituals. The participants taken as those who have perform various actions which have different meanings and implications. Even they utilized folk arts as communication means in *Raabaa* ritual practice. These performing folk arts are folk dance, folk drama and nonverbal communication Folk arts are very important to hold a certain amount of attention for participants to be attentive. In *Raabaa* ritual, performance isn't something you do for someone else; you are both the observer and the observed. Thus during the *Raabaa* ritual all participants are become aware that something is occurring and at what time they have to engage in ritual by decorating their selves with various makeup. In a sense of performance folk art the action not just conventional, but as a substitute a work of art and it is powerful and practical⁴.

The participants of *Raabaa* ritual and their roles

The participants of Raabaa ritual area vary in sex, age ,social status and role. All *Baallis*, *hookka*,*bokkuu*,*sadeetaa* and *cifree* are participated in *Raabaa* ritual according to their seniority, age, Gadaa grade and status. *Balliis* are *Birmajii*, *Bultuma*, *Horata*, *Bahara* and *Roobalee* from senior to junior. Women have the significant role in *Raabaa* ritual and ritualization. Thus, from very beginning women are the pillar of Raabaa ritual practice. They are active participant of the stage and they are the protocol of *Raabaa* ritual. Especially the wife of *Raabaa* has a vital position during *Raabaa* ritual. She gives her husband horse and blessed him by holding her *Siqqee* and *Okolee*. This mandate is given to her by Gadaa in parallel to men.

⁴ Interview with Meetoo Fayyisaa, Dodola, Jaunary, 05/2017

Fig 7: Women participation and their roles



Source: Photograph, taken by researchers, February 07, Dodolaa

Historically these all *Baallis* has its own implication. Accordingly, *Birmajii* designed to will blessed wife; *Bultuma* for wellbeing; *Roobalee* to claim rain; *Horata* for *hormaata* and *Bahaara* to claim new life. *Raabaa* can be classified into *Raaba ajeesa* and *Raaba mirga qabne*. In their community they identified by their dressing style and roles. The *Raabaa ajessaa* known by wearing the lather or skin of the wild animals he has killed.

Fig 8: Raabaa mirga hin qabne



Fig 9: Raaba ajeesaa



Source: Photograph, taken by researchers, February 05, Dodolaa.

The wife place is vital in *Raabaa* ritual. If her husband is *abbaa mirgaa/ajesaa* she prepare *kalloo,erboora, ballii,alangee, Eeboo, aannoo buufata* and decorating all his protocol. If he not *ajesaa* he wear *kalloo waatii* and *sokora* red *baallii*. Thus, the wife blessing her husband by saying *ofkali gadaa*. On the day of *Raabaa* ritual women sing different folk song. For instance;

killan bahee sirraa dahee abbiyyee hoo

Oho my father I have come with *killaa* and I have got *finna* from you

Killa guuree sin na uumee abbiyyee hoo

Oho my creators I have collect *killaa*

Conclusion

In this research, we have tried to demonstration in the way *Raabaa* ritual practiced among the Arsi Oromoo of Dodolaa district. The *Raabaa* ritual ceremonies and its practices have been explored from folkloric perspective. Thus, *Raabaa* ritual is the name given to certain group which ruled by and practicing *gadaa* system as a social institution. The full circulation of *Raabaa* ritual is *ganna sadeet* eight year starting from *korma walargii qaluu* to *dullacha guurii*.

The folklore of going to *Raabaa* ritual sites among Arsi is a ritual with a long history. The participants go to *Raabaa* ritual with variation of reasons, such as, divine and restorative, and to establish mutual affiliation with *waaqaa* by present *galataa*. The most dominant motive for *Raabaa* practice this ritual is appeal and contact with *uumaa fi uumamaa* be blessed and take skills of leader, through prayers and handing over of power. According to our key informants the foundation of *Raabaa* ritual was directly connected to *seera gadaa*.

However, the *Raabaa* ritual and the followers had faced various oppositions and challenges through time such as confiscation, hiding, and incarceration. Some of the major challenges came from local administrators, modern religious, and spirit of moderation. The researchers have tried to show that the ultimate factor for the coming to dominance of the *Raabaa* ritual is its spiritual, social, and cultural significance. From spiritual aspect, the *Raabaa* ritual is believed as to be guarding stick between *uumaa* and *uumamaa*. Socially, it is a gentle ritual for participants of varied religious (Muslims, Christians) and social status backgrounds. Therefore, it strengthened social bond. Culturally, the community used *Raabaa* ritual to claim, preserve and develop their *gadaa*.

Recommendations

The fact that the Oromo Gadaa system is decline from time to time and attempts made to antithesis this circumstances have to focus critically on its corresponding line of research and has to identify concrete measures that has to be boarded on. Thus In the sense the role of social institutions at diverse level, lawful motivations, and scientific documentation efforts to save the endangered *Raabaa* ritual.

- ✓ Strategies and declarations issued need to elucidate the roles, tasks and Overall mandates of federal, regional and local institutions in relation to the Gadaa in bold and *Raabaa* ritual in particular as they help to revitalized the overall the Oromo life *Jiruu fi jireenyaa*.
- ✓ The *Oromiyaa* culture and tourism office and bureau need to make more elaborate guidelines and proclamations for ‘indigenous knowledge in general and *Raabaa* ritual in particular’ as it is very inessential in use and Conservation.
- ✓ The related governments agents have to clearly indicate the role, clear structure, inter organizational relation and the boundary of different institutions dealing with the *Raabaa* ritual and work to avoid confusion on Oromo culture and *Raabaa* ritual in particular.
- ✓ It is also vital to facilitate conditions to ensure the way new generation learn and promote the *Raabaa* ritual, empowering the community at the grass root level and contribute to its sustainable.
- ✓ Any decisions regarding to Oromo culture have to have a great room for the customary bodies (*Bookku, jaarsa biyyaa ,cifiree and Hookaa*) in the controlling and safeguarding.
- ✓ Empowering community and community-based customary institutions instead of marginalizing them and enforcing and encouraging the real bottom-up approach in the practicing and revitalization of the *Raabaa* ritual.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no competing interests among authors.

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