

**TOWARDS A POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF
OROMO LITERATURE:
JAARSOO WAAQOO'S POETRY**

By

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

JULY 2003

INSTRUCTORS' PROVISION OF WRITTEN RESPONSES TO
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the School of Graduate Studies*

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In the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature*

By

ASSEFA TEFERA DIBABA

***ADDIS ABABA
JULY 2003***

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Glossary

abbaa

father

abbaa gadaa

the father of eight year *gadaa* period

abbaa dheedaa	the father of grazing land
abbaa maddaa	the father of well / water
dhaaduu / dhaadhuu	Borana Oromo recitative / narrative war poetry (geerarsa sub-genre)
farsoo	generally alcohol among the Borana Oromo
finna	Oromo development phases, jiruuf-jireenya, i.e., life and work; suitability factors related to Borana pastoral way of life

gadaa

Oromo social / political egalitarian system

geerarsa	traditional Oromo folk song nowadays transformed into protest song
hariyyaa	age-group
Habashaa rule	the Amhara-Tigre rule
jila / buttaa	feast on every eight year of Gadaa presidential election
kallacha	a wooden phallic symbol worn on the forehead by Abba Gadaa
nagaa Boorana	'the peace of the Borana'
odaa	a sycamore / sacred tree
sidii / nyaapha	enemy
suunsuma	Arsi geerarsa sub-genre
Waaqa	God

Acronyms

<i>AO</i>	<i>Afaan Oromo (Oromo Language)</i>
<i>EPRDF</i>	<i>Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front</i>
<i>FSG I-IV</i>	<i>Finna San Gama I-IV (Beyond Adversities)</i>
<i>OLF</i>	<i>Oromo Liberation Front</i>

OLA Oromo Liberation Army

<i>OPDO</i>	<i>Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization</i>
<i>RAL</i>	<i>Research in African Literature</i>
<i>TGE</i>	<i>Transitional Government of Ethiopia</i>
<i>TPLF</i>	<i>Tigre People's Liberation Front</i>

Key to Phonetic Transcription in Afaan Oromo (AO) / Oromo Language

1. Oromo Consonants: B/b, C/c, D/d, F/f, G/g, H/h, J/j, K/k, L/l, M/m, N/n, Q/q, R/r, S/s, T/t, W/w, X/x, Y/y, Ch/ch, Dh/dh, Ny/ny, Ph/ph, Sh/sh
2. Vowels: A/a, E/e, O/o, U/u, I/i
3. Plosive **d** is written with **dh** in AO as in *dhala*, 'son' or 'daughter'
Plosive **t** is written with **x** in AO as in *xaba*, 'play'
Plosive **k** is written with **q** in AO as in *qara*, 'sharp' or 'clever'
4. Vowel lengthening in AO is shown by doubling the vowel as in *haaraa*, 'brand-new', unlike the short vowel in *hara*, 'pool'
5. Consonants are doubled for gemination in AO as in *ballaa*, 'wide'/'broad', unlike *balaa*, 'danger'/'disaster'

Abstract

The major aim of the present study is to sociologically analyse Jaarsoo's poetry *Finna San Gama (Beyond Adversities)* set in the social, cultural and economic immediate milieu of the Oromo and in the current sociopolitical matrix of the country. The study is mainly concerned with the poetic *content* analysis of Jaarsoo's poetry using appropriate methods. In this regard, in *Chapter II*, the study attempts to consider available theoretical concepts which are thought to be helpful in a sociological analysis of poetic contents and in answering questions of literary and sociological nature raised in *Chapter I*. Similarly, those related studies that describe the need for a sociological study of Oromo literature are included. Thus, primarily, the study attempts to make the descriptive assessment of the *ethnographic* and *literary* background that informed the poet and his works. Data were collected using structured and unstructured queries, note-taking and tape-recordings. The task of *transcription* and *translation* of the data was accomplished under a close supervision of informed Jaarsoo's audience both inside and outside Boorana.

In *Chapter III*, the study tries to show impacts of the *geerarsa genre*. The intention was to establish some generic characteristics of Jaarsoo's poetry *Finna San Gama (FSG)* set within the *geerarsa genre*, particularly the Boorana *dhaaduu* recitative war poetry. Based on its subject-matter, *geerarsa* can be

categorized as *traditional (time-free)* and *contemporary (time-bound)*. The *traditional time-free geerarsa* includes *historical songs* in praise of Oromo tribal warlords. *Historical songs* tend to be *contemporary songs* of their own time since they compose local political and social events of their own time. Other *traditional geerarsa* songs are: hunting songs (*e.g. gooba*), songs of war of economic interests like the Boorana *dhaaduu* or the Arsi *suunsuma*, and songs of success or failure in *finna*/life. *Contemporary geerarsa* are those personal narratives or praise songs historically transformed into prison/protest songs following the dynamic sociological situations of the Oromo. This transformation may mark the *transitional period* of Oromo literature, *transition* from what had hitherto been mere praise song to a political song of some kind. Both the *traditional* and the *transitional* Oromo oral genre, doubtlessly the *geerarsa*, must have paved the way towards *modern* Oromo literature which is expected to have a great didactic role in directing current Oromo sociopolitical life situation in some way. The *geerarsa genre* and the *dhaaduu* recitative war poetry have influenced the *content* and *performance* of Jaarsoo's *Finna San Gama I-IV* in which the poet recites issues of *resource-based conflicts*, *nationalism*, and *social and development* topics, as analyzed in *Chapter IV*. Based on the *generic* interpretation of those popular genres, *geerarsa* and *dhaaduu*, *FSG* can be classified as the Boorana *dhaaduu* recitative poetry. In data analysis the *poetic contents* of *FSG* are

delineated based on their *subject-matter*, *function*, and *context*. Thus, the result of the study indicates, like *contemporary geerarsa*, *FSG* focuses on different *subject-matters* (*sociopolitical*, *cultural* and *economic*), not just on war events unlike the *traditional dhaaduu* recitative war poetry. The significant role of the universal Oromo *geerarsa* and the Borana *dhaaduu* in the *content analysis* of Jaarsoo's poetry set in the Oromo current sociopolitical context is therefore the aspect that a sociological analysis can reveal.

Key Words/Phrases: generic transformations, resource-based conflicts, social and development issues, issues of nationalism

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem

The problem one faces in studying Oromo literature (oral/written), the researcher posits, is of a dual nature: first, where should one start the study of Oromo literature before he embarks on the task of the study? Though premature it may seem, this problem is crucial.¹ Another question that would logically follow from the first is this: towards what should one direct in the study of Oromo literature? Oromo literature, in the present-day Oromo reality, is part of the problem that needs serious attention and careful handling in order to be keenly aware of the *present* and to foresee the *future*. The assumption that *one has to start from where one is*, in *synchronic*² terms, may well be appropriate to a researcher in the field of Oromo oral poetry. To study the present *finna*³ or 'development' stage of Oromo oral poetry, however, it seems imperative to look back at and start from, *diachronically* speaking, the *past* conditions under which the historically transformed Oromo oral poetic genre, particularly *geerarsa* was emergent.⁴ For this purpose, this study places Jaarsoo's poetry within the matrices of the *geerarsa genre* to trace the impacts both of externally imposed socio-political factors and of internally motivated social and historical characters of Oromo tradition on the works of individual poets such as Jaarsoo Waaqoo.⁵

Second, if authentic literature derives from the real life situation of the people and is determined by it, literature also reacts to the culture of the people. That is, literature affects the society and is also affected by it. Poetry, for instance, may make a difference to the speech, to the sensibility of members of the society, to the lives of the whole people—whether they read or not—and to the language, since language is an indispensable vehicle of culture.

Now, the problem is, even though there is a long tradition of *Oromo Studies* (see *Chapter II*), to the best of the present researcher's knowledge, few research works have been conducted which seek to root the critical analyses and studies of Oromo literature (oral or written) within their socio-political and cultural context.

The *aim* of the present study is, therefore, to fill that gap. That is, it is to examine critically the *sociological* aspects of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry through analysing the *geerarsa* poetic genre undergoing a historical 'transformation' (see Addisu 1990) set within the present-day Oromo life situation. That is, the *significance* of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry is critically analysed from the perspective of the socio-political, historical, cultural and economic life situation of Oromo society in general and the immediate milieu surrounding the poet and his works in particular. Since culture and *cultural productions*⁶ are believed to be social practices/actions, hence, their historical, literary and socio-political *significance* should be studied within their sociocultural context. This is so because '*significance*' from a sociological viewpoint refers to "*how an action or resource is valued by a particular group*", (emphasis added) (Chamber in Levinson 1996: 1012). Jaarsoo Waaqoo's oral poetry can only be adequately understood in a sociological perspective, when 'put back' in its social and cultural context. In a way, this attempt is a move against the "pre-sociological and mystifying notion" of 'art-as-magic' and 'artist-as-magician' or '-genius', to repeat Janet Wolff's words in her *The Social Production of Art* (1993), towards art as a social and cultural practice rather than an individual feat.

Questions to be answered within this study are: how is the *content* of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry affected by externally induced and internally motivated factors (socio-political, historical and cultural)? how is the mode of communication ('*geerarsa*' as an '*innovated*'⁷/*transformed*'⁸ oral genre) related to the content of Jaarsoo's poetry and to the life situation of the Oromo? what is the historical and socio-political significance of Oromo oral poetry to the people? why is

Jaarsoo Waaqoo's oral poetry compelling at this particular time? upon what social understanding is the work dependent? how do *relations* among groups and circumstances affect the poet and his poetry? Attempt is made to answer these questions through analysing texts from Jaarsoo's poetry, *FSG I-IV*, in relation to the historical and socio-political life situation of the Oromo.

There have been few works so far on Oromo (oral) literature, but most of them are not contextual studies. In this respect, Fekade Azeze's (1998) unpublished recent bibliographical data show that over the last thirty years (1966-1997) among the senior essays written at Addis Ababa University, Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature around twenty BA theses are on Oromo oral poetry. Based on these data and on a few other MA and BA theses on Oromo oral literature--most of them on prose narratives--submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, much still remains to be done to study Oromo literature in its sociocultural context. Addisu Tolesa's Ph.D. dissertation (1990) on the 'contemporary' *geerarsa* poetic genre is one such research conducted from the perspective of Oromo sociocultural and political context in the wider matrices of Oromo oral literature. To this one may add Sumner's collections and philosophical analyses of *Oromo Wisdom Literature*,⁹ though Sumner's study is not *contextual*.

The study of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's oral poetry transcribed as *Finna San Gama*¹⁰, hereafter *FSG*, '*Beyond Adversities*' contributes, the researcher believes, to promoting the *sociological* study of Oromo (oral) poetry set within the Oromo life situation from its inception.

The *rationale* for the selection of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry is two-fold: firstly, his poetic records were set in the period when rapid social and political change in Ethiopia seemed to take a 'new' momentum following the fall of the Derg regime in 1991. Secondly, though

Jaarsoo had no formal education he produced a large output of poetry recorded on tapes. Thus, the context and content of the texts aroused questions of curiosity in the researcher—the curiosity that has now become an academic pursuit.

Oral Poetry plays an important, often pivotal role in current public life of the Oromo people and does not merely consist of those anonymous oral narratives and poems handed down by tradition. Oral poetry among the Oromo is nowadays reinforced both by *variations on the old themes* as in the contemporary *geerarsa* protest songs (e.g., by Abbaa Shamaxee of Arsii and Luuccaa Abbaa Tuggoo of Wallagga) and by completely *new compositions* created by individual oral poets like Jaarsoo Waaqoo of Boorana. These individual poets and others like Sheik Mohammed Xaahir and Sheik Bakrii Saaphaloo of Harar and Abdaa Garaadaa of Arsii act as social critics and commentators on current events in Oromia. Through their poems or songs they have aroused national consciousness among the Oromo and influenced public opinions in such important issues as external pressures and the Amhara-Tigre domination on the Oromo (Addisu 1990, 1994; Andrzejewski 1975, 1985). Gunther Schlee (1992) and A. Shongollo (1996) have also confirmed the role of contemporary oral poet such as Jaarsoo Waaqoo as an active commentator of the present regime in Ethiopia. So, based on its thematic variation and mode of communication, one may put Oromo national literature as the *traditional geerarsa hunting / praise song*, the *contemporary / transitional geerarsa prison/prison song* and the *modern (written) literature*.

Informants say that the late Jaarsoo Waaqoo had no formal education (see 1.5 below).¹¹ His love of and concern for *aadaa* Oromoo, i.e., Oromo culture, especially songs and the *dhaaduu* poems (see Fugich Wako 2002:18-34), was deep. Four of Jaarsoo's tape recordings have been collected and transcribed as *Finna San Gama, FSG*, by the present researcher with the help of informants for the purpose of the present study. His other tapes have been not found yet.¹²

Such a noble cause of composing new oral poems and recording them on tapes and commenting on the existing socio-political situation, however, was disrupted by the poet's early death on September 21st 1994. Jaarsoo was in his early 30s when he shot himself at the front, according to the informants and Jaarsoo's senior brother, rather than be taken prisoner by the *woyyane* force then fighting against the OLF army in Boorana (A. Shongollo 1996:270).

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first treats the problem of the study and describes its objectives and methods including a brief account of Jaarsoo's life history. Chapter two reviews related literature. The third chapter presents the *sociological* poetics of the *geerarsa* genre and its impacts on the works of individual Oromo oral poets, especially on Jaarsoo Waaqoo's. Chapter four discusses the sociological analysis of *FSG I-IV*. The multi-faceted aspects of socio-political, economic and cultural *relations* the poet raises in his poems are sociologically analysed in chapter four. It also presents the ethnographic background of Jaarsoo's poetry. Impacts of other oral poetic genres, particularly the *dhaaduu* recitative poems on Jaarsoo's poetic *content* are illustrated in chapter four, which also includes *Conclusion*.

1.2 Objectives

The *objective* of this research is to study critically Jaarsoo Waaqoo's oral poetry and to analyse it from a sociological and historical perspective of Oromo oral poetry, *geerarsa* as reflecting the socio-political and cultural life of the people. To do so, the researcher will examine the *verbal content* of some 'contemporary' *geerarsa* texts (cf. *Ch. III*). The basic assumption underlying the present study is that the *geerarsa* protest song and the *dhaaduu* recitative poems recited in plain voice have influenced the composition, recitative performance style and content of Jaarsoo's oral poetry. Thus, the researcher attempts:

- to examine if Jaarsoo's poetry goes beyond passively reflecting on the *status quo* and rather aspires to direct and bring about change in the "working of the society"
- to describe whether those socio-political and historical realities that dictated Jaarsoo's poetry are also shared among other Oromo oral poets and,
- to make an attempt towards examining critically impacts of poetic features of the existing Oromo popular genres (*e.g. geerarsa, dhaaduu poems*) on the poetic content and meaning(s) of such 'newly' created oral poems by individual poets like Jaarsoo will be examined in the present study in relation to the Oromo life situation.

1.3. Methods of the study

Methods used in the descriptive and analytical study of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry, i.e. to transcribe, translate and analyse the poems, are discussed in this part of the paper. Information related to the socio-political and cultural factors that influenced the oral poet, i.e. Jaarsoo Waaqoo and his works at some time in history could well be more reliable if provided by the poet himself. Unfortunately, Jaarsoo Waaqoo died on September 21st 1994 as already noted. Information about the poet and his works was therefore obtained through interview during the fieldwork in Boorana (in Liiban and Dirree) in February 2002 from those who collected and kept the oral poet's recorded poems, from Jaarsoo's kin, close friends and relatives, and from some materials found in print (Shongollo 1996; Schlee and Shongollo 1992). For the task of transcription and translation the researcher has worked with informants from Boorana though the intended meanings of some Jaarsoo's poems remain beyond the knowledge of the informants themselves.

The poet's political background and *intentions* in his poems that comments strongly on the *woyyane's* socio-political and economic suppression in Oromia (Shongolo 1996:268), however, might urge one to think very carefully about the *methods* of the present study.

Interviews were needed during transcription, translation and annotation or glossing of the intended meaning of the poems to accomplish the task of the research. But, selecting for interviews or picking for some technical support any Booran or any Oromo only by virtue of his/her speaking Afaan Oromoo and knowing Jaarsoo and his poems may cause one, without any exaggeration, to run the risk of ending in jail. The researcher, therefore, first had to interview individual singers and *dhaaduu* reciters with the help of elders and collect data to identify the 'traditional' oral poetry such as the *gooba* and *dhaaduu* and 'contemporary' songs/recitations composed and performed by individual oral poets. Then after, the researcher interviewed those who had known the poet from his childhood and later those who heard his poems as the researcher promised to keep anonymous the interviewees. Information related to the poet and his poems was not provided unless the Booran informants came to know gradually the researcher and the purpose of the research very well.¹³ These were some of the challenges the researcher has encountered during the present study.

The analyses of the *texts* in Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry involve describing the sociocultural *context* in which the works were set. It will be the purpose of this study, therefore, to find out whether or not the role of Oromo (oral) literature, Oromo oral poetry, is mainly *functional* not just aesthetic. Even more, to explore if, as already noted, the socio-economic, historical and political problems the poet communicates in his poetry correspond with the life situation of the Oromo at large and not just the Boran, is the target of the study.

1.3.1 Recordings and Collections

Jaarsoo himself, the interviewees unanimously agree, carried out the recordings of his poems (interview with Roobaa, Diida, and Gaayoo; cf. *FSG II*, p109). G. Schlee and A. Shongolo's articles also confirm that Jaarsoo himself did the recordings. In the article co-authored by

Gunther Schlee and A. Shongollo (1992) "Oromo Nationalist Poetry: Jaarsoo Waaqoo Qootoo's Tape Recordings on the Political Events in Southern Oromia, 1991" the co-authors say that Jaarsoo himself allowed them to transcribe and work on *his* 90 minute tape. Shongollo, in his "The Poetics of Nationalism: a Poem by Jaarso Waaqoo Qootoo" (1996) contends

when Jaarsoo wanted to reach a wider audience, he recorded his recitations... and handed out copies to people without charging any money... People... made copies of the copies. There are no record companies, no copyrights, no private ownership of this popular orality (p270).

The informants/interviewees share this view of the poet's reciting, recording and distributing few cassettes only among those whom he trusted. Hence, one may conclude that Jaarsoo himself accomplished the task of reciting and recording his poetry for the noble cause of mobilising his people against external pressures. As for the collections, the researcher started to collect Jaarsoo's recorded poems in 1998 at *Jimma Teachers College* when he read Jaarsoo's poems in print by Abdullahi Shongolo (in Baxter *ibid.* pp265-90). The researcher collected then some of Jaarsoo's recordings (*FSG II* and *IV*) through a college student from Boorana when he was teaching at *Jimma Teachers College*, while the remaining *FSG I* and *III* were collected during the fieldwork in Boorana in February 2002. Jaarsoo composed and recorded most of the tapes "while he was serving in the [OLF] guerrilla army" (Shongolo *ibid.* p269).

1.3.2 Transcription and Translation

Transcription of Finna San Gama I-IV

In transforming the recorded poems into written words there are some practical problems the researcher encountered. One such problem among others relates to some dialectal variations:

phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic. Other constraints are perhaps relatively minor and do not impede the semantic processing of the poetry. These include hesitation phenomena: fill-ins like *duub' amma* (now/'and hereafter), and false starts and corrections.

Perhaps equally difficult was setting Jaarsoo's tapes in a chronological order. A 90-minute tape transcribed and translated by Schlee and Shongolo (1992) is labeled as recorded in 1991. That tape can be transcribed as *tape two* for there is another tape-recorded on social and development topics earlier. Shongolo says in his article on "A Poem by Jaarso Waaqo Qooto" (in Baxter 1996), that before Jaarsoo joined the OLF the poet "had for some time composed songs about local politics and about development topics, such as, for example, the dangers of alcohol" (p.265), especially *farsoo*, as locally known. That tape transcribed as *FSG I* in this study is agreed by the informants as the first of Jaarsoo's poems. The poem Shongolo studied "was composed in the early days of the OLF resistance ...[against] the Tigre attempts of Abyssinian neo-colonialism" (Baxter *ibid.* p.268). This was more likely in 1992 when the OLF withdrew from the Tigre-led EPRDF coalition party. Another tape transcribed as *FSG II* was recorded just about the same time, i.e., in 1992 (The poet himself recites about the year, see *FSG II*, p.99.)

FSG III is a 'dramatic verse', which communicates the theme of OLF's pan-Oromo cause, i.e., struggle for self-determination and democracy, using dialogue. *FSG IV* is the tape, the informants said, Jaarsoo was working on in 1994 which was interrupted by the poet's tragic death on September 21st the same year. The interviewees told the researcher that his colleagues filled the incomplete tape by recording songs of freedom and of patriotism.

In the present study there have been problems that relate to methods of transcribing and translating the texts. One such problem is a *dialectal variation*. The Boorana people in

southern Oromia and in northern Kenya speak a southern dialect of the Oromo language (see Ton Leus, 1995). In the long tradition of studies on Oromo phonology, morphology and syntax that involved dialectal variation, Ton Leus cites works on Borana dialect by Stroomer (1987), Owens (1985), Heine, Andrzejewski, and Venturino's *Dizionario Borana-Italiano* and *Dizionario Italiano-Borana* (1976) (see Leus 1995:2). According to those studies, Leus adds, "Oromo dialects have evolved specific and rich terminologies" (pp1, 2,) relating to sociocultural, political, economic and environmental aspects such as the modes of production, particular environmental adaptations, various social institutions and their inherent rituals.

Afaan Oromoo is intelligible among the Oromo in Oromia and those in the neighbouring northern Kenya. Though 'full' fluency in the Boorana dialect seem to be unattainable for the present researcher, since he comes from Gomboo (Jaarsoo), the Sibuu clan of Wallaga, the dialectal variation, however, does not impede the present study. As Ton Leus asserts, the last four centuries from the time of Oromo expansion in the sixteenth-century "have not been enough for developing different languages" (p1). Ton Leus's Dictionary, added to the information obtained from the Boorana informants/elders, is most pertinent to the present study not just for its lexical accounts of Afaan Oromoo, but because it also involves anthropological, historical, ethnographic and linguistic aspects of the life situation of the Borana Oromo.

To attain 'accuracy' in *transcription*, the text that 'comes down from the lips of a speaker or singer ... is set down with word for word exactness by a collector' (Dorson in Finnegan 1992: 196). Regarding what should or should not appear in *transcriptions*, Finnegan argues, what determines is the *aim* of the *transcription*: *what* is being transcribed, for *whom* and *why* it is transcribed (*ibid.*). Purpose for transcribing being the touchstone, she also proposes some '*dos and don'ts*' while transcribing oral texts. She says: *leave out 'uh's', false starts and fill-ins*

like 'you know' or 'I mean'; repair false starts and corrections (unless these seem significant for content); use the standard spellings, not dialect; do not correct or interpret: put down what the speaker actually said, not what is thought he meant (emphasis added, *ibid.* pp.196ff).

The researcher contends it is the aim of the research at hand in general and the purpose of the transcription in particular that determines the whole task of the *transcription* and *translation*. However, there are still other factors that determine the transcription and translation of the texts such as *text rendition*, i.e., if sung or delivered in plain voice, and the *generic category*: if traditional songs or poems by individual oral poets. PTW Baxter, for instance, in his "Giraffe and Poetry" (1986) among the Booran, has this to say:

two points emerged clearly during the transcription and the accompanying discussion. Firstly, none of the verses has an exactly correct version: Dengi [the singer] varied his versions slightly from rendering to rendering, even in immediately successive rendering of the verse. There just is not a 'correct text' to collect.... Secondly, the verses are not intended to convey a simple narrative message (p48).

In transcribing and translating Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry such difficulties as fill-ins, corrections, false starts and unclear pronunciation are encountered. It is the present researcher's conviction that Afaan Oromoo is not yet (fully) standardized to the level that one can stick to a single *Received Pronunciation (RP)* though the phonetic system of Afaan Oromoo, i.e. *qubee* is established. The researcher therefore transcribed Jaarsoo's poetry word-for-word including hesitation phenomena (false starts and fill-ins), where appropriate, and non-standard pronunciations such as elision (contraction) since the aim is to capture the *content* of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry from sociological perspective. Perhaps equally important point is title of the texts in transcriptions. Conventionally "oral forms do not always have titles in the same way as written works" (Finnegan 1992: 200). For the sake of convenience, however, the researcher has transcribed Jaarsoo's oral texts titled as *Finna San Gama 'Beyond*

Adversities' (FSG I-IV), to systematise the larger units and floating ideas into an integrated narrative whole.

In the series of texts in *Finna San Gama* the poet raises issues of sociopolitical, cultural and economic interests at length in some coherent and integrated manner. The '*pure transcription*' therefore followed the actual voice of the speaker without any or with minimum interference of the transcribing medium, i.e., *writing*. The poems in his *FSG I*, for instance, are not titled. Thus, only some *sample texts* are selected out of the series under some operational criteria and used for the *content analyses*. Factors considered for the selection include: the *aim* of the research, namely, analyzing the content of Jaarsoo's poems, degree of variation, i.e. from purely 'aesthetic' to 'functional', and immediate determining situations of the specific text: *conflict*, or issues of *finna* ('suitability factors').

Translation

The fact that *Finna San Gama* is in the Boorana dialect, i.e. that it is in *the* dialect, may make the task of *translation* more complex to handle. Added to the poetic features observable in *Finna San Gama* such as *long syllables*, frequent *high tonal contours*, *contractions* of sounds, frequent *repetitions* and *refrains* are typical of the vernacular. The vernacular, through *denotative factual expression*, is describing '*factual*' content/events such as war, drought, famine, forced exile, poverty and disease and, most of all, struggle for freedom is one factor, among others, to consider as a practical problem in determining the aim of translation. Hence, the *factual/descriptive* model of *translation*, which depends on whether the language has a "direct correspondence with 'reality', essentially consisting of denotative factual statements" (Finnegan 1992:187).

The first two models in translation i.e. *factual/descriptive* and *thought/meaning*, Finnegan says, “are extreme enough”. The third and the fourth concern, namely *language as expression* and the *purely linguistic model*, i.e., ‘*speech acts*’ or *meaning-as-use* are also not without some drawbacks. According to Finnegan, in “language as expression” or “as action” attention is to *context*, i.e. to performance, to non-verbal communication and to audience interactions. And she goes on to ask: “And how can these be translated? And what can be done with ambiguous and allusive poetry (like the Boran poem in Baxter 1986)? or what can be done with the level of meaning of different categories of audience/hearers ” (ibid. p.188)?

To overcome the problem of translation it may be compelling to “follow Andrzejewski’s injunctions [1965:11-17ff] and compile a gloss for each verse”, where appropriate, as Baxter suggests (1986). In the present study, the glosses are assembled from the comments of informants and other participants during transcriptions and translations and put in *endnotes* also using Ton Leus’s *Borana--English Dictionary*. Such a stylistic device that caused Baxter difficulties in translating the Boorana giraffe hunters’ song (*gooba*) is the names of people and places frequently used in Boorana oral poetry. According to the informants, Baxter says, names are often used “merely for their *sound*, that is to make or extend a rhyme or an alliteration or to provide a required number of syllables” (p49): names are used rather for their sound than for their sense.

Baxter concludes, citing Cerulli (1922:109), that Oromo verse places a high value on “*sound parallelism*”, which is probably, as Baxter confirms, “common to much Oromo poetry” (Baxter 1974). On the other hand, in translating Jaarsoo’s poetry it may well be argued that names are not used more for sounds than for senses. Unlike the names in Baxter’s “Giraffe Poetry” the personal name Goobana, Minilik’s warlord, for instance, is very crucial in

Jaarsoo's poetry (cf. *FSG I* 1991), in which case the researcher found it reasonable to leave such names in Afaan Oromoo.

Another difficulty in translating Oromo oral poetry, particularly that of the Boorana, results from *ambiguity* and *allusions*. Baxter maintains, the ambiguity and "impressionistic, almost concealed, meaning" with esoteric and archaic words, synecdoche and metonymy altogether make translation difficult. Such ambiguities, the researcher contends, derive from the implicit connection between the words and sounds as "part of the cumulative meanings of each verse" (Baxter 1986, p49): hence, "the ambiguity of the language reflects the ambiguity of the experience" (ibid.). Owing to allusions, words tend to have other latent meanings rather than just manifest ones. Thus, one may conclude understanding the Oromo verse, especially the Boorana poetry, and comprehending it increases with repeated listening and exposure to the culture and language of the people.

In translating African languages, Andrzejewski points out, "a *literal translation*, instead of giving an insight into the original, distorts it by violating the rules of the target language..." (*emphasis added*, 1965, p11). Many names of objects and concepts in the *source language* may be totally alien to the culture of the *target language*. Andrzejewski's best example is the Oromo *kallacha* (*script corrected*), a wooden 'phallic symbol' strapped to the forehead of Abbaa Gadaa, for which there is no equivalent English word.

For such technical and aesthetic reasons, the present researcher decided against a '*word for word*' translation and resorted to giving as extensive glosses/annotations as possible on the meaning(s) of individual words and notes on some punning allusions and ambiguities. Attempt has been made also to "compromise between the sense and substance of the original and the imperatives of poetic coherence in the original" as Said S. Samatar says in his

memorial note in tribute to the late B.W. Andrzejewski, who died in 1994 (see Samatar in *RAL* vol. 29 no 1, 1998). Andrzejewski had a "brilliant gift" in striking a balance between *over-literalism* and *over-literariness* in translation, which Samatar chooses to call "*Andrzejewski's happy medium*" (Samatar in *RAL* vol. 29 no 1, 1998, pp216ff). By *over-literalism* Samatar seems to mean too much relying on literal translation; whereas, *over-literariness* is too much poeticizing in the target language instead of giving due insights into the original.

Where the translation still sounds fully intelligible, Andrzejewski maintains,

[t]he easiest solution to the difficulties facing the translator is to pretend that they are not there: to suppress all details which might be puzzling...and to paraphrase or even summarise the contents of the original" (ibid. p15).

Hence, the translation of 'content' alone cannot represent the text's full import or the language as the form of expressiveness with emphasis on the cultural context. In the present study, therefore, the researcher has attempted at a judicious balance between the *substance* of the original text and the *poetic sense* of the text in translation. Some models of translation have been carefully reviewed in this section for the sociological analysis of Jaarsoo's poetry. In what follows, formats for analysing the poetic style and Jaarsoo's delivery of his poems will be briefly discussed.

1.3.3 Text Rendition and Analysis

Interdisciplinary approaches are employed in analysing *FSG* because the presentation of the 'texts' is set within a varied historical order. That is, the poet refers to past and present historical events in Oromia and articulates the hopes and aspirations of the Oromo in the

future. Hence, methodologies in practice tend to overlap in time and converge since the topic raised in each tape centers on issues such as politics, education, health, economy, and other societal interests.

In the usage of the term “text” throughout the analyses in this paper, the researcher has left aside Bakhtin’s broader sense of the term: text is “any coherent complex of signs” (qtd in Finnegan1992: 158). In this study therefore the focus is on “texts-as-verbal”, i.e. that which is ‘verbalised’, delivered orally. *Text*, in this study, means that which is orally composed and orally delivered, tape-recorded, and handed out for public consumption by an oral poet and transcribed, translated where appropriate, and now *re-presented* in writing by the present researcher.

The *texts* in Jaarsoo’s poetry, as already noted, do not focus on only one topic. The issue of *power relation* among the Oromo and Others, especially the *Habasha* (the Amhara-Tigre ruling class) in successive historical periods, and the *resource-based conflicts* with the Somali, the Gabra, and the Garri which has gradually led to boarder conflicts, as the poet says, are among the major topics. Jaarsoo's poems, as elsewhere argued in this study, are about *nationalism* (cf. Schlee 1992; Shongolo 1996). Mohammed Hassen has described *nationalism* as “...above and beyond all else, about politics, and that politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is primarily about control of the state” (Baxter 1996:70). Parts of the texts related to *power relation* and *conflict resolution* call for sociological analyses, the researcher believes, using multidisciplinary approaches in the fields of sociology and development studies. To affirm the significance of other factors, it seems compelling to repeat Albert B. Lord cited in Foley (1990): “without a symptomatic knowledge of context the text may well be misunderstood and misrepresented” (p380). That is, in the analysis of texts-as-verbal “text and context are inseparable” (*ibid*).

Context is, Isidore Okpewho says, what Malinowski urged his colleagues to note during the early days of anthropological study of oral texts, i.e., the "social, cultural, economic, environmental, meteorological, and circumstantial" matrices of song or tale performance (Okpewho 1990:122). According to Malinowski, Okpewho adds, those matrices help one "as a guide to understanding the functional import of the texts in the life of the community" (ibid.). The problem is that Okpewho rightly argues, neither Malinowski nor his disciples has given a single analysis which combined insights from all those domains (ibid.) in the sociological study of oral texts.

In this study, therefore, to describe the sociocultural context in which *FSG* texts are set *conflict theory* and *development theory*, based on ethnographic data, are called up on (Markakis 1994; Wallace 1994; Galtang 1996) including a combination of approaches to (Oromo) *oral literature* (Bakker 1997; Summner 1997; Finnegan 1992, 1977; Baxter 1986; Ong 1982;). Considering the 'contemporary' text from the perspective of 'traditional' literature, which gives the text depth of meaning to its origin and nature or development is not to force the observation of the text-as-verbal into the straightjacket of *diachronic* observation. It is rather not to distort the text beyond recognition while describing and analysing it in *synchronic* terms set within the present *finna* and sociocultural situation.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The primary emphasis of this study will be the analysis of sociological aspect of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry. The present study does not claim to be an overall study of Oromo oral poetry from a sociological perspective. However, the *geerarsa* oral genre referred to as an "Oromo National Literature" (Addisu 1990, 1994) is also used in Jaarsoo's oral poetry as an 'innovated' poetic style: this time, not just to be sung, but to be *recited*. That perhaps

necessitates the analysis of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry within the general framework of Oromo traditional praise song, i.e., the *geerarsa*, now transformed into a national Oromo *protest song* (Addisu *ibid*). Jaarsoo Waaqoo recited his poems and recorded them himself, as already noted, out of which "a 90-minute tape" is in its transcription and translation into English from the original Oromo version by Prof. Gunther Schlee and A. Shongolo (1992) and another transcribed and described as "The Poetics of Nationalism" by Abdullahi Shongolo (in Baxter 1996). Other tapes are transcribed by the present researcher (with the help of informants), annotated and titled as *Finna San Gama I-IV* in series, meaning *Beyond Adversities* since Jaarsoo declares (cf. *FSG I*):

**Oromo never shows a weak character
even in the face of *adversities*!**

FSG I, 145 pages in a transcript focuses on the existing social problem of the people, Boorana in particular. The poem as a social critique comments in detail on the danger of *alcohol/farsoo* as impeding the *finna* 'development' of the society.

The second volume, *FSG II*, 137 pages in transcript, is on the Oromo worldview. The Oromo as a whole have three elements of common knowledge system to share. These are: the concept of *uuma*, the concept of *ayyaana* and the concept of *safuu*—the violation of which is *cubbuu* 'sin' according to Gemechu Megersa (1993; cf. also Bartels 1983). Jaarsoo's this second volume is allegorical in style. It centres on the dialogue between '*cubbuu*' and '*dhugaa*', i.e. '*vice*' and '*virtue*' where, according to the underlying Oromo philosophy, and of the oral poet indeed, the latter dwells in the world of *Being* which is both transcendental and eternal in nature (Bartels 1983; Gemechu 1993; Baxter 1996). *FSG III* is much the same as *FSG II* in that it uses dialogue as a medium of addressing the present political confrontation between the Oromo and the "Tigre attempts of Abyssinian neo-colonialism", as the poet recites.

The other tape, which makes *FSG IV*, 122 pages in transcript, is mainly political in content. It focuses on the description of the Boorana land, culture and life style of the Booran and hence the need to protect Boorana from any attack or occupation by the neighbouring ethnic groups, especially the Somali. Abdullahi Shongolo's text in print (in Baxter 1996) is a combination of extracts at least of two cassettes or more, of which the first recording comprises the major part, with a brief biographical sketch and some annotations/glosses (cf. also Schlee 1992).

1.5 Jaarsoo Waaqoo as a Poet

In this section the biography of the poet will be established mainly based on the information obtained from Jaarsoo's close kin, especially his senior brother and relatives. The researcher also tried to crosscheck the information in those materials in print (in Abdullahi *and* Schlee) with those obtained through interviews. The late Jaarsoo Waaqoo was the sixth son of Waaqoo Qooxoo of Noonituu clan who lived and died in Tuqaa, near Moiyale. Jaarsoo's mother died when he was only four; this might have affected Jaarsoo greatly from his childhood to feel abandoned in a wilderness. Tarri told the researcher that Jaarsoo did not like to often mix with people, except, though less often, with his *hariyyaa* (*age-group*) called *danbal' duubaa*.¹⁴

According to Tarri, Jaarsoo's elder brother, Jaarsoo was a rebel as a herd boy. He repeatedly condemned the elders for compromising with the Garri, the Gabra and the Somali about their property rights to land and land resources in Boorana. Similarly, when he was the OLF soldier, Jaarsoo is said to have frequently criticized the leadership, Tarri says, for its lack of some organizational coherence and for its reluctance to fight the *sidii* (*enemy*) and free Oromia. Jaarsoo was known among his *hariyyaa* as creative, articulate, energetic and straightforward. He was a renowned story-teller among his *harriyya* and a *dhaaduu* narrator

who could recite a chunk of war events non-stop (interview with Qararsa). He told his brothers and sisters, and the *hariyyaa*, that he would not remain a herd boy, but one day he would be a freedom fighter and free his people put under subjugation. Then when he was only fourteen he fled home to Nairobi to live as a peddler and later a shopkeeper, during which time Jaarsoo might have come in contact with the OLF. Jaarsoo was twenty when he came home only to live for five years under dissatisfaction as he saw the unbearable external pressures which forced him to flee again and join the OLF in early 1987/8. It was this time in Soloolo, Kenya border, that Jaarsoo lived with his bride *Diimaa*, whom Tarri married to him, and composed/recorded his poetry. *Diimaa* bore him a baby-boy named Boruu now living with his mother and a cousin in Solooloo. According to Tarri, Jaarsoo composed/recorded his poetry on the danger of alcohol, *farsoo*, and its social and economic implications after he came home from Nairobi.

Tarri says Jaarsoo knew the historical injustices that his people lived in, as he usually passed his time talking with Boorana elders, *raaga* (prophet), *arga-dhageettii* ('griots'), *ayyaantuu* (seer) and others. Tarri Waaqoo, now *abbaa qe'ee*, literally, 'head of the household' is himself a seer, under whose apprenticeship Jaarsoo was brought up as a seer, poet, and 'arga-dhageettii', quite impossible for a young man of Jaarsoo's age. It is this background experience from his childhood that enabled Jaarsoo to depict through his poetry *continuity* and *change* in the life of his people.¹⁵

The poet composed his oral poetry based on *dhaaduu* (recitative poetry), and the oral genre of *geerarsa*, the folksong which has undergone a historical transformation but still has remained the medium of artistic verbal expression "firmly based in Oromo social life" (Addisu 1990; Shongolo in Baxter1996). Jaarsoo's oral style is therefore innovative in that he developed the

traditional popular genre of *geerarsa*, particularly *dhaaduu* into a more general and more collective mode of communication. He expresses a universalist modernizing sociopolitical discourse, i.e. unity and solidarity among the Oromo in general and mutual trust and peace between his people and other ethnic groups in particular. Abdullahi Shongolo argues that the poet invented this new mode of sociopolitical discourse so that he can speak to the “heart” of his people and to all the peoples fighting each other over resources in Southern Ethiopia. In this regard, many of the verses in Jaarsoo’s poetry are critiques of the existing ethnic conflict between Borana and the Garri, Gabra and the Somali in particular and other social, economic and political problems of the Oromo in general. Jaarsoo suggests that the root cause of the conflict between the Borana and others is “ignorance and misunderstanding” when they have traditions of common origin, shared customs and language (Shongolo in Baxter 1996: 269).

Oral poetry among the Oromo serves such social functions as conflict resolution mechanism as can be seen in Jaarsoo Waaqoo’s poetry. Related to this fact is perhaps Negesso Goba’a’s *suunsuma*. Negesso’s *suunsuma*,¹⁶ is another social critique commenting on his people’s early euphoria when the king was deposed in 1974 and ‘*Land For the Tiller!*’ was the song of the day leading on to the 1975 *Land Reform Proclamation*. Similarly, the social and political context in which Jaarsoo’s poetry is set is “the transitory and contested situation that followed” the fall of the Derg in 1991 (Shongolo 1996; Schlee 1992). This time, when “the new Tigre rulers” came to the area, i.e., Boorana, and “asserted their presence” by establishing a new statehood then representatives of various peoples and ethnic groups (Garri, Gabra, Somali, Borana) in the area started to fight about power sharing in the newly established statehood. At the same time the already existing conflict over resource use and management among the peoples in the area was escalating (Shongolo *passim*).

To Abdullahi Shongolo the conflict in the south was then of two types: one was, between representatives/leaders of the people struggling for representation in the newly emerging sociopolitical order in the country. The other was the already existing but now escalating conflict among the peoples over resources. However, one may argue, there were three modes of competitions prevailing in the south, particularly in Borana and other neighboring ethnic groups as a result of the absence of state structures and institutions then in the south involving the society to make policies workable. First, *resource-based competition* among the clans, lineage and tribes; second *pastoralism* and *farming* as two competitive modes of life; and third, the traditional *autochthonous* people-centered administrative, sociocultural institutions and the *modern state institutions* operating under central government (*Pastoralism Forum Ethiopia*, 2000).

The major focus of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry is a general political and sociocultural message of unity, peace and solidarity among his people and other ethnic groups and the current situation of the Oromo under the "Tigre attempts of Abyssinian neo-colonial rule" (Shongolo, in Baxter 1996:268). He also addresses a "situation in which the social construction of identity and belonging involves a very complex use of criteria of language, decent and cultural practice"(ibid.) often causing conflicts over resource use and management, especially land. Jaarsoo plays down those differences and urges his people instead to focus on unity, peace and solidarity. Jaarsoo was in his early twenties when he composed his poems. He learnt reading and writing in Afaan Oromoo (Oromo Language) in Latin script only later as an OLF soldier

and used writing for revising and perfecting the poetry he composed orally. Born and bred in the pastoralist Boorana community of Noonitu clan as a herd boy at Tuqa near Moiyale, Jaarsoo composed and recorded his poetry, most of it as an OLF soldier (interview with Tarri). He used literacy, Shongolo writes, “only as a mnemonic device to perfect his oral performance; his concern was Orature not literature” (ibid., p270; cf. also *footnote* no.9). Jaarsoo composed poems on various sociopolitical and cultural issues until his death on the 21st September 1994.

ENDNOTES

1. The problem needs due attention because the Oromo today find themselves in a *double jeopardy*: primarily the Oromo are engaged in a reconstruction of the past and in averting the 'history of the Galla' as portrayed by Bahrey (1590) and "used by historiographers as written source material for the study of the Oromo past, became not only their international image but was incorporated into, and became part of, the Oromo self-image." See Gemetchu Megersa's essay in PTW Baxter (1996, pp92-102). At the same time, the Oromo today find themselves in a serious sociopolitical situation under the present regime and are engaged in a national struggle for self-determination as addressed in the works of Jaarsoo Waaqoo and other Oromo individual (oral) poets. See Addisu 1990, 1994; Schlee 1992; Shongolo 1996. See also Mohammed Hassen who bluntly declares that "...the Oromo language, the core of national identity, was the one language that was most disparaged and least studied in Ethiopia" (in Baxter ibid. p71). He adds citing Mekuria Bulcha (1994:9): "From 1942 to 1974 Afaan Oromoo was the only language in Africa that was banned from being used for preaching, teaching and *production of literature...*" (emphasis added, ibid).
2. See Baxter *Voice, Genre, Text* (1991, p5) where he cites T. Todorov for an argument different from the present: "... every interpretation of history is based on the *present*, just as that of space starts with *here*, and that of other people with *I..* ”
3. *Finna* is a very complex concept to pin down. On one hand, it is understood among the Booran as *suga*, abundance/health. Tarrii, for example, says if the living condition for the people and the livestock is suitable, the Borana say it is *finna*, finna Waaqaa. Ton Leus puts this as "life all given by God"/Waaqaa. (See Ton Leus, *Borana--English Dictionary* 1995, p297.) Ironically, where the grass and water is scarce, the condition of the animals, the country and of the people can still be healthy. *Finna*, therefore, is not a matter of quantity, Tarri adds. On the other hand, *Finna* can also represent a bad time or *hard times* "when a government is oppressing people putting them in prison etc" (Leus Ibid) or when the cattle, the people or the country is not in a good condition even when there is a lot of food, grass and water (cf. Gufu Oba 1989). Still more, *finna* is the phases of development, which constitutes the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural life aspects of the Oromo over time

(cf. Gemetchu 1993, and in Asafa 1998, pp.30-31; see also Aneesa Kasam's essay "The Oromo Theory of Social Development" (Asafa *ibid.*). *Finna*, among the Macca Oromo, particularly the Horroo, is 'kin' what the Booran call 'firaa-fiixaa'. For the purpose of this part of the study, however, the researcher has adopted the Oromo 'stages of development' as the meaning of *finna*.

4. In folkloric studies, in diachronic terms, "discourse is produced both in historical and social terms" (Muana 1998, p.50 citing Bauman and Briggs 1992; Urban 1994).

5. In this respect, at least two conditions seem to be indispensable: one, to identify and critically examine *what external conditions* (sociopolitical economic cultural, or any others) and *how* they often suppressed the Oromo literary activity; two, how those external and internal conditions affected the composition and performance of Oromo oral poetic genres. These two points may require a fully-fledged research of its own kind.

6. By '*cultural productions*' the researcher is to mean oral literature, especially oral poetry, other than other cultural artifacts. Among most African writers, literature is understood as "an art and cultural product" (see Ojaide 1996:ix).

7. See Shongolo in Baxter 1996, p269. Shongolo says that Jaarsoo's poetic style is an '*innvoted*' geerarsa genre. In Shongolo's words, Jaarsoo's style is "a new mode of expressing modern, generalised and collective--in contrast to the geerarsa's traditional and individual praises--political values and goals among the Boran" (in Baxter 1996, pp269ff).

8. See Addisu 1990, 1994.

9. Professor Sumner's Philosophical analysis of *Oromo Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Folk tales and Folk songs)* lays a foundation indeed for the study of Oromo (Oral) Literature. His works in series are: *Oromo Wisdom Literature Vol I (1995)*, *Anthology of Oromo Wisdom Literature (Proverbs, Folk tales and Folk songs) (1996)*, *Oromo Wisdom Literature Vol II, Songs (1997)* and *Oromo Wisdom Literature Vol III Folk tales (1997)*. However, Sumner collected and analysed in English those texts/works already published in different languages (German, French, and Italian) in isolation from their social, political and cultural context.

10. It should be made clear that in this study Jaarsoo's poems are transcribed as *Finna San Gama (FSG) or Beyond Adversities* since the poet addresses the *present severe condition* the Oromo are put in, the *national struggle* toward self-determination the nation is engaged in and the *hope and aspirations* of the people in the *future*.

11. See Schlee and Shongolo who contend that Jaarsoo "has never gone to school" (p. 230), to which informants, Qararsaa and Tarii, agree. A. Shongolo writes the poet learnt reading and writing in AO, the Oromo language, when he was an OLF soldier. He adds that Jaarsoo "used literacy only as a mnemonic device to perfect his oral performance" (in Baxter, p270).

12. Jaarsoo's brother and informants agree that the poet composed several tapes in his lifetime.

13. Other researchers got the chance to talk to the poet himself. See Schlee and Shongolo 1992 in R.J. Hayward and I.M. Lewis (1996: 230). They say that Jaarsoo's "motivation is political mobilization and he has given us permission to make transcriptions and translations with this [his political motivation] in mind" (*ibid.*) from a 90 minute declamation of political poems.

14. *Danbala* is one of the lines of *hariyyaa*, agegroups, so: "*Danbal' Diidaa, Danbal' Bulee, Danbal' Areero...*"

The other *hariyya* line is *Wakor*, so *Wakor Waaqoo, Wakor Liiban, Wakor Soraa etc* (interview with Tarri, see also Ton Leus 1995:188).

15. Of *continuity* and *change* the researcher agrees with what Mario I. Aguilar writes (Aguilar 1998): "...I have argued that the foundation for each generation's choice has been a response to external factors in which *survival and continuity* (emphasis added) have been key" (p254). He adds that the "need for *continuity* has meant change, through a process in-built in ...Boorana society, that of diversification. Aguilar's conception of *continuity and change* in the life of the Waasoo Boorana is congruent with Baxter's *Nagaa Boorana* (1965) or Helland's *political viability* of Boorana pastoralism (in Baxter et al 1996) that "response to ...crisis or conflict has been aimed at keeping and increasing that *Nagaa Boorana*" (ibid.). In this *Epilogue* to his *Being Oromo in Kenya* (1998) Aguilar concludes the Boorana preoccupation with keeping the *Peace of the Booran* and "Those processes of conflict and consensus have shaped and continued shaping a new body of Borana oral tradition and custom..." (ibid.).

16. Negesso's comment was that the rapid sociopolitical change of the time was unpredictable and nothing good or bad was known yet about the military junta (Negesso 1994 *passim*).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter literary and sociological theories related to the analyses of (oral) literature/poetry are presented in two sub-topics: *some theoretical considerations*, and *review of related studies*. Under *theoretical considerations* alternative approaches for the sociological analysis of Oromo literature/poetry will be discussed. And, in the *literature review* section works relevant to the study of the *geerarsa* genre and the *content* of Jaarsoo's *narrative poetry* will be reviewed.

2.1 Some Theoretical Considerations

In the field of social sciences, studies focus on the close investigation of people's cultural activities, traditions and human communication, not just on building theory.¹ Ruth Finnegan in her *Oral Tradition and Verbal Arts* (1992) rightly argues the importance of theoretical assumptions is "best recognized explicitly" since the conduct of research inevitably necessitates some theoretical framework (p25). She adds, "the role of theory is just to facilitate the study" (ibid.). There is, however, the need to be "open" to cultural specifics, Finnegan stresses, rather than sticking rigidly to a single "theory".

Among the debates and controversies within social research some relate directly to 'oral traditions and verbal arts'. In this regard, there is a 'counter trend' against the long tradition of analysis through frameworks and categories set by outsiders. Hence, there is a shift of

focus towards “exploring people’s own views and artistry” (ibid. p26) while debates still center on to what extent the researcher accommodates existing cultural specifics and individual personalities and events. Some awareness of current theoretical trends and interdisciplinary approach is therefore necessary to avoid the chance of falling into naïve preconceptions and 'laboriously rediscover' what is already known.

In the present research, a socio-cultural model is believed to sketch some sequential and hierarchical order of literary critique as a more detailed methodology for the sociological analysis of Jaarsoo’s narrative poetry. In this regard, a combination of *social development theories*, *conflict theory* and some tenets of *nationalism* accompanied by the native Oromo *finna 'theory of social development'* will lead the present study towards the sociological analysis of the subject under inquiry. Each of the theories, though interconnected, is thought to be pertinent in its own way as an inclusive framework for the analysis of Jaarsoo's poetry both from literary and sociological perspectives. For the sake of convenience, the researcher has merged the literary and sociological alternative approaches into one as *socio-oral literary approach*.

Conflict theory and *development theory* are employed in this study to describe *what* confronts the critic in Jaarsoo’s poetry. That is, Jaarsoo’s poetry seems to be dictated by and react to the immediate sociopolitical determinants and economic conditions of the time that demanded the poetry. The *oral literary* model serves to stipulate influences of the *geerarsa / dhaaduu* on Jaarsoo’s poetry and *how* the recital poetry conveys the intended message (whatever) in each of the recordings. The *prescriptive* aspect of the model would detail a method for other related generic considerations subjected to further critical analysis. In this study the “*descriptive*”

model accounts for *what* it is that confronts the critic/researcher; the *prescriptive* suggests *how* it might be integrated within an ordered analysis. That is to say, the *descriptive* model “provides a description of a single given case exclusively; the other offers a more generalized analytical strategy” (Danow 1997:178, emphasis added).

“Sociology of Oromo Literature”, i.e., sociology of literary study—though premature it may sound—is forwarded not as a ready-made literary theory off hand or as a monolithic precept/discipline but as a dynamic social and literary theory. Set within the proliferating disciplines related to Oromo culture, philosophy, history and political economy, the endeavour to establish such a viable “poetics” as an alternative model may serve to meet the proclaimed need for a consistent and uniform method of interpretation of Jaarsoo Waaqoo’s oral poetry. *Poetics*, to Hrushovski, is:-

the systematic study of literature as literature. It deals with the question ‘What is literature?’ and with all possible questions developed from it, such as: What is *art in language*? What are the *forms and kinds* of literature? What is the *nature* of one literary *genre* or trend? What is the *system* of a particular poet’s ‘art’ or ‘language’? How is a *story made*? What are the *specific aspects* of works of literature? How are they constituted? How do *literary texts* embody ‘non-literary’ *phenomena*? etc. (qtd in Rimmon-Kenan 1983:2, emphasis added).

In the present study issues of sociological nature beyond those literary ones (poetic style, structure and prosodic effects) are: *the embodiment of ‘non-literary’ phenomena* in Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry, the *intention*² as observable in the text and determining the author's poetic device, and also the ‘*nature and trend*’ of the literary genre as compared to other Oromo oral poetic genre(s). In analysing Oromo folk song, for example, *geerarsa/dhaaduu*, what

determines the poetic content/style is not the poet's *conscious intention* but the *intention realized* in the song itself. Hence, the major concern in such a sociological analysis is not with distinctions between stylistic techniques in the formalistic sense but with the singer's/reciter's view of the world, with his attempts to reproduce this view which constitutes his intentions as the formative principle underlying the content and style of the work (cf. Udena 1993: ix and 12).

As regards the development of theoretical perspectives in the field of social sciences, Finnegan claims the nineteenth century preconceptions are still current to some extent, i.e. "the binary 'us'/'them' opposition develops in both social theory and popular understanding" (Finnegan 1992:27). That is, *nationalist movements* were preoccupied with *traditions* and *roots* which led in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century to search for 'folk' identity and to the collection and creation of texts exemplifying national culture and "providing a focus for nation-building". To these early collections and studies, 'Oral traditions' and roots or 'nationalist theme' were central.³ Jaarsoo's poetry best exemplifies the search for national identity, "*return to the source*". The focus of his poetry is on *reconstructing the past* while *deconstructing* the current socio-political injustices, and the creation and collection of texts as it was the case in the ex-colonial nations and the 19th and early 20th c Europe (Finnegan p.27).

Interest of the *Marxist* tenet is in questions of power relations and conflicting interest groups and interpretations in contrast to the homogeneity pictured in *functionalist* or *romantic* analyses. That is, interpretation of multiple 'meaning' is not just in the text itself or in 'free' and independent individual authors/poets but related to current social conditions. The evolutionary influences within Marxism, Finnegan claims, have sometimes found expression

in theories about 'stages' of society⁴ or related to particular genres: fairy tales, for example, are of pre-industrial origin and hence of only marginal interest to later modern industrial society. The question of literary taste of the society seems to be determined by sociocultural, economic and political development phases (*finna*) of the society at certain stage in time.

In the Marxist perspective, the *production* and *consumption* of art is a proper object of study, not just style, meaning or earlier history, leading to such questions as: *how* are particular literary forms composed and circulated? *in what conditions* are they composed? *by whom* and *to whom* are they composed? and, *in whose interest* do they provide message? These and other related issues are discussed in the sociological analysis of oral poetry. Finnegan says, those points are not exclusively Marxist because, everyone is now, at least up to a point, interested in social behaviour and contexts and relatively "sensitized to the possibility of opposing interests" (p36). Many of the above questions are therefore not distinctively Marxist. They have become absorbed into the social scientific repertoire in general or woven into other approaches. Thus, these approaches are labeled as Marxist "only when they are articulated explicitly" using some terminologies particular to Marxist perspective (ibid.).

Sociological theorists 'do sociology' focusing on particular aspects of what is going on. That is, they approach their subject matter with certain assumptions, within certain framework of analysis, and they emphasise particular research methods to answer particular types of questions they want answered. Their research is based on the ways of looking at things which sociological theories advance. Thus, what sociological theories do is to lay these out in an explicit and systematic way. Even more important, the systematic way in which sociological theory works is a quality it shares with the theory of any other discipline relevant to describe

ideas of a society's members and analyse the creative and unpredictable dynamics of human interaction (Wallace 1995:3). In the present study, since the sociological and literary theories start with descriptions of such general concepts as *colonialism/neo-colonialism*, *nationalism*, *geerarsa*, *nationalist narratives*, and *genres* the theoretical approach applied to the study is a *deductive* one. The theories lay out criteria/rules about how to classify those general concepts in terms of categories, and then put forward a number of general propositions about the concepts.

Conflict theory describes an arena in which groups fight for power. According to this theory the 'control' of conflict "simply means that one group is able, temporarily, to suppress its rivals" (Wallace *ibid.* p76). *Conflict* theorists see societies and social institutions not as systems in which parts depend on each other and work together in unity to create equilibrium. They focus not on the equilibrium of interdependence and cooperation, but on the shifting balance of power among competing groups. Civil law, for example, as a social institution, Ruth Wallace maintains, is not a way of increasing social integration, but to conflict theorists, it is "a way of defining and upholding a particular order that benefits some groups at the expense of others" (*ibid.* p76). Wallace suggests three interconnected tenets central to this general 'conflict' orientation (Wallace pp76, 77). First, people as having *basic "interests"* in things that are not defined by societies but common to them all. Second, *power* viewed not only as a scarce and unequally divided resource but also as essentially coercive. Third, *values* and *ideas* used as weapons by particular groups to advance their own ends, not as a means of defining a whole society's identity and goals, for example, Menelik's idea of "civilizing" the southern populations. The major strength of conflict theory is in its relating social and organizational structures to *basic interests* of the people and to the *balance of resources*: to

shifts in resource distribution and power. It also insists that *values* and *ideas* must be related to their social environment. Conflict theorists forward tentative distinctions between conflicts stemming from: struggle for scarce resources, regional imbalances, infrastructural investments affecting local systems, state-controlled redistribution, and conflicts concerning the content of national development strategies (cf. Markakis 1998).

Social development theory and the *finna* theory of Oromo development phases are other *alternative* approaches relevant to the sociological study of Jaarsoo's poetry. *Alternative* trend in development theory deals with development in terms of *normative* approach, not in terms of *positive* approach, which is concerned with *how development takes place*. Normative approach is concerned with *how development ought to take place*. The distinction between the two is '*what is*' and '*what ought to be*'. In its normative aspect, a process of growth that does not lead to the fulfillment of basic human needs, and more than that to freedom of expression, self-realization in work is said to be a travesty of development, i.e., not real development. Thus,

there is no way of escaping value judgments in development theory. Jaarsoo's poetic social criticism in the four tapes presented in this study is more concerned with *what ought to be* than *what is*. Thus, the poet's social analysis of *finna* Oromo follows *normative approach*.

By *alternative/another development theory* development strategies should be: *need oriented* (geared towards both material and non-material human needs), *endogenous* (stemming from the heart of the society which defines its sovereignty in its values and the vision of its future), *self-reliant* (that each society relies primarily on its own strengths and resources in terms of its members' energies and its natural and cultural environment), *ecologically sound* (utilising rationally the resources and with the awareness of local ecosystems, global and local outer

limits imposed on present and future generations). An attempt to define *alternative/another development theory* in terms of those principles is not to mean that in the alternative approach there is a universal path to development. There is the tendency that every society must find its own strategy compatible with its needs (in "Dimensions of Another Development", Ch. 5). *Finna Oromo* is such indigenous *development phases* that over-rule other economic and socio-political principles Jaarsoo laments in his poetry as protracted by external pressures.

In discussing *alternative development theory* the *basic needs approach (bna)* is relatively widely acceptable. Human needs in general involve a *universal/objective* interpretation of 'needs' on one hand, and, on the other hand, an interpretation that is *subjective* and historically relative (Lederer 1980). Since it is difficult to find criteria for deciding on the relative importance of needs, the practical value of such an approach (*bna*) is tied to the possibilities of making *priorities*.

The *objective* or *universal* school of *bna* defines human needs as something that applies to all human beings and is quantified, measured. It therefore belongs to the *positive approach* in development theory. Whereas, the *subjective* and *historically relative* human needs are seen in the context of *specific* social systems and cultural milieu. *Basic needs* in this view are *qualitative*. Hence, unlike the *universal, objective* and *quantifiable* basic human needs the *subjective* one covers transcendental values. Therefore, it is relative with respect to different cultures, for which a universal definition is impossible. As it makes life worth living in different cultures, so the *subjective* and *historically* relative interpretation of *bn* is *normative*. In this respect, according to Lederer, to answer that *one must eat* is not enough, but *what this person will eat, how he will eat it* and *with whom he will eat* are equally important (Lederer *ibid.*, p237). It should be noted that in the context of *alternative development theory* the *normative/subjective* and *historically* relative approach to basic human needs is more relevant

to the social analyses of Jaarsoo's poetry for reasons already mentioned in the distinctions made above.

Another development theory implies small-scale solutions than mainstream solutions to solve local problems and, for pragmatic reasons, Third World countries are said to opt for it (Ignacy Sachs 19880, 1974, Stavenhagen 1986 in "Dimensions..." pp186, 187). The outcome of the *mainstream* development strategy is an explosion of ethnic violence, such that Jaarsoo Waaqoo describes in his narrative poetry. The strategy is based on 'people not things', which is ambiguous since "people consist neither of individuals nor of nation states" (ibid. p189).

Development may also be seen in terms of cultural pluralism. Culture related to *development* is defined as the unconscious universal frame of reference, which becomes specific only in confrontation with other cultures. Ethnic groups, however, are most commonly locally based. Their cultural identity is closely related to the ecological particularities of the region and to a certain mode of exploiting the natural resource (Worsley 1984 in "Dimensions..." p194). For example: the Boorana pastoralist community, and the Arsi or Bale Oromo in the highland and their lifestyle exemplifying mixed farming. A process of development that threatens the ecological system of the region may also be a cultural threat against the ethnic group for which the ethnic group is the habitat, even if it is development in the *macro-/functional system*. Regardless of how unrealistic a particular 'nation state project' would be, there is an in-built bias against ethnic identification and in favour of national identification. So as a basic component in *another/alternative development*, Rodolfo Stavenhagen suggests that a development process appropriate for a particular ethnic group can be called *ethnodevelopment* (1986), together with *egalitarian* development, *self-reliant* development, and *eco-development* or *sustainable* development, which are all mutually supportive.

Egalitarian development implies development consistent with basic needs and self-respect, i.e., it involves equal distribution of resources. Whereas, *self-reliant development* strategy is based on the principle of autonomy, but *eco-development* and *ethnodevelopment* are two aspects of the same thing in situations where ethnic identity is territorially based. The 'national' culture is often rather artificial, compared to regional and ethnic cultures--unless one particular sub-national culture is elevated as a national culture, like the Amhara-Tigre culture in the Ethiopian empire.

In any case ethnodevelopment is a challenge to the nation-state. On the basis of the premise that different communities in the *same* society have distinctive codes of behaviour and different value systems (Worsley 1984), ethnodevelopment is development within a framework of *cultural pluralism*. A hegemonic concept of culture as diffused downwards and assumed to result in a shared national culture implies an ethnocide in the name of building a nation state. This must be described as an agent of anti-development unless it resolves such a fundamental contradiction in the 'nation state project', the problem which cannot be resolved unless the project is redefined. Pastoralist way of life, for instance, has been ignored as backward and resistant to change in the Ethiopian context of economic and land policies (*Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia, 2000*).

Thus, the content of a *development strategy* enforcing cultural variety and ethnodevelopment can be spelled out as: decentralization, participation, rural rather than urban bias, territoriality, self-reliance, ecological balance, etc. Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetic social analysis shows that the ways the Ethiopian regimes have been formed and ruled so far are generally an underlying cause of ethnic violence. The ethnic conflicts and liberation movements may have some

historical functions and indicators of modifying the nation-state project and the pattern of development inherited in it.

The *finna* theory of Oromo development phases is another theoretical consideration relevant to the present study worth discussing. *Finna*, its meaning varies from place to place among the Oromo and in other Cushitic linguistic groups, e.g. the Afar. Among the Boorana it can mean ‘bad’, ‘adverse condition or situation’, “a bad time”, for example, (Leus 1995:297). To Gufu Oba, a Boorana himself, “the Boorana describe events that influence their lives as *finna*” (Gufu 1998:13). Hence, it includes *suitability factors* such as climate, ecology and *sociopolitical events* that have direct bearing on the lives of the people and the livestock. Gemechu Megersa describes it in his dissertation (1993) as Oromo *developmental phases*. The concept *finna* is much wider as it crosses linguistic boarder into other Cushitic group, namely the Afar. ‘*Finna*’ to the Afar is what *Gadaa* is to the (Boorana) Oromo and *Heera* is to the Somali all being “great pastoral institutions on which the social economic and political organization of the respective communities survived for centuries” (Yacob in *Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia*, 2000:30).

For the purpose of this study, in this context, the meaning of the term and its implications are limited to the “*suitability factors*” referred to, i.e., to the socio-political factors that affect the life situations of the Oromo. The situations are: the social development stages Gemechu Megersa and A. Kassam describe as *guddina*, *gabbina*, *bal’ina*, *badhaadha*, *hormaata*, *dagaaga*, *dagaa-horaa* (Gemechu, *ibid.*, cf. also A. Kassam in Asafa 1998:30-31). These cumulative interdependent development phases, *finna*, according to Gemechu and Kassam, embody the entire historical and contemporary social changes that have in turn resulted in new social order. Those changes in *finna Oromo*: sociopolitical, economic and cultural

development phases must have influenced Jaarsoo's poetry thus transcribed as *finna san gama*, 'beyond adversities'.

To Aneesa Kassam, in her “The Oromo Theory of Social Development” *finna* “represents the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers” (cf. in Asafa ibid.p30). According to Kassam, the *generation* transforms, enriches it further and will bequeath *finna* to future *generation* (emphasis added). *Finna* describes the inner potential of society as developing on the basis of cultural roots which it has laid down. It describes the consistent inner movement of the development phase and keeps it on track in light of the socio-cultural needs and life situations of the society throughout the historic periods. When that movement is disrupted culture as a social practice starts to regenerate itself in the process of reacting to the impeding external force. Kassam's study shows that the Oromo have had such a complex theory of social and cultural development that well dictates Oromo literature and now Jaarsoo's poetry. While he is reconstructing the past and foreseeing the future perhaps this is Jaarsoo's mission to direct the vision of this generation towards building free and independent Oromia State *beyond all adversities*. It is within such an ideological framework that Jaarsoo recites his poetry.

From *nationalist* viewpoint the *colonial/neo-colonial* theses comprise the multi-faceted nature of sociological theories used in the study of Jaarsoo's *narrative poetry*. In defining colonialism in the Ethiopian context Asafa Jalata's *Oromo Nationalism* (1998) and Masay Kebede's *Survival and Modernisation* (1999) are most relevant to the purpose of the present sociological analysis of Jaarsoo's poetry. Asafa declares that there were two major *historical waves* from the 17th to the mid-20th centuries: the first wave, according to Asafa was colonisation, genocide and the continued subjugation from the 17th to the mid-20 century. The

second wave was the liberation movements and revolutions not yet completed to avert the first historical wave and to reconstruct the past. Such liberation movements of the Palestinians, Kurds, Chechnyans, West Saharas, and the Sidamas, and Afars are best examples of the second wave. Asafa adds, "Amharas and Tigrayans colonised Oromos" without the superior technological and administrative skills of their own, but with the help of those European powers. Hence, Jaarsoo's allusion to *nam'-adii*, 'white-man' speaking of Western support to fulfill the Ethiopian colonialism of the southern populations. The Oromo liberation movement, as an integral part of the second *historical wave*, has evolved as a cultural and political force to challenge Ethiopian colonialism to the present (Asafa *ibid.* p. xi).

In defining colonialism in the Ethiopian context those defenders of the *colonial thesis* agree that all the characteristics of European colonialism are also true to the southern conquest of the Oromo. By this colonial thesis colonialism occurs when carriers of different system penetrate into boundaries and territories of others to forcefully impose a different pattern of production and new set of socio-political and cultural rules (Mesay 1999:11). Ethiopian colonialism, like the European colonialism is a "violent process of conquest, annexation, incorporation and subjugation of peoples and territories involving massive use of manpower, technology and strategy whatever to overcome every resistant force of the victims" (*ibid.*). From the viewpoint of the *colonial thesis* it is agreed that the expansion triggered by Ethiopian economic necessity, though not on the same level with that of the European domestic economic needs, is equally colonial as that of its European counterpart. Thus, while Menelik's army had great quantity of firearms purchased from the European colonial powers by the resources such as slaves, gold, ivory and coffee from the south the latter had nothing except traditional weapons (Asafa 1998:2).

In distinguishing between Ethiopian *expansionist colonialism* and western *imperialistic colonialism* Messay points out that *expansionist colonialism* is an extension of the prevailing system, whereas *imperialist colonialism* is a subordination of the existing system to the superior one (Messay, *ibid.* p18). In Jaarsoo's poetry, however, one may infer the extension of expansionist colonial system is made possible only when the subordination of the victim's socio-political and cultural system as inferior is successful. One characteristic feature inherent to the *neo-colonial* order is that it endures that one ethnic group has dominance over the other(s). It is also characterised by interests of the "*national*" sabotaged by interests of the ruling outsiders. One method of survival that *wayyane* uses in Ethiopia today is granted by assembling different ethnic groups along their linguistic and socio-cultural boundaries and then hatching many such *PDO*'s as the *OPDO*, i.e., the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (Leenco 1999).

In spite of other facts to the contrary, opponents of *colonial theory* declare that the real coloniser of the southern population was the West; Ethiopia was only the agent. Thus, Messay Kebede maintains this view of opponents of colonial theory: colonised peoples cannot be accused of being themselves colonisers, any more than the Indian troops used by the British colonial power for its imperial expansion (p19). However, be it enforced by loss of sovereignty itself, or for some 'civilising' mission, to 'pacify' the south, as it were, to provide peace, law and order (cf. Wallace 1995), or for the purpose of extracting raw materials, Ethiopia's colonial expansion conquered the Oromo and responded to its own domestic economic needs through comparable ideological justifications with the West. If Ethiopian colonialism is lowered to an *agent* position in the south but following the withdrawal of the European born representatives, Oromo speaking Habashas were put in charge to keep intact

the colonial legacy: socio-political and economic institutions in Oromoland. It is such a neo-colonial doctrine characterised by *wayyane's* political system of ethnic favouritism and foreign alliance that Jaarsoo strongly condemns in his poetry.

Each of those theories discussed in the present chapter shades light on different aspects of the respective human society. They are all "nets cast to catch what we call 'the world'--to rationalize, to explain and to master it" (K. Popper quoted in Ruth Wallace's *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (1995:12). The *sociology of Oromo literature* accompanied by a combination of various social development theories must remain open to modification and revision, and proceed beyond a single entry into the *always-to-remain-open* catalogue as dynamic as literary process. The problems Jaarsoo addresses in his social analysis are also dynamic: *uneven development* and *ethnic favoritism, cultural oppression, regional and ethnic movements, resource competition, unclear policies* and *government interventions*. There are also consequent *ethnic conflicts* and call for '*peace by peaceful means*', as Prof. John Galtung (1996) puts it, in the poetry leading towards the ultimate goal of the Oromo struggle, i.e. *self-determination*.

The move *towards a 'sociology of Oromo literature'*, may thus be viewed in terms of the literary (the oral) and sociological (conflict theory, development theory) conceptual frameworks discussed in this section as an interdisciplinary approach. But, why a sociology of Oromo literature? Logically speaking, the move '*towards*' also implies the move '*away from*'. First, it is a move *away from* the traditional tenet that oral literature or oral poetry is a definitive and unitary body of art that can be clearly differentiated from literature '*proper*' or,

as it were, 'normal' poetry. Whereas, it may well be argued that the nature of oral poetry can cast light on literature 'proper' as having some common elements to share (Finnegan 1977:2).

It is also a move away from the wrong impression so often gained from sociological writings or impressionistic suggestions such as Ullendorff's, of the artistic and intellectual barrenness of non-literate cultures. Third, it is a move away from the romantic and mystical notion that a work of art is a magic creation of 'genius', mysterious product of an individual feat rather than "the complex construction of a number of real historical factors" (Wolff 1993:1). Finally, it is the move away from the idea of fixed, normative or 'pure' genres and lead towards "taking the accounts of emergence, transformation, obsolescence... as positive realities of genres... not merely as forms of defect or breakdown in generic order" (Dorst qtd. in Finnegan 1992: 137).

The sociology of literature poses questions that relate to the social functions of literature: what does literature do in society? does it reflect, more or less directly, the existing sociocultural and political order of the society? is that reflection selective or covers 'the whole society'? does literature go beyond a passive mere reflection of the *status quo* and play more active role in the 'working' of the society? The idea of considering literature as a social practice is perhaps unquestionable. This is so because in such a time of rapid and radical changes literature, as it seems, is not the intellectual and imaginative product of an isolated individual sitting by himself/herself and passively reflecting on the daily activities of man in relation to his surrounding. It is rather a cultural creation of a social group with whom the artist identifies himself, and for whom he is a spokesperson, as argued by several literary/social theoreticians (M. Corse 1997; Ojaide 1996; Ngara 1990; Irele 1990; Natharet 1977; Mutiso 1974; Fanon 1963).

The *changes* that occur to man are social, economic, political, cultural and religious in their nature. And so being, they involve man in the very social practice of cultural creation, i.e., oral poetry for example as a "*practical agency*" in reaction to that common and universal/cultural human experience: birth, life, love and hate, success and failure, pain, joy, suffering and death etc. (Mutiso 1974:4). Hence, this necessitates the need for sociology of literature.

Social cohesion is another cardinal point that makes literature so socioculturally oriented and so distinct from literature of the Western culture in which "self-reliant individualism" is the core attribute of the national character (Corse 1997: 2). In this respect, social cohesion among the Oromo is, like in any other African societies perhaps, rather centered on the Oromo holistic image of mankind: "*we are, therefore I am*" (Imbity qtd. in Ojaide 1996:3; Sumner 1996; cf. also Sekou Toure's idea of '*communocracy*' qtd. in C. Wauthier 1978:173). Similarly, social cohesiveness and communal spirit is so important and is the center of material and non-material Oromo culture (Asafa 1998; Baxter 1996; Gemechu 1993; Bartels 1983). Jaarsoo Waaqoo, in reciting his poetry address his people collectively as "we" while referring to that collective experience of his people as determined by the existing political, sociocultural and historical factors. Those factors in turn define and express themselves in his oral poetry marking off for it a "broad area of reference" in which the poet addresses the enormous problems he thinks common to his people. So, it seems logical to conclude that the poet and his works, set in this context, are socially committed to the immediate society which gave birth to both the poet and his poems.

Such a criticism of sociopolitical real life situations as a major concern of literature in Africa today is what Harold Bloom calls "*extratextuality*" (qtd. in Ojaide1996). That is, the focus is on the sociopolitical issues that affect the poet and his people. And thus, grounded in the ideas and problems inherent in the poet's own particular society, the study of poetry in Africa opens a way for the "construction of social and political theory" (Muutiso 1974). That is why *conflict theory* and *development theory* as social theories are thought to be pertinent in the analysis of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry and in the construction of Oromo literary/critical practices.

The new paradigm emergent as a theory must therefore value and equally recognize the work of art "as exemplary expression of a people's collective struggle for cultural and political identity" (A. Williams in *RAL* Summer 1991:12).⁵ To solve the problem of critical practice some scholars replace the individual "intersubjectivity" with the more collective '*sociolectic*' critical term "interdiscursivity"/"intercollectivity" (Schipper in *RAL*, Winter 1993). To Peter Zima, for example, 'interdiscursivity' and historical/cultural relativity are indispensable. Interdiscursivity emphasises awareness of the collective '*sociolectic*' nature of all theoretical discourses. And it is this assumption, to Zima, that structures the background knowledge of the critic and forces him to acknowledge and examine the content of the counter discourse (Schipper p45).

In a world where humanity is besieged by hunger, want, disease and absolute misery, in a world driven by exploitation of the black by his kind, and in a world of inequality, *no criticism can be innocent*. Thus, Jaarsoo's poetry is political since Jaarsoo recites about power relation in the present Ethiopia (see Gunther Schlee in Hayward 1996: 229-42 and A.

Shongolo in Baxter 1996: 265-90). Schlee and Shongolo label Jaarsoo's poetry as the 'poetics of nationalism' and nationalism "...is above and beyond all else, about politics, and that politics is about power" (Briecully 1982 cited by M. Hassen in Baxter 1996:70). To be free from poverty and exploitation experienced throughout successive historic periods, the poet strongly believes, the Oromo should actively participate in the struggle for self-determination led by the OLF: "power, in the modern world", M. Hassen stresses, "is primarily about control of the state".

In such a society engaged in redefining itself, reconstructing the past and directing the sociopolitical order in some way the role of the critic seems to be predetermined. A. Williams contends "the task of critical disclosure is by its very nature political" (RAL ibid. p19), and therefore, literary study in Africa today, Williams rightly argues, "must be informed by an interpretation of diverse texts by political reality and by the interpretation of political reality by diverse texts" (ibid). Text is a living body within a large whole. It is not just literary text *per se*. Text is rather the sociocultural events: social relations, complexities, nuances and intricacies of cultural ensemble that informed the poet and his works. It is the institutions, events, personalities and artifacts prevailing in the cultural processes that are all the living parts of the literary text. In his book titled *Socio-Political Thought in African Literature* (1974:7) Mutiso's hypothesis is stated as "all literature in the African context tends to function as a kind of social commentary." Ojaide also adds, there is a shift of attention from the *white/black* conflict to the *black/black* conflict in modern African poetry (Ojaide 1996:23). John Ekwere also declares "the palefaced strangers" and "foreign hawks" no more prey on us "But we on us!" (Mutiso p.12).

Now, which literary theory? And, to ask as Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) asks, is it merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western critic to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation? Or still, is the 'Western' theory collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as a powerful block, as still Bhabha interrogates? A possible answer to these questions is perhaps what follows: to describe a given oral poetry within a totality rather than segments and analyse it such concrete issues as specific historical and cultural formations and the socio-economic and political configurations determine it. That is, the literary paradigm relevant to the studies, i.e. sociological studies of social, cultural and historical life of the people must include a theory of, among other things, how the processing of power in specific historical and sociocultural circumstances affects the production of a literary work itself. Hence, the need for *social development theory*, *theory of conflict resolution*, and the native '*finna*' theory for the sociological study of Jaarsoo's poetry.

A literary theory relevant to the study of Oromo literature/poetry should interrogate the extent to which the work of art is a symbolic resolution of severe conflicts. How to account for differences in relations among peoples belonging to different cultural formation must be given enough room in cultural and literary studies. The place of women and children in the sociocultural life situations, institutions, organizational structures, and community and resource management systems, property rights should also be given enough room. Perhaps only this time is it possible to theorize the role of cultural productions and producers, or poets, alike within the global context of industrialization of culture and literature and resist the "recolonization" of the Oromo culture or at least echo the lament of those who voice its arrested "decolonization". Hence, the study of Oromo literature and of Jaarsoo's poetry as a

social critique should take its place within other Oromo studies based on the *finna* 'social development theory of the society' so that it leads eventually towards the development of Oromo literary and critical practice side by side.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

So far some theoretical considerations and alternative sociological and literary approaches to the study of Oromo poetry (e.g. the *geerarsa/dhaaduu* genre) within a sociopolitical context have been discussed. Next, works relevant to the study of the *content* of Jaarsoo's poetry are reviewed.

Regarding Oromo literature at present there are few studies conducted from the perspective of the life situation of the Oromo that informed the text and the artist. Desalegn Seyum, in his MA thesis "E. Cerulli's Folk Literature of the [Oromo] of Southern Ethiopia: a Critical Evaluation" "(1985), attempts "to show how Cerulli's collection can reflect Oromo culture" (p26) centering on the major objective of the study: "to critically analyse Cerulli's *Folk Literature...* and examine" the cultural and historical significance of the collection of Oromo poetry in 1922 to the life situation of the Oromo in 1980s, i.e. twenty three years ago. Desalegn's study is innovative in many aspects. One is linguistic. For example, the Oromo vowel length had hitherto been denied to have phonetic value, an assumption strongly opposed by Desalegn, and foreign scholars such as Tutscheck, for instance. Desalegn argues that doubling the vowel represents vowel length in Oromo. Second, Desalegn also declares that the pejorative word '*galla*' does not represent 'Oromo', both the people and the language

(cf. T. Zitelmann's "Re-Examining the Galla/Oromo Relationship" in Baxter 1996:103 *passim*).

The objective of Desalegn's study is to evaluate the cultural and historical significance of Cerulli's collections. However, though Desalegn attempts to set his study within its sociocultural context, the attempt made does not seem a success. The reason is that the corpus of oral texts in Cerulli's *Folk Literature* (1922) were those composed in the nineteenth and towards the beginning of the twentieth century (cf. the historical songs) and that 'so much water had passed under the bridge' since then, one may argue, up to the time of the analysis in 1985. Moreover, Desalegn's study is 'textual' "evaluation," as the title of the thesis reads and not a *contextual* analysis as it appears to be. And, if contextual study requires one to go to the source that informed the text and the poet then to "put the text back into history and history back into textuality" (in *Research in African Literature, RAL*, 1997:17), then, Desalegn's thesis, unlike the present study, does not seem to be set within the Oromo socio-political and cultural context.

The second innovative research work relevant to Oromo literary studies is Addisu's Ph dissertation: "The Historical Transformation of a Folk Genre: the Geerarsa as a National Literature of the Oromo...." (1990, see also his article 1994). To Addisu, the primary purpose of his study is to analyse the relationship between the *geerarsa* folk song and Oromo cultural identity both before and after the sociopolitical changes in the Oromo life situation. What makes Addisu's study more relevant to Oromo cultural studies than Desalegn's is that the former provides ethnographic and performance contexts for the *geerarsa* while the latter does not.

Addisu writes that the performance goals of the *geerarsa* singer exhibit the Oromo as a nation aspiring for freedom while resisting external pressure and sociopolitical and cultural domination. He adds that the Oromo political system, *gada* (cf. Asmarom's *Oromo Democracy* 2000; *Gada* 1973) and other traditional values are also depicted in *geerarsa* on such occasion as the ritual and festival *gada* celebration known as *buttaa* or *jila*.⁶ The people's national identity is "survived and maintained", as Addisu argues, "through *geerarsa's* adaptation" in response to those sociopolitical changes (p. viii). Unfortunately, what was once

verbal expression of heroic deeds, songs of triumph over victories, songs of praises is later on transformed into a manifestation of public resentments, into a lament of defeat and solitude, into mute hymns of challenge, which Jaarsoo picks up for the subject of his recital poetry. Thus, Addisu's study lays a fertile ground for the sociological analysis of Oromo literature as in the present study.

Among other local historical, anthropological, linguistic and literary materials related to Oromo studies, Fugich Wako's article "Tradition, Memory, Creativity and the Self in the Personal Narratives among the Borana..." (2002) is another contribution to the study of Oromo literature. It describes the Boorana *personal narratives* like *dhaaduu*, which must have influenced Jaarsoo's narratives. Wako's article is also relevant to this study since it is sociologically oriented.

Sahlu Kidane's MA thesis (1996, published 2002) is perhaps also worth reviewing. The study is a contextual analysis of Borana *prose narratives*. Sahlu maintains that the Borana "cultural life has to be studied *separately*" (emphasis added) though he knows the Borana to be one "half" or "moiety" of the Oromo. One reason, Sahlu argues, is that "[t]hrough their history the Borana's close contact with alien culture is *very minimal*" (emphasis added, p1).

Doubtless the *gada* sociopolitical system is still operational among the Borana Oromo. Also that the Borana mode of subsistence is based on rearing cattle as the predominant life sustaining activity seems to be a conjuncture, not an evident reason that Boorana oral tradition should be studied '*separately*'. Cattle rearing is also one economic base in other parts of Oromia which is accompanied by an oral tradition of its own kind, particularly praising cattle as among the Macca.⁷ That *gada* as an institution is still operational among the Borana and pastoralism is the economic base of the society (the Boran), but Sahlu should not have overlooked one equally important fact related to the life situation of the present-day Oromo in general and of the Borana in particular. The Oromo as the "community of memory and nationalism" (cf. Fugich Wako 2002: 18-34) share *finna*⁸ in common that embodies the Oromo concept of '*social development*' described as having "seven interconnected cumulative development phases" (Asafa 1998:30).⁹

The sociopolitical and cultural changes that have occurred to the Oromo life situation have transformed the *finna* of the Oromo nation as a whole. The degree to maintain the cultural heritage may vary, however, from one community to another. The transformation in *geerarsa*, for instance, is inevitable since there is the dynamics of the cultural, economic and political changes affecting the lives of the Oromo society. Sahlu should not have ignored this reality

common to the Oromo oral culture as dynamic. Addisu argues that such changes that occur to *geerarsa* “seems to be the product of the sociopolitical condition which has created social conflicts” (1990:7, cf. also 1994). These forceful conditions are the cultural domination and political repression which has created deep resentments in the people to be expressed in verbal art.

The binding force of the Oromo cultural life and its fabric is the Oromo *knowledge system* universal both to the Borana and the Barentu as well (Gemechu 1993). To Gemechu Megersa (1993), the division of the Oromo into Borana and Barentu is “conceptual”. That is, the Borana and Barentu are not two distinct personalities or founding fathers. The division is just a “mental one, designating the division of the social body into east and west, laterally” (p32). And according to Gemechu, the *vertical category* shows the family and social relations between the first-born sons (*angafa*) and the younger sons (*quxisu*). By this vertical relationship the Oromo are put into Boorana and Gabbaro, which are traditionally arranged into two moieties of five groups: the Sabbo and the Goona, the Macca and the Tulama, the Raayya and the Asebo, the Sikko and the Mando, and the Itu and the Humbanna (ibid.). It is the Oromo knowledge system universal to the Borana and the Barentu shared among the two exogamous moieties (“halves”) of the five Oromo groups (ibid). According to Gemechu, the three major elements of the Oromo worldview that constitute the *Oromo knowledge system* are the concepts of *uumaa*, *ayyaana* and *safuu* (cf. also Bartels 1983). It is these three elements of the Oromo knowledge system that are the binding force of the nation from East to West and North to South, since to the Oromo, in this respect, the concept of society is not just the sum of individuals but those systems.

If not to delineate the matrices of the study of Oromo prose narratives to certain specific area, more for practical reasons than for attempting to study the culture of one group as a pure entity, Sahlu cannot categorically deny the major common elements that Oromo as a nation share in favour of few peculiarities. Sahlu's conjecture that the *Boorana prose narratives* should be studied '*separately*' is, therefore, no more than technical/methodological to limit his study to Borana (to the Sabbo and the Goona) since it is impracticable for him to reach the whole nation.

The present researcher shares Sahlu's opposition, however, to the Western (literary) theories imposed on the critical studies of African art, except those universal paradigms such as *orality, social development theory* and *conflict resolution theory* in literary and social studies congruent to the native views such as the *finna* 'development phases' of the Oromo. The need to root literary study from its inception within the context of the indigenous people seems to be very crucial. Hence, in spite of wider context, studies in Oromo oral literature are few. Perhaps, the root cause of the problem is two-fold: firstly, there is a general tendency that the term 'literature' seems to subject all oral literature that is not in print to the domain of non-literature based on the etymological root of the Latin word *littera* 'letter' when the term "literature" can, surely, "be used in a sense which departs from its etymon" (Andrzejewski 1985:31).¹⁰

Secondly, there has been an established academic norm among the "Ethiopians" and "Ethiopianists" referring to the sixteenth-century myth recorded by Bahrey, the Abyssinian monk, who wrote *The History of the Galla* (1593), that the Oromo are nomadic pagan herd which swept like a "flood" over the north and north-east Ethiopia. According to Bahrey the

Oromo nation was then a single unitary nation, Borana being an integral part of the nation and ritually the most senior segment. He considered *Gadaa* as a system through which generations of savage warriors terrorized and invaded 'Civilized Christian Abyssinia' (Gemechu 1993, 1996).¹¹

Abyssinian historiographers and chroniclers and expatriates such as Edward Ullendorff wrote erroneous notions about the Oromo and Oromo culture even reporting that “ the Galla had done nothing to contribute to the civilization of Ethiopia” (1965:76).¹² Such prejudiced views towards the Oromo are not uncommon in Ethiopian studies (Abbay 1992; Tareke 1990).¹³ Ethiopian historiographers, chroniclers and other scholars have “put their prejudiced views down in black and white for future generations to contemplate” (Asmarom 2000:5). The problem of a profound lack of critical debate and analysis of Oromo Literature (oral or written) based in the native sociopolitical and cultural context is partly political. Addisu Tolesa states “[r]esearch in *geerarsa* has been forbidden in Ethiopia” (1990: 2). Others also confirm that except some sketchy reports on folksongs and other Oromo folklore genres, full-scale research and detailed contextual descriptions and analysis of texts related to historical subjects and political matters on Oromo were hardly possible (Negaso 1983; Cerulli 1922).

A few native Oromo literates during the last decade of the nineteenth century,¹⁴ such as Onesimus Nesib and Aster Ganon, devoted their folkloristic collection "*Jalqaba Barsiisaa*" 'Oromo Readers' to the '*warra biyya Oromo*', to 'the family of the land of the Oromo'. Thomas Zitelman says, that early attempt to Oromo studies in Europe "marks a further stage" or a good beginning (Bulcha 2002; Baxter 1996:108; see also Pankhurst 1976).

Sheik Bakri Saphalo of Harar, the "great scholar-poet" was another Oromo who committed his life to promoting Oromo language, history and culture. S. B. Saphalo, Mohammed Hassen writes, "produced eight works on Oromo history and culture, and invented the Oromo alphabet in 1956" (in Baxter 1996:73). He also composed poems in Afaan Oromoo (Oromo Language) in praise of the beauty of Oromia, its peoples, rivers, lakes, valleys, mountains and animals. Some of his secular poems deal with the Oromo suffering under Abyssinian colonial administration and he continued with the same venture until he was forced to flee his country to Somalia, and ended his life there in prison.¹⁵ Those challenges in the history of Oromo literature however, are indicators of the existence of early interests and attempts in promoting Oromo language, culture and history among the Oromo despite all the pressures of Ethiopian authorities. Baxter argues the Oromo are "one of the most numerous and productive nations of Africa," but unlike the Zulu, the Somali, Akan, Limba, and Yoruba their contributions to world literature and they themselves as a nation "are hardly known at all" to the outside world (Baxter in T.A. Abdi 1981: v). Such ignorance has in some part been because of "the policies of successive Ethiopian governments which have actively sought to assimilate" the culture/language of the people (ibid).

Summarily, there is no doubt those sociopolitical factors and, in opposition, the ongoing *Oromo cultural movement*¹⁶ will have a direct bearing on the methodological and theoretical aspects of Oromo literature. Such factors (political, social, cultural and economic) that constitute the Oromo collective experience today will also affect every attempt made to reach a proper contextualisation of Oromo literary development and to direct its *finna* 'main decisive development stages' in the right track. That is, the dynamics of sociopolitical/cultural contexts in which Oromo poetry is set will also posit an argument in favour of methodological

shifts, stylistic changes and generic structures as can be exemplified in the discussion of the *geerarsa* genre in the chapter to follow, influencing the critic of Oromo poetry, eager to justify his university training and ever willing to regurgitate canons of the western literary and critical scholarship.

ENDNOTES

1. See Bell 1993:34. A model is however characterised by a graphic or visual representation of facts. According to Bell the formulation of a theory helps the investigator to summarise the previous discussion and guide his future course of action. Thus, a theory is an essential tool of research in that it helps "in achieving clarity and focusing on key issues in the nature of phenomena" (ibid).
2. See George Lukacs's analysis of the role of *intention* in literature cited in Udentu O Udentu, *Revolutionary Aesthetics and the African Literary Process* (1993), esp. "Introduction" and Chapter 1.
3. Amílcar Cabral in *Return to the Source* (1973) asserts, when
repressed, persecuted, humiliated, betrayed by certain social groups who have compromised with the foreign power, culture took refuge in the villages, in the forests and in the spirit of the victims of domination. Culture survives all these challenges and through the struggle for liberation blossoms forth again. Thus the question of a "return to the source" or of a "cultural renaissance" does not arise and could not arise for the mass of these people, for it is they who are the repository of the culture and at the same time the only social sector who can preserve and build it up and make history (p. 61).
4. Cf. the concept of *finna* and Oromo *cultural movement* in Asafa (ibid), Gemechu 1993
5. See also Asafa (1998) "The Oromo Cultural Movement" pp39-42, and "The Struggle for Knowledge: The Case of Emergent Oromo Studies" pp253-77.
6. See Mohammed Hassen's PhD dissertation, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: a History 1570-1860* (1994: 13).
7. Tesema T'a'a writes that pastoralism is a "complex organization of labour" demanding cooperation among the Oromo. There is a general sociological trend Tesema argues in his article "Traditional and Modern Cooperatives Among the Oromo" (in Baxter 1996): "[s]ociologically...all traditional forms of Oromo cooperation are characterised by an underlying mutuality..." (p.203). Despite ecological differences, but such a mutuality characterises the Oromo 'pastoral cooperation' based on divisions of labour, "according, in part, to gada grades and responsibilities" (ibid.). See also Assefa Tolera (1999:87).
8. Aneesa Kassam, in her "The Oromo Theory of Social Development" says, *finna*
"represents the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers and which it transforms; it is the fertile patrimony held in trust by the present generation which it will enrich and bequeath to future generations...it describes a movement emanating from the inside, a developing of the inner potential of society bases on the cultural roots it has already laid down" (qtd. in Asafa ibid. p30).
9. See what Richard A Couto has to say of the "community of memory and nationalism" (in Asafa ibid. p32):

the community of memory nurtures individuals by carrying a moral tradition that reinforces the aspirations of their group...The test of this community is its sense of a common past...there are stories of suffering 'that sometimes create deeper identities...' These stories approximate a moral tradition and turn community of memory members 'toward the future as communities of hope.' Such communities of hope sponsor transforming social movements.... Whether Sahlu's study of Boorana narratives include such "suffering stories" as what Couto writes about is beyond the scope of the present study.

10. The Russian *Slovesnost* and the German *Wolkunst* are such case examples. But the Oromo version *Ogbaruu* "literature" is rather less controversial since there is *afoola* to mean "folklore", though the two distinct lexemes of "folklore", i.e. 'folk and 'lore' are different from *afoola* which derives from *afoolee* "singer", as in Arsi Oromo, or *afoola* 'person who talks a lot', hence, a 'narrator' as in Boorana Oromo (Leus 1995: 20).

11. See Gemechu Megersa in Baxter 1996:97. Gemechu claims: "The ideological and social basis for this persecution of the Oromo was laid in the sixteenth century" when the 'civilized Christian Community' feigned what they claimed to be, in opposition, the 'history' of the 'barbaric pagan Galla' (Oromo).

12. See Asafa (1998:21). Ullendorf even does not recognise or does not want to recognize that "a society cannot survive without producing significant material and non-material culture..." Ethiopian scholars also kept on denigrating the Oromo as having no "cultural substance on which to construct their nationalism" (Tareke 1990:151 in Asafa ibid) or having nothing like an Axumite history to glorify (Abbay 1992:35 in Asafa ibid). Such a dehumanising attitude towards the Oromo has remained the belief of Amhara-Tigre rulers and elites that "to be an Ethiopian, one has to cease to be an Oromo," two things seen as incompatible (M. Hassen in Asafa 1998:188). But as Gemechu rightly puts it, "The Oromo will never become good Ethiopians before they become good Oromo" (in Baxter 1996:101).

13. The Oromo see culture and history differently from the way the Habasha (Amaharas and Tigreans) see it. "The Oromo do not warship individual despots because their democratic traditions have been against despots and hierarchical social organizations" (Asafa ibid). Asafa's comment is a response to Aleme Abbay's an irresponsible comment that "the Oromo do not have 'heroes' like Yohannes and Allula to look up to; nor do they have a major insurrectionary history like the *wayane* in their memory pool" (Abay 1992:35).

14. See Mekuria Bulcha's *The Making of the Oromo's Diaspora* (2002, Chapter V). See also R. Punkhurst "The Beginning of Oromo Studies in Europe" (1976).

15. See Mohammed Hassen in Baxter (1996:73). Shaikh Bakri Sapalo, Mohammed writes, is a 'great scholar-poet' who

"stirred the imagination and captured the love of the Oromo by means of his poems....His poems deals with secular and religious subjects; some of his secular poems deal with the beauty of the Oromo country, its people, rivers, lakes valleys, mountains and animals while others deal with Oromo suffering under Amhara colonial administration".

16. See Asafa Jalata's "The Oromo Cultural Movement" in his *Oromo Nationalism* (1998:39). Asafa argues, "Oromo literature, music, songs, poetry, theatre drama and forms of cultural revival and actions manifest...concepts of the Oromo cultural movement." The Oromo cultural movement embodies concepts that "express Oromo nationalism": *Oromummaa* (Oromoness), *gootummaa* (patriotism), *bilisummaa* (liberation), *gadaa haaraa* (renewed Oromo Democracy), *mootummaa* (state), *nagaa Oromoo* (peace for all Oromoo), and *finna* (development). These lay a fertile ground for the Oromo literary and critical practice to date, the researcher believes, in such a nation engaged in national struggle for independence.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIOLOGY OF GEERARSA GENRE *(the Dhaaduu recitative poems and Jaarsoo Waaqoo's Poetry)*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the *sociological poetics* of the geerarsa genre. It also presents a discussion of the *generic system* of geerarsa song and the *dhaaduu* recitative poem. The overview of historical transformation of 'contemporary' geerarsa as national Oromo literature (Addisu 1990; 1994) presented in this chapter will also lay a foundation for the sociological analyses of Jaarsoo Waaqoo's poetry in the next chapter.

'Contemporary' *geerarsa* has influenced, one may also argue, the poetic style, tone and content of other emerging Oromo (oral) poetry and songs. Jaarsoo, for instance, recites (*FSG II*: 68):

addunyaa karaallee!	in the last days of resistance, Oromo
nyaaphat' dudda nu fe'aa!	there is always a challenge. advance!
ka'ii loladhu Oromoo	or you remain ever a beast of burden!
waarr' nu biraa raa'ate	those who have won their freedom
yoona bilisoomne nu se'aa	think that we have also won ours.

Hence, the Oromo struggle has become a theme of 'contemporary' geerarsa transformed into a *protest song*. It follows that geerarsa now serves as a significant medium of the Oromo struggle which is part of the "sociopolitical revolution and a process of liberation [...] taking place in large parts of Northeast Africa " (Negaso 2000:x).¹

The 'originality' of the geerarsa composition lies in the *creating and recreating* of the themes, phrases and poetic lines or stanzas of the *protest song*, while the 'traditional' element of the popular song geerarsa lies in its function for the *preservation of culture*. Hence, the dual function of geerarsa: first, it is a *political medium* of articulating the political and economic suppression and cultural domination on the Oromo by the Amhara-Tigre rulers in Ethiopia. Second, as a *social critique*, it is a means of preserving sociocultural values and maintaining unity of purpose among the Oromo in the process of struggle for "self-determination including independence" (Negaso 1983; Addisu 1990, 1994:59).

The four-line text below in Jaarso's *FSG II* (p67)

'chaarterii' baananii	the charter is signed! they declare
lama siin hibannu:	(no democracy) no more charter! we rebel:
nu ilmaan Oromoo	sons and daughters of the Oromo!
haa xiloo qarru!	move! grind your spear

depicts the short-lived "*Peace Conference*" of mid-1991 followed by the *Charter* signed by various liberation groups including TPLF/ EPRDF and the *Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)*.² Similarly, the line '**having seen and not possessing it**' in the two *geerarsa* line by Luuccaa in Addisu Tolesa's "Oromo Literature, Geerarsa, and the Liberation Struggle" (1994:159-65) implies a shared grave experience among the Oromo under the new Tigre-led government:

arganii dhabuu kanaa	having seen and not finding/possessing it
nu baraari Waaqayyo!	oh! have mercy upon us Waaqayyo/God!

The *historical significance* of both the song and Jaarsoo's poem is to mark the new phase and continuity of Amhara-Tigre rule in Oromiya following the short-lived *charter*. In Jaarsoo's poem above '**the charter is signed! they declare**' also indicates the frustration of the singer as to what would be the fate of the Oromoo under the TPLF/EPRDF rule. That is what the idiomatic expression "*having seen and not finding / possessing it*" means in the given *geerarsa* context. From the sociopolitical situations of the time both the song and the recitative poem are '*songs of experience*' about power imbalance/relation. The choral repetition in

maddii Killee Leensaa, Killee Leensaa	where rich, green grass is plentiful
dheeddi fardeenillee, fardeenillee	there horses graze,
namuu gamtaa hinqabnee, gamtaa hinqabnee	people without unity of purpose
gamtaan walii hingallee , walii hingallee	organization without coherence
5 jetti jarreenillee , jarreenillee	aliens point finger at to ridicule

comments on lack of unity of purpose among the Oromo (lines 3,4), as a result of which the "*divide and rule*" policy of the Amhara-Tigre domination became a reality. It is with this lack of unity and a viable organization, as it were, that colonizers attempt to justify their conquest: **jetti jarreenillee** (line 5). Hence, the social and cultural significance of *geerarsa* in the above text is to stress on the process of the preservation of culture and identity, unity of purpose and strong organization as very crucial and equally urgent (lines 3,4). Culture, in this sense, is

limited to the Oromo life style: the *daboo* (cooperative work) which involves *geearsa* and other poetic genres; the *gadaa* (democratic system); sense of belongingness to the community, *Oromummaa* (*Oromoness*) and accountability to one's words and actions (Gemechu 1993; Addisu 1994).³

From the above significance of *geearsa*: historical/political and social/cultural, added to its traditional aesthetic value as a means of entertainment, the study of contemporary *geearsa*, one may argue, can lay fertile ground for the *sociological analyses* of Oromo poetry. This chapter, therefore, serves as a transition towards the analysis of *Finna San Gama* in *Chapter IV* where the sociological analyses of the texts and description of the contexts are carried out using alternative approaches of literary and sociological interest: a combination of *oral-literary theory*, *conflict theory* and *social development theory*.

3.2 The Sociological Poetics of Geearsa Genre

The study of *geearsa* discourse as a work of literature constitutes its sociological *poetics*, i.e., in this context, the science of the study of *geearsa* as 'Oromo national literature' (Addisu 1990, 1994). *Geearsa* as a genre is usually identified as a collective noun encompassing the Oromo Oral Poetry of hunting, war and historical and political events (Cerulli 1922; Andrzejewski 1985; Baxter 1986; Sumner 1997). The recorded *geearsa* as an Oromo poetic genre is traced back to the time of Philip Paulitshke (1896), one of the earliest ethnographers of the Horn. Paulitshke provided one *geearsa* text referring to it as *geerar*, perhaps the same as the Somali version '*geerar*' (Finnegan 1977:211). Later in 1922, Enrico Cerulli presented twelve *geearsa* texts, which he transcribed as *geeirarsa* in his *Folk Literature....*

Cerulli argues that *geearsa* is a poetic expression through which Oromo warriors are 'celebrated' by recalling their ancestors and praising their kin on both their father and mother's

sides, whereas *faarsaa* is a praise song by an individual warrior (Cerulli p58; Mohammed 1994:12). There is no criteria of generic classification, however, which Cerulli forwards in his argument as to identify *geerarsa* from *faarsaa* (praise song).⁴ What is clear, as will be discussed later in this chapter is, according to Enno Littmann, the *geerarsa poetics* is characterized by *seven meters* as in the *geerarsa* by a certain singer below:

harreen dudda urataa	a donkey with an open sore on its back
gangalannaa 'naleeluu	cannot roll on its back
nam' aarii garaa qabu	(so much so),
kolfa 'riyyaa 'naleeluu	a man with a wounded heart
	cannot (laugh with a friend), but sighs a deep grief

The Andrzejewskian notion of '*time-free*' and '*time-bound*' category of Oromo oral poetry (1985) may overlap with what can be put as the '*traditional*' and '*contemporary*' *geerarsa* based on the temporal characteristics of its *content* and *real life situation*. *Geerarsa* can be generally put as *Traditional* (Append. B.I) and *Contemporary* (Append. B.II). One may categorize the '*traditional*' '*time-free*' *geerarsa* genre as follows:

1. *geerarsa* of war events also called *historical songs* (Cerulli 1922: 100; Sumner 1997: 39).

Such songs labeled '*traditional*' are also the '*contemporary*' songs of their time. They are therefore '*time-bound*' in a way since they record major events (political or otherwise) of particular time in history (see Appendix B:1).

hunting songs of a) a successful kill of a lion, rhino, leopard, elephant, buffalo, giraffe or of an enemy (see Appendix B:2 (a)) b) *an unsuccessful kill* (Appendix B:2 (b))

c) those who *abstain from the hunting venture for some reason* (Appendix B:2 (c))

3. *geerarsa* of success / failure in life (Appendix B:3 (a) (b))

In addition to those typologies above, there are also songs of '*warm up*' called *cooka*. It is sung in chorus to stimulate the singer at the start, or to let him take breath, collect himself and continue again in the middle, or to wind up his song and give the turn to another singer at the end.

In the background remarks of this chapter ‘*contemporary*’ *geerarsa* is described as a ‘*protest song*’, and is ‘traditionally’ also understood as the Oromo *national literature*. In the following sub-sections, *geerarsa* is discussed in terms of its *subject-matter, occasion, composition and performance*. *Geerarsaa* as a transformed oral genre and as a genre also to be recited, not just to be sung, is discussed in the sections to follow.

3.2.1 The Subject-matter of *Geerarsa*

In spite of new interests and the inevitable changes of outlook consequent on the passing of the old mode of life and mere praises, particularly self-praises, the literary form of *geerarsa* oral poetry still flourishes in most cases as a protest song.

In some types or sub-genres (*gooba, dhaaduu, suunsuma or mirriyisa*), however transformed, *geerarsa* still brings inspiration and a formal mode of literary expression that depicts real situation in life (Sumner 1997) among the Oromo. Speaking of the *geerarsa* sub-genres Baxter (p49) says, "[t]he generic name for hunting and war songs is *geerarsa*" (cf. Cerulli's *gierarsa* 1922:100). *Geerarsa* among the Macca Oromo, Baxter points out citing L. Bartels, is also used to refer to songs of triumph and of a war prisoner (cf. Luucca Abbaa Tuggoo, for his songs in prison). It also refers to the songs of "a man who has 'defeated' poverty" (Baxter *ibid.*).

Even though *geerarsa* as an Oromo literary genre is reported even before Cerulli's *Folk Literature...of 1922* as far back as 1896 (cf. Enno Littman), much still remains to be done. Among other such general problems is the generic transformation of *geerarsa* from the mere praise poetry to a protest song. The performance goals of the *geerarsa* singer exhibit the Oromo as a people aspiring for freedom while resisting colonial and cultural domination. The *gadaa* and other traditional values are also described in *geerarsa* as performed on such

occasions like *buttaa / jila (feasts)*, as it is adapted to the sociopolitical changes during and after colonization.

According to Ruth Finnegan, praises such as *geerarsa* occur among the Oromo "who lay stress on the significance of personal achievement in war or hunting" (Finnegan 1970:111). Like the Somali *geerar*, Finnegan writes, the Oromo *geerarsa* is "often in the form of a challenge, sometimes hurled between two armies" (p211 citing Chadwicks⁵ 1940:548-9). However, in a sociopolitical real sense of the term, *geerarsa* is not a genre merely limited to cataloguing exploits of war, but more than that it has paramount social, historical and political significance. On the rites of passage, the stage or age of *foollee* or *gaammee-gurguddoo* "youth-group", Addisu writes (1990), "is particularly relevant to the process of reciting, composing and singing *geerarsa*" (p108) to show that the *foollee* are initiated into the adult stage once they turned sixteen. The experience and reputation boys establish at this stage of *foollee* provides opportunities for them when they later seek election into the highly valued social position (Asmaron 1973:54-57).

What could not be said directly or through the usual medium of communication on just any occasion is conveyed through *geerarsa*. Jaarsoo for instance recites thus to comment on the existing sociopolitical situation of the Oromo:

**nam' adiin mal' dhahatee
yaad' dhibii nutti hinfinnee?
Goobanaan jaarsa nuu mataa
sobee beeseen nutti hinbinnee**

**didn't he consult the white people
and conform as with new tactics?
hasn't Goobana⁶ hired the elders
and bought them with money?**

(adapted from Schlee 1992, p235)

Using the words '*beesee*' (money), '*nam-adii*' (white man) and *Gobana* (Menelik's warlord), Jaarsoo allusively refers to those Oromo natives in the OPDO⁷ referred to as the proverbial quisling *Goobana* for cooperating with the Tigre-led government so much as Gobana unwittingly cooperated with Menelik in the 19th century long before the rise of modern Oromo nationalism.

By the same token, in the following verse the *geeraraa* 'singer' comments on 'jabana'/bara, i.e. change in time and the consequent worst system using traditional forms: 'yaa jabanaa' / siif safuu!, i.e. 'O time, Safuu! (interjection). Thus he sings,

hindaqqoo qooxii guutuu	the chicken full on the roost,
adalli bijaa godhe!	a wild cat crept in at night and devoured!
misa garaa koo guutuu	bravery I had full my heart
jabanni bijaa godhe	now gone by <i>changes in time</i> !
5 siif safuu yaa jabanaa!	safuu to the changing time!
.....	
ilma namaa rakkiftee	that you have put us in trouble
misa garaatti hambifte!	suppressed bravery in the heart!

(Tasamma 2000:51)

The singer makes no mention of any name but, presumably, there is a general understanding between the singer and the audience that the singer as a social critic is commenting on the *status quo* (lines 3-7) and lamenting the worse life situation he and his people live in (line 6). He is by no means glorifying the existing system. He criticizes the *present time* which 'suppressed' him to succumb to the existing situation (lines 3,4,7). Such songs, i.e., *geerarsa*, are performed on various *occasions* such as the *daboo* (co-operative works) and wedding ceremonies.

Among the main occasions on which *geerarsa* is sung are those connected with hunting and heroic exploits related to war. As a protest song, however, *geerarsa* is sung at a public gathering, in prison and in other similar situations. Traditionally, *geerarsa* as a popular form may also figure at various occasions: for rejoicing not specifically connected with hunting or war, but with such occasions as weddings or naming ceremonies. Hence, the composer/reciter is a hunter, a hero or the rebel who wants to articulate the worse situation he and his people are put in.

3.2.2 Composition and Performance

Under this sub-topic the *composition* (act of producing) and *performance* (act of delivering) of the *geerarsa* genre will be discussed. In performing *geerarsa* the individual singer does not

tend to stand out like a soloist folk-singer in a dominant position as against a passive audience. The singer, instead, interacts with the audience who are waiting to take the turn to sing or to repeat a refrain usually sung in chorus, for example, at a wedding or *gubbisa* (naming-) ceremony.

Born and bred within the Oromo ‘oral tradition’, one is introduced from his childhood to the Oromo poetic world. From birth to the *gubbisa* (naming-) ceremony and throughout every stage of passage a Booran is exposed to some poetic acts that range from varied songs of initiation to different heroic and hunting songs. On such different occasions as homecoming after a successful kill at the *amna* (hunting/fighting) one also does a great deal of exercise before s/he successfully produces song or personal narrative for inclusion in the poetic repertoire at actual performances.

The *geerarsa* composer does the composition spontaneously: while he is on the long walk, while he is alone at work on his farm or while herding cattle, as Areeroo the Booran informant has it. Along forest paths to such a distant farm the *geerarsa* poem also bursts into utterances, which may be the beginning of new *geerarsa* composition. This happens, especially in the case of the Boorana *dhaaduu* according to Qararsa, the *dhaaduu* reciter himself and the informant referred to elsewhere in this study. Often the ‘new’ breed of *geerarsa* (*dhaaduu*) emerges when an unexpected and suppressing event such as a surprise attack of the people by the enemy occurs, generating in the singer troubling emotions, which seek a vent of one type or another.

Jaarsoo's motivation is political mobilization, for instance, when he recites to comment on the new sociopolitical situation of the Oromo under the *wayyane* rule (ibid. p234):

Oromoo, obboleeyyan tiyyaa!
allaattii wal nyaachisuu

Oromo, my brethren, haven't you
stopped even now from throwing

isan haga har'aa hinlakkifne
kan dhufuut' nu yaabbataa,
garbummaan gad nu hindhiifne!

each other to the vultures?
whoever comes mounts us,
servitude has not left us!

The present researcher's informants are unanimous in asserting that geerarsa is the general term for all such original compositions as *dhaaduu* and *gooba* in Boorana (cf. also Baxter 1986). The two-geeraarsa sub-genres, i.e. *dhaaduu* and *gooba*, seem to be created by particular individuals (known heroes, hunters) as distinct from the anonymous traditional geerarsa handed down orally to generations. No one recites or sings the same *gooba* or *dhaaduu* for sure as sung or recited by another hunter or hero, Areeroo and Qamparre agree.⁸

In evaluating the geerarsa piece, according to the informants, the first criteria is *the amount of wisdom* put in the song. That implies *how accurate* or *inaccurate* are the observations made by the singer/reciter about the life situation of the society, the Oromo in general and the Boorana in particular. Added to that is *how humorous* are the remarks made, how far does the diction of the piece consist of idiomatic expressions, words peculiar to hunters and heroes. Metaphorical turns of phrase rather than ordinary words of everyday speech also add to the aesthetic quality of the geeraarsa. Great acclaims are usually given to historical and chronological serious events such as war as well as real-life stories (cf. Sumner's *concrete situation in life*, 1997.) illustrating the efficacy of the thorough recitation in *dhaaduu* or singing in *gooba*.

The second criteria involves *the sound of the geerarsa* and some stylistic traditions or conventional poetic formulas: prosodic effects and rhythm-segments. The lines of the best improvised geerarsa pieces thus constructed, and when intoned, sound more like the traditional song sung by So and So--a well known singer in the public--or that appeals to the conventionally ascertained rules imprinted by tradition in the mind of the singer. Those rules can be prescribed by E. Littmann's the seven-meter principle of geeraarsa as *Maaca Oromo*

sing it (in Addisu 1990). In the Boorana geerarsa genre called *dhaaduu*, for instance, it is conventional to repeat the refrain 'itti deebi'e' / itti deebise' i.e. 'I went on to the war again'/'I beat the enemy again' before one passes on to narrate the series of chronological events. That refrain shows the end of one battle and the beginning of another and of the recitation too, and it goes on.

The best geerarsa singer/reciter at a social gathering, the informants firmly agreed, is the one whose repertoire is the most extensive and accurate, the most balanced in themes (containing humour, just enough amusing geerarsa pieces as effective spice as in the main body of the poems), and the best sung or recited. In this respect, the eyewitnesses he mentions among his colleagues who were on the battle prove from experience the accurately rendered repertoire of a particular *dhaaduu* reciter. Asmarom Legesse provides an example of such a confrontation between a warrior singer and peers when he made a very vague claim in delivery of *dhaaduu*,

Janjamtuu/Gujii simantuu	Gujii adults,
nama kudhanii-lama	twelve men
hareessa qaraa	in the first rush,
anat' ejjeese	it is I who killed

Then an angry mate responded: *raatuu, kijibduu! Nama kudhanii-lama mukatti sii hidhanii?* (you fool, you liar! Did someone tie them to a tree for you, all twelve of them?) And, Asmarom adds, in the midst of laughter then the singer told the truth that he killed only one, not twelve (Asmarom 1973:104ff).

In rendering both 'traditional' and 'contemporary' geerarsa, disjointed phrasing and halting delivery are disapproved. That is, poetical continuity and fluency of performance, especially in the *dhaaduu*, the Boorana speech-like poetry to be recited, are the things that are much lauded. And that is why the geerara 'singer' particularly the good *dhaaduu* reciter habitually controls his breathing action as well. And, that is why he is capable of consistently reciting sustained notes or poetic lines and whole sentences as units of musical phrasing.

Overall, geerarsa maintains the Oromo history and culture both as 'traditional' and 'contemporary' poetic genre through different degrees of composition and performance on various occasions. The Oromo expressed his resentments, lacks and complaints by geerarsa when forced to flee his home, his land or when put in prison. Hence, the geerarsa poetic genre is '*transformed*' into a protest song (cf. Baxter 1986; Addisu 1990, 1994).

3.2.3 Geerarsa as a 'transformed' / 'innovated' Poetic Genre

In Addisu Tolesa's dissertation (1990) and in his article titled "Oromo Literature, Geerarsa ..." (1994), the 'contemporary' geerarsa folk genre is described as serving the purpose of Oromo *liberation struggle*. That can be well justified by Jaarsoo's tape-recording in which he recites

Oromiyaa,
jiruu biyyee marchi lafaadhaa
gubbaat' nu dhalee, nuu kenne Waaqaa
sa'aa namaan horree ilaalaa badhaadhaa
jiruu balchumaa barbaadaa

Oromia,
that Land of abundance and fecundity
on which God created us
that Land which God blessed us with
sons and daughters of man and cattle
our rich Land that which we love
and therefore we seek most!

(FSG IV, cf. Schlee 1992 *passim*; Shongolo 1996 *passim*)

He says that Oromia is the land which Waaqaa (God) blessed the Oromo with (lines 2,3) and therefore the Oromo seek it most. Jaarsoo reclaims Oromia as the 'land of abundance and fecundity' (line 2). Through the words 'love' (line 6) and 'seek most' (line 7) in the recurrent poetic lines above that Jaarsoo uses as a refrain in his tape-recording of the 1992 (FSG IV) he articulates Oromo nationalism.⁹ One can also hear other Oromo individual singers/reciters whose subject matter is topical and/or political. The Arsi *Suunsuma* (Nagesso 1994) or Luuccaa Abbaa Tuggoo's *prison songs* (Addisu 1990), Sheik Bakrii Saaphaloo (M. Hassen in Baxter 1996:73), Sheik Mohammed Xaahir, and Abdaa Garaadaa's oral poems (which Gemmechu recited on an interview with the researcher) also echo, one may assert, the grievances of the Oromo nation.

Jaarsoo's poetry is referred to as the '*poetics of nationalism*' based on the '*innovated*' geerarsa folk genre (Schlee 1992; Shongolo in Baxter 1996), "in which men give poetic accounts of their heroic deeds--and sometimes also, like in the American blues, of their problems and grievances in life" (Shongolo p269).¹⁰ Finnegan (1970) also says that the topical and political function of (Oral) poetry "can be an aspect of work songs, lyric, praise poetry, even...lullaby" (p272).

In her *Oral Poetry* (1977:159), Finnegan adds that performance of poetry designed for propagating policies/political programmes of opposition parties have been common in Africa. Various singers performed such political poetry designed by political parties to put their own case during elections, Finnegan (ibid) claims, hired by opposing political parties. Enthusiastic supporters of particular political parties, in this view, may best design to put their cause through poetry or well represent it in song.

Hence, poetry is used for what cannot be said directly and by taking the place of other sources of information: the press, the radio and publication. Such a case example is that of the Chopi People of Portuguese East Africa, Finnegan declares (1970:273), where public singing is used as a way of expressing public opinion and bringing pressure on individuals:

You, Chugela, you are proud of your position, yet you are only a chief made by the white man

attacks the young chief Chugela who co-operated, according to the comment above, with Portuguese colonising power. Perhaps an instance of such propaganda referring to a political party is Jaarsoo's poem attacking the OPDO ('Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organisation) one of other "*ethnic 'PDOs'*" wayyane (Tigre) organized 'towards the end of 1989' (Mohammed 1994; Baxter 1996):

-OPDO-dhaa ati?
-eeyee

-are you an OPDO?
-yes

-aabboo Rabbi si haa nyaatuu, caqasi!
 sidiin lafaan si barattiif
 dhaab' jettee si geessitee

 haa'teef' aabee si ajjeesifte

-may God ruin you, listen!
 enemy made you his instrument
 and you killed your own people:

 you killed your father and your mother

FSG II, p65

This is a means of communicating the '*hard times*' in history, which is unwittingly siding the enemy against the will and whim of the people, in favour of cowards and opportunists. The poem is, one would rightly argue, the increasingly harsh and direct innuendo of an unsatisfied poet/reciter: '**enemy made you his instrument**' (line 4).

There are such '*abusive* Oromo songs', as Finnegan designates them, (1970, p277) as against ordinary individuals (see Tasamma Ta'a's *collection* 2000:50). Abusive Oromo songs are sometimes directly used as means of social pressure, enforcing the will of public opinion. Though no names are mentioned, unpopular individuals, or those who look for opportunities during such hard times as in the geerarsa song above about *a bad finna* in history (Tasamma, p51) are ridiculed and attacked through geerarsa.

3.2.3.1 Ruth Finnegan on Political Songs

As Finnegan claims, political songs are an accepted type of poetry by African political parties. They were often purely oral among the largely non-literate masses though at times such songs appeared "in writing, even in print" (Finnegan 1970, p 284). And written collections of party songs circulate among the public as a "powerful and flexible weapon in many types of political activity" (ibid) by their apparently innocuous nature.

The poetic genre used for secret propaganda is also the hymns used by the Mau Mau Movement in the early 1950s in Kenya of which L.S.B. Leakey in *Defeating Mau Mau* (1954) writes:

The leaders of the Mau Mau Movement... were quick to realise the very great opportunity which the Kikuyu love of hymn singing offered for propaganda purposes. In the first place propaganda in 'hymn' form and set to well-known tunes would be speedily learnt by heart and

sung over again and again and thus provide a most effective method of spreading the new ideas... This was very important, for there were many who could not be reached by ordinary printed propaganda methods. (qtd in Finnegan 1970, p 285ff)

Finnegan contends that the consequent spread and tenacity of Mau Mau as a political movement was in part the result of those hymns appearing in books and in oral form during the Kenyan national liberation movement in early 1950s.

In line with this, in discussing the problem of whether or not “one type of poetry always goes with a particular form of society”, as Finnegan questions in her *Oral Poetry* (1977:246), generalities do not seem to help much to achieve any new insight as through specific studies to understand how actually poetry functions within the society at a given level of development. The sociological tendency, however, is not the descriptions of specific historical cases but, to sociological analyses of poetry, it is the general relationships and types rather than the unique that facilitate the understanding of the function of poetry at a given level of *finna*/development stage'. Some kind of poetry may seem to fit well with certain type of social order at some stage of society; this may also necessitate constructing typologies of such a kind. In this view, attempts to connect “type of poetry and stage of society” relate to the romantic and evolutionist thinkers of the 19th – century (Finnegan *ibid*).¹¹ It is worth reiterating here the point already made: there is little evidence, if any, that oral poetry always occurs in the ‘changeless’ tradition bound context.

To sum up, it has been argued that oral poetry does not occur in a ‘changeless’ context, that the poet operates, communicates, and even, on occasions, innovates his composition within the realm of the existing conventions. Geerarsa under no circumstance remains unchanged to stand as a universal and special oral style: it is therefore innovated and undergoes some

transformations in the process of constant sociopolitical and cultural changes the Oromo are nationally engaged in.

3.3 A Sociology of Geerarsa Genre

3.3.1 Generic Theories and Methods

The need to base the study of verbal art upon an understanding of genres is one of the basic principles underlying sociological poetics. However, the study of genre is not an end in itself but rather serves as "a means toward the fuller understanding of individual works and of literature as a whole" (cf. P. Bernadi *Beyond Genre* in Fowler 1982, p322).

The sociological approach to genre studies has the basic tenet that "verbal art is a communication event, involving the active social interrelationship of all the participants" (Morris 1994, p160). Pam Morris confirms Bakhtin's argument in "Constructing a Sociological Poetics" saying that in the sociological analysis of the 'communication event' too often the sociological approach is only appropriate to content and to the *extraverbal* situations, i.e., the determining effects of external social forces upon the content. In this regard, the aesthetic form is analysed more appropriately by a non-sociological method of analysis, since form is "intrinsic to the work itself".

In what follows here the *sociological approach* to the immediate determining situation of the *geerarsa poetics* extend to a speculation about the *origin* and a consideration more of *interpretation* and *function* of the genre, i.e., geerarsa, than *generic classification*. As regards generic classification the *two-tier genre system*, i.e. the dilemma of compromising local generic distinctions and conventions on the one hand and the Western-based notions of generic taxonomy on the other (Muana 1998) is another theoretical *impasse* of genre system.

Thus the researcher is urged to rethink the complex problem of generic classification and focus on *interpretation* and *function* based on ethnic genres for "genres should be primarily perceived as conceptual categories of communication and not classification" based on 'ethnic genres' (Ben Amos 1976: 225; Muana 1998: 48).

3.3.2 Origin of Genre

Nothing more than speculation is known about the origin of genres, but it is said: "...genres are as old as organized societies" (Fowler "The Formation of Genres" 1982:149). That is, the concept of literary activity seems to presuppose "there being human institutions" which govern its production also guaranteeing its relationship to human purposes.

The origin of any genre perhaps relates to its double orientation towards social reality: *extrinsically*, genre is determined by external conditions influencing its actualization in real time and space, e.g. the Oromo *dhaaduu* war poem, or the *geerarsa* genre. Whether a particular genre serves a public function, personal, religious or secular in those human institutions reflects its extrinsic social orientation. *Intrinsically*, according to Morris citing Bakhtin, the generic social orientation is determined by the thematic unity of the form. This type of generic social orientation is not understood as the reality produced by content or by the words used but by the generic structure as a whole. Baxter also argues genre is not a timeless and placeless entity. Its existence presupposes the *dialogic* engagement of "particular people" in "particular utterances" with one another, which M. Bakhtin had already noted "the reality of the genre and the reality accessible to the genre are organically related...genre is the aggregate of the means of collective orientation in reality" (cited in Baxter, 1991 p7).

Answering the question "*where do genres come from?*" T. Todorov (1993:15) writes: "Quite simply from other genres" through transformation¹² In his "The Origin of Genres" (the article

first published in 1976, cited in Baxter, *ibid.*) Todorov argues that discourse that deals with genres "is always and necessarily constituted by speech acts" (Todorov, p16). Hence, one may conclude, there is no literature without genre, a system which undergoes constant transformation. Genre, in this regard, is "a characteristic of past literature" (Baxter, p5). According to Todorov a *speech act* "that has non-literary existence like *prayer*" becomes a genre under certain transformations, e.g. *the novel* based on *the act of telling*. He discusses three such case examples: first, '*praying*', which is a speech act; '*prayer*' is a genre (literary or not), "the difference is minimal", he points out. Second, '*telling*' is a speech act, '*the novel*' is a genre since something is being told (narrated) in the novel. Unlike the first, i.e., '*praying*' and '*prayer*' there is now a considerable difference. The third case: the '*sonnet*', which is a literary genre. But, there is no such verbal activity as '*sonneting*', he argues.

Similarly, in the Oromo oral literary tradition there is a *speech act* '*geeraruu*', to sing a genre '*geerarsa*'; there is a *speech act* '*dhaadachuu*', to sing a genre (or sub-genre) *dhaaduu*. In both cases, even the names of the genres derive from the speech acts. Hence, from these few examples, it seems, among the Oromo, a genre does not differ in any way from other Oromo speech acts. However, for the *geerarsa* sub-genres of Arsii *suunsuma* war song, *mirriysaa* of Harar and the *gooba* hunting song of Boorana if there are such speech acts as '*suunsumuu*', '*mirriysuu*' and '*goobuu*' needs a thorough investigation.

Now, let it be allowed that this may be the case: there is no verbal action as '*suunsumuu*', or '*goobuu*' like the '*geeraruu*' or '*dhaadachuu*' speech acts. It follows that unlike for '*geeraruu*' and '*dhaadachuu*' one does not take discursive properties as a starting point to examine the generic system of '*goobuu*' or '*suunsumuu*' if no such a verbal action exists as in the genre '*sonnet*' for which there is no '*sonneting*'.

Tzvetan Todorov's *structuralist* view of "The Origin of Genres" (ibid. pp13-26) and Bakhtin's '*double orientation*' of genres to social reality in space and time are reviewed in this section since both relate generic origin to human interrelationships. So are the *geerarsa*, the *dhaaduu*, the *gooba* the *suunsuma* and other Oromo poetic genres determined by specific situation (intrinsic and/or extrinsic) to emerge in space and time like Jaarsoo's poetry. As generic categories they also 'represent flexible social resources' categorized on the basis of the 'situational factors' (in Muana 1998, p48). Overall, in both diachronic and synchronic terms, genres originate out of other genres and previous constituents so much as they originate in everyday human discourse in human institutions: *genres are as old as organized societies!*

3.3.3 'Generic Classification' or 'Generic Interpretation'?

So far an attempt has been made to establish the origin of genres. It can be recalled that Todorov's argument has been centered on the progression of literary genres out of human verbal acts, which are non-literary in nature. Efforts have been also made to support the argument, namely, derivation of literary genres out of speech acts by exemplifying some poetic Oromo oral genres.

Generic taxonomy is no less difficult than tracing the origin of genres. Since oral poetry takes many different forms it is difficult to pin down poetic generic system under one unitary model. That is why focus in this study is more on the *interpretation* of the genre system than on *generic classification*. The purpose of this part is, however, to overview the taxonomy of Oromo oral poetry through varied *theories of genres* on the bases of the *local* generic classificatory system, but not to synchronize it with the *Western* literary taxonomic system. For the demarcation of genres and to perceive them as distinct verbal entities, both the *text* and the *social context* of its performance are determining factors. According to Daniel Ben-Amos (1975, p166 *passim*):

attempts to discover the principles of folklore communication in Africa must begin with the identification and analysis of *the cognitive, expressive and social* distinctive features of folklore forms (*emphasis added*).

The *cognitive* features consist of the *names, taxonomy and commentary*. By these features the society *labels, categorizes and interprets* respectively the literary forms within a wider system of discourse. These are abstract principles in the society to govern the folklore use. That is not just to abide by principles as fixed and pure monolithic canons but it involves the ability to modify rules pragmatically: hence, "the interplay between principles and necessities" (Ben-Amos, p186).

The Oromo etiquette, for example, dictates that a young Oromo has to say the politeness formula '*isiniif margi jira*', 'I hold grass in respect of you. Forgive me' to utter a taboo in the presence of an older person, so much as a younger Yoruba has to say a prefatory apology just to say a proverb in presence of an older person (ibid.). The standard politeness formula can be: "I don't claim to know any proverbs in your presence you older people, but you older people have the saying...."

Expressive features include the *styles, the contents and the structures* of the forms by which each literary genre is characterised. The *names and taxonomy* of folklore genres and *commentary* about these genres "constitute abstract knowledge about the style, themes, structures, and uses of the forms of verbal art" (Ben-Amos ibid. p.172). In social reality it is this abstract knowledge that is used as the source of ideas to be able to generate folkloric expressions anew and to utter them in appropriate situations.

In poetry the most recognizable *expressive* feature is *rhythmic language* by which songs are distinguished from conversation. Recitations also have a pattern of accents and beats that mark them off from 'informative and informal speech'. In addition to their rhythmic effect

African folklore genres, Ben-Amos (1975) declares, have basic indications which signify their meanings: e.g., the *opening and closing formulas* such as in the geerarsa song.

Finally, the *social* features: these are the constituents of the situational contexts. In this respect, the rules of folklore use and the set of behavioural perceptions and expectations constitute the social features of folklore. That is, the meaning, interpretation and understanding of songs and oral poems, tales, proverbs and riddles in their social use "are affected by the adherence to, or deviation from, these rules by the speakers" (ibid. p186). It can also be equally affected by the age, sex and status or social position of the member of the community. In this respect, Ben-Amos says ethnic genres constitute "a cultural affirmation of the communication rules that govern the expression of complex messages within cultural context" (Ben-Amos 1976:225).¹³ Ben-Amos's generic taxonomy is based on the culturally accepted local conventions (cf. Muana 1998, p.48) , the view which Finnegan shares (1992). Finnegan claims that the preliminary survey of the field made in her *Oral Poetry* (1977) gives a general idea and illustrates that oral poetry is "by no means a clearly differentiated and a unitary category" (p.9). Allied with this general comment is her contention "that the whole idea of a genre is relative and ambiguous, dependent on culturally-accepted canons of differentiation rather than on universal criteria" (p.15).

The folk-genres traditionally considered as absolute and enduring entities have ceased to become fixed genres subject to the dynamics of performance and practices. That is, genres undergo transformations to meet generic expectations of performers and audience as "a resource for performance available to speakers for the realization of specific social ends in a variety of creative, emergent and even unique ways" (qtd. in Finnegan 1992, p 137). The exploration of such generic processes is believed to be particularly effective for analysing or considering fluid and changing genre like the Oromo geerarsa.

Hence, to work on generic classification/interpretation, one better way to start with is “to use the local words” such as *dhaaduu*, *gooba*, to refer to the Boorana types of heroic song widely known by the ‘geerarsa’ generic name among the Oromo (Baxter 1986, p49). In the study of Oromo oral poetry, from the perspective of its form, rules to govern the nature, occurrence and distribution have not been established (Andrzejewski 1985, p410). Efforts made in the 1920s by Enno Littmann and in the '30s by Moreno were good beginnings. They paved the way for the study of Oromo oral poetry today, especially the geerarsa (Sumner 1997; Addisu 1994, 1990). From content and generic interpretation/classification it may well be argued that further research is needed to set reliable information and to establish operational criteria for the generic classification and interpretation of Oromo oral poetry. Andrzejewski cites Phillip Paulitchke's early attempt in Germany as far back as 1896 though the "classification does not overlap completely with any strictly defined ranges of themes" (Andrzejewski *ibid.* cf. Pankhurst 1976).

C. Sumner's "*form, content and concrete situation in life*" (1997) as the basic criteria for the generic *classification* and *interpretation* of Oromo oral poetry are seemingly limited to songs. Sumner and other researchers, including Addisu Tolesa, do not seem to have been aware of such a speech-like oral poetry as *dhaaduu* to exist in the (Boorana) Oromo oral poetry. In such a case one may draw a hasty conclusion that Oromo oral poetry is generally to be sung and there is none to be recited. For the purpose of the present study, therefore, adopting Sumner's "*form, content and concrete situation in life*" seems to be unreasonable.

Perhaps Andrzejewski's '*time-free*' and '*time-bound*' model used to categorize Somali poetry is pertinent to the study of Oromo poetry, particularly *geerarsa*. He puts the Somali poetry within '*time-bound*' and '*time-free*' streams, which he adapts to the generic classification and

interpretation of Oromo oral poetry (1985, pp410-15). According to Andrzejewski the Oromo oral poems of public forum, i.e., those deeply involved in the current political and social situations of their time such as Jaarsoo's are categorized as '*time-bound*'. Hence, Oromo love poetry is very prominent in the '*time-free*' stream.

To sum up: in literary studies it may well be argued that there is no one single model to apply to the fundamental question(s). The value/function of the genre, the origin and taxonomy of the genre, and the validity of the interpretation all call for due attention and each of such a fundamental question calls for the application of relevant model(s). This section has been treating such theoretical and pragmatic considerations of Oromo oral poetry: the *geerarsa* songs and the *dhaaduu* recitative poetry.

3.3.4 Boorana Popular Genre: Geerarsa as Dhaaduu Recitative Poetry

Among the Oromo, of whom the Booran are one, killing lion, elephant, rhino, and giraffe for trophy game is common and a successful killer is accorded great honour. Some researchers contend that such an active shedding of blood of enemies and of trophy animals by men is paralleled by the passive shedding of blood by women through menstruation and child birth. Baxter, for instance, makes the same connections in his writings on the Oromo culture (Baxter 1985, 1978, 1986) and Lambert Bartels (Bartels 1983) also demonstrates the same conceptual relationships between "*killing and bearing*".

The active blood shedding by men through killings and the passive blood shedding by women through child bearing and menstruation is considered to be central to the religion of the Oromo (Bartels 1983). Baxter's contention that among the Oromo "men should be active,

strong and brave whereas women should be receptive, soft and fertile" (1986:45) may be frowned at as male chauvinism though traditionally shared by men. Among the Oromo the symbolic connections between *copulation*--in which case *women are said never on the top*--and '*spearing*' "are close and explicit" seem to be confirmed by PTW Baxter citing Okot pBiteck (1966): "men are said to 'spear' women" (Baxter *ibid.*). Even more, Baxter and Fardon, guest editors to *Voice, Genre, Text* vol. 73, no 3 Autumn 1991 forward, citing Donna Haraway's '*sexual politics of a word*', that "genre and gender are related terms" (p4). They add: "an obsolete English meaning of 'to gender' is 'to copulate" (*ibid.*). By Haraway's gender and generic conception 'gender' adheres to 'concepts of sex, sexuality, sexual difference, generation, engendering...' Other words close to '*gender*', Haraway adds, are: kinship, race, biological taxonomy, language and nationality (p5).

The *generic* system also among the Oromo is *gender* oriented. Like the geerarsa song below, there are other song texts, says a certain Gurmeessaa, which the singer uses to reinforce others to take turn to sing geerarsa or otherwise they are likened to women:

nami gaagura hiituu	a man who hangs a bee-hive is
nama miila tokkooti	a man with only one leg,
nami hingeerarin galtu	a man who does not sing today is
nama cinaan tokkooti	a man with only one testicle

Similarly, the traditional two-line geerarsa text: '*reettiin areeda hinbaaftuu / dubartiin hingeerartuu*', literally, '*a she-goat never grows beard / so much so, a woman never sings geerarsa*' is another gender-oriented common moral precept used in geerarsa at least for two purposes. One, to limit the art of geerarsa accompanying hunting and war only to the domain of men; two, to activate the man who is reluctant or shy to sing geerarsa by saying, ironically, only woman does not sing geerarsa.

The primary purpose of this part of the study is to examine the Boorana popular genre: the *dhaaduu* war poem--to be recited, not to be sung. It will also be made clear in this section that

there is the influence of the *dhaaduu* ethnic genre on the language and the poetic style of Jaarsoo's poetry, which Jaarsoo delivers in reciting rather than in singing.

3.3.4.1 *The Dhaaduu Recitative Poetry*

This sub-topic aims to describe the *dhaaduu* recitative poetry as *geerarsa* sub-genre that might have influenced the poetic content and style of Jaarsoo's recital poetry. *Dhaaduu* is a war poem recited in nearly a speech-like tone. In discussing the formal structure of *dhaaduu* it is not simple to pin down its poetic form. The difficulty lies not in its composition, since the reciter recounts from his memory past events recorded and composed into poems. The difficulty rather lies in the nature of the content of the poem itself. That is, all the hardships encountered, pains of the bloody fighting fought and the victims, emotions and feelings attached to these disrupt the normal flow of the poem. So energetic and emotional as the reciter becomes at the moment of delivery and that he continuously utters the events, it is not simple to clearly tell where the line of the verse ends. However, the division into line is in most cases indicated by the reciter's delivery: words pronounced together in the same breath, pause, words/phrases fall together in terms of sense, sometimes formalized linear units of praises. Vowel sounds are more often than not used as what Andrzejewski has called '*vowel coloured breaths*' (see Schlee 1992:230).

The end of each *dhaaduu* poetic line is actually difficult to notice except on the basis of related sense of meaning of the 'nodes', i.e. a group of words which function the same semantic, syntactic or aesthetic purpose, or on the basis of repetition or parallelism. Whereas, the ends of stanzas are brought out by the lengthening of *pitch* of the penultimate line and the *glides* heard on the last word of the last line, as it seems to be the case for such recitative poems. Here is a *dhaaduu* by Areeroo, a renowned *dhaaduu* reciter:

ka Abb' Duubaa

(I am) Abb' Duubaa's son

ka Guyyoo Duubaa	Guyyoo Duubaa's giant
Boora ka jaartiiti	old mother's giant
boor' Saakora Yuubaati	Saakoraa Yuubaa's giant
5 aaddaa shaahuu Diqqooti	
dhirsa Kuulaati	Kuulaa's husband
soddaa Kuluulaati	Kuluulaa's brother-in-law

The language being so allusive and so ambiguous, the linear units being so short and made of names of kinsmen (lines 1,2,4, 6,7) and forms of expression being metaphoric (cf. *giant*) the poetic style of the *dhaaduu* poem emerges more fully when one considers the whole poetic lines coming next. Alliteration (see lines 3,4 and 6,7) is the most commonly used poetic feature in *dhaaduu* as one can observe in the words **kuulaa/kuluula**, **boora/boor**.

The use of special idioms and elaborated adjectives as in the above *dhaaduu* text (see the possessive adjs.) are a special poetic style the composer of *dhaaduu* poem needs to master. In the following alliterative poetic lines,

irr' arboori dansaa	armlet on arm is nice
qubaallee qubeen dansaa	ring on ring-finger is nice
guutuu liilanni dansaa	woodden comb in the tuft of hair is nice
mataa baalgudi dansaa	feather on the crown of head is nice

the adjective **dansa** 'nice' is repetitive to emphasize the *content* of the poem, i.e., the importance of trophy and all those 'nice' paraphernalia for the hero's traditional costume. The items stressed by the repetitive adjective 'dansa' or 'nice': **arboora**, **qubee**, **liilana**, **baalguda**, i.e. armlet, ring, wooden comb and feather respectively are all nice for the hero to decorate himself with. In this regard, parallelism and repetitions are marked features in *dhaaduu* self-praise poetry as can be illustrated from the praise song provided by Galgaloo just quoted. The first and the second lines are semantically parallel since both 'armlet' and 'ring' relate to 'hand' or part of hand whereas the third and fourth lines refer to 'head' and 'hair'. The alliterative words and phrases: 'irr' **irboorri**' in the first line and '**qubbaallee qubeen...**' in the second lines show that those ornaments 'irboora' or 'armlet' and '**qubee**' or 'ring' derive from

names of parts of the body ‘irree’, ‘arm’ and ‘quba’ or ‘ring-finger’, named after the parts of the body they are worn on and so are **dansa** (nice).

The hero in *dhaaduu* is associated with animals (domestic or wild) to indicate the suggestion that he is too wild for his enemies to manage. The hunter also considers himself so brave and so fierce like the animal he hunts. Baxter, citing Cerulli, has this to say: "tough wild young [Booran] bachelors who hunt are indulged, because they are like "animals of the bush" *bineensa* hardly domesticated" (Baxter 1986:45; cf. Cerulli 1922:100). Most frequent of all, the comparison is made to a lion, a tiger, a buffalo, and an eagle in association with the animals’ bravery, wildness and fearsome appearance. An example is Areeroo's *dhaaduu* where he associates himself with a lion, a rhino and a leopard and uses such animal metaphors as,

neenca ta’ee goodaat’ galee	as a lion, in deep jungle I dwelt
qeerramsa ta’ee baddaat’ galee	as a leopard, in mountain bush I dwelt
warseessa ta’ee mataa-lagaat’ galee	as a rhino, in river water I waded

And, the hero praises himself and draws parallelism between himself and a series of furious and strong wild beasts. By further analogy the reciter praises himself for his strength and courage to bear up the pains and hardships such as dwelling in mountainous bushy pockets, in deep jungles and splashing about in the surf in river water, etc.

Relatively speaking, examples show that *similes* are fewer than *metaphors* in *dhaaduu*.

However, a few occur by way of descriptions: Qaraarsa, for instance, recites thus,

lafti Booranaa dhakaa	Boorana land is rocky
anuu jabaa akka dhakaa	and so much as firm as rock I am

where the singer demonstrates his strength by using the simile 'akka dhagaa' in *anuu jabaa akka dhagaa*, '*and so much as firm as rock I am*'. To vividly describe the tenacious situation, *hyperbole* appears in emotional description in *dhaaduu*. The fierceness of the battle may be illustrated as in the lines below:

namichi gosaan Soomale	the person/victim is a Somali
hinwaraanne inqabe	I did not strike but caught him
hinajjeefne inqale	I did not shoot but slew him
nabsee nati harkaa fuudhe	

qawwee Waaqat' harkaa na fuudhe his soul did I conquer and so did God his weapon.

The effect of the battle may be thus pronounced as in the *dhaaduu* text shown above indirectly in such a description of the general scene. In the text having five lines above, the singer depicts the picture of the battle when the victim falls, the hero catches and slays him (line 2,3), 'disarms' him of his soul while Waaqaa (God), literally speaking, disarms him of his weapon (lines 4 & 5).

Thus, by ordering the events chronologically and depicting a series of pictures of his own war-like qualities and deeds Qaraarsa recites.

an am' mucaa amal' dansaa	I am the son of good temper
amala Waaqat' namaa midhaansa	but Waaqa is the architect of good temper
Qabata abbaat' midhaanfata	while one is the architect of his own temperance

That the alliterative and repetitive qualities of the poem sometimes serve to heighten the artistic effect of the poetry and render it some aesthetic beauty and depth of philosophy.

Dhaaduu poetry, being very much oral in composition like other praise poems it is intended to be heard not read, and delivered much faster, in a normal speech like tone as in Jaarsoo's poetry but with few pauses. As well, there are growing excitement and dramatic gestures made as *dhaaduu* proceeds. That is, as the poetry is more and more recited, the reciter works himself up much faster, eyes glaring, face up lifted and suddenly raised and shaken. As the researcher observed Qaraarsa, who resisted reciting such a war poem as *dhaaduu* now that he is a *hajji*, gestures during the delivery are so frequent and dramatic that the reciter would suddenly leap or move as the poems are poured from his lips. As he becomes exhausted then the flow of the spring of *dhaaduu* grows less and less.

Qaraarsa also says similar to what is quoted in Finnegan (1970) from other source related to the power of the verse and of delivery: "a man whilst praising ... can walk over thorns, which cannot pierce his flesh which has become impenetrable" (p 138). Finnegan in her *Oral*

Literature in Africa (1970) adds that “the composition of praise poetry was traditionally both a specialist and a universal activity” (p 139), while occasions for the composition of praise poems, particularly the *dhaaduu* being battle.

Summarily, the literary effect of *dhaaduu* does not seem to primarily depend on the reciter’s skill of providing the poem. It rather depends on the art of the poet to use those traditional formulas: figurative expressions, allusion, various stylistic devices such as parallelism, for instance, as in Jaarsoo’s recitative/narrative poetry. Those traditional forms, apart from the poet’s delivery, serve to heighten the literary effectiveness and power of the *dhaaduu* verse. Thus, the *dhaaduu* poetry is a meeting place between the *geerarsa general poetics* of event-based literature and the protracted *finna*, Oromo *development phases* analysed from sociological perspective in the chapter to follow.

ENDNOTES

1. See Negasso 1983; Addisu 1990, 1994 on *geerarsa* as a *historically transformed* oral genre; and Schlee in Hayward 1996, and Shongolo in Baxter 1996 on Jaarsoo Waaqoo’s *dhaaduu*-like recitative poems. The *theme* of *geerarsa* genre nowadays has transformed into having a *double-face*, Janus-like: one is ‘traditional’ *praises* communicating and preserving the Oromo culture while the other is the ‘contemporary’ *protest song* articulating the Oromo struggle and aspiration to subvert the Tigre-Amhara rule in Oromia.

2. Though the purpose of this study is *content analysis*, in discussing the poetic *style* of Jaarsoo’s poetry, the issue of the poet’s *intention* seems the predominant one. The concern is more with the author’s *intention* realised in the work which Schlee and Shongolo put thus: “His [Jaarsoo’s] bias, quite legitimately, is pro-OLF and pro-Boran” (in Hayward 1996, p230). C. Sumner declares in his *OWL* vol. ii *Songs* (1997) that “[i]n Oromo songs there is a complete identification of the ‘literary type’ with the ‘notion’ or the ‘theme’ ”(p367).

3. The researcher draws the issue of Oromo tradition/culture as a basis for Oromo consciousness and Oromo identity upon Gemetchu Megersa’s article titled “Oromumma: Tradition, Consciousness and Identity” (in Baxter 1996, pp92-102). In the excerpt from his ‘framework for the understanding of Oromumma’ Gemetchu argues “... Oromo tradition provides the basis for Oromo identity” and the “juxtaposition of Oromo consciousness with Oromo tradition and social experience is necessary for the understanding of the nature and content of Oromo identity” (p92). Doubtless to say ‘contemporary’ *geerarsa* is a medium of expression of that Oromo consciousness and social experience.

4. Cerulli distinguishes between *geerarsa* and *faarsaa*: the former he considers it as a ‘boasting’ song of individual warriors, whereas *faarsaa*, literally, ‘praise poetry’, is the ‘boasting’ song of the society. In this regard,

the following *geerarsa* text is sung by an individual warrior who comes home after a successful kill (Cerulli 1922, p102):

**the *guchii* (ostrich) loves the sun
I have descended to the narrow valley
and I have pulled down the horsemen...
the beautiful girls will adorn my comb
my friends will kiss my mouth
the children will say to me "You have killed well!"**

In any case '*geerarsa*' and '*faarsa*' are both popular or folk songs, and, therefore, it is not very clear if Cerulli meant by '*faarsa*' minstrelsy songs or songs of traveling singers.

5. H. M. Chadwick and his wife Nora Chadwick, 1940

6. Goobana, in the "contemporary OLF discourse ... is regarded as the proverbial traitor", i.e. the Norwegian Vidkun Quisling "who in 1945 cooperated with the Nazi occupation force" (Shongolo in Baxter *ibid.* Footnote no. 13 p271).

7. OPDO, Mohammed Hassen writes "was created by the TPLF and is tightly controlled by the same organization" (in Baxter 1996, Footnote no. 8 p.78).

8. No hunter, however, can validly claim the authorship of *geerarsa* piece, according to the informants Areeroo, Caalaa and Qampharree, even if he is the first to sing it on a certain occasion. This is because the tradition is believed to be the source to which every singer refers as *aadaa* culture in which one is brought up passing through every initiation rite. Hence, the process of the composition seems to be intuitive and inspirational as if it springs from the innate talents of the artist. Certainly, there are new *geerarsa* pieces created by well-experienced singers on different occasions, as added to his repertoire and to the already existing 'traditional' song even though no one claims authorship.

9. See Schlee and Shongolo in Hayward 1996, p230 that Jaarsoo's poetry, "quite legitimately, is pro-OLF".

10. Speaking of Jaarsoo's poetic style, Shongolo, who claims the Boorana identity himself (in Baxter 1996, p.310), states Jaarsoo "creatively combined plain everyday language with traditional rhetoric style" (*ibid.* p269). The language of Boorana oral poetry, and of Jaarsoo's poetry, however, is under no way as simple as Shongolo declares it to be. The present researcher contends with what Baxter says of language of the *gooba* 'giraffes poetry': added to the ambiguity and obliqueness combined with "impressionistic, almost concealed meanings" are the "esoteric and archaic words" that make the task of transcription and translation of the songs difficult (1986, p48). Baxter adds that in Boorana songs "the ambiguity of language reflects the ambiguity of the experience. The implicit connection between the words, as sounds and as meanings, and their associations and ambiguities are part of the cumulative meaning of each verse" (*ibid.* p49) as in *gooba* songs, for instance. In studying Jaarsoo's poetry, but one may conclude that symbolic figures such as metaphors, similes and hyperboles are combined with what Shongolo says "features of nationalist discourses into a basically Booran idiom" (in Baxter p268) used as a 'war of words' as opposed to a war with arms" (269).

11. Such an attempt to relate certain types of society to certain types of poetry and poetic activity also relates to those heroic poetry and 'heroic age' society of the Oromo. The 'Heroic Songs/Historical Songs' in Cerulli's *Folk Literature...* (1922), Sumner's (1997) collections of Oromo *Songs*, and the *geerarsa* song texts in Addisu's dissertation exemplify the Chadwicks' argument that 'heroic poetry' and 'heroic age societies' are related (in Finnegan *ibid.*).

12. See in T.Todorov *Genres in discourse* (1990, p20); PTW Baxter and Richard Fardon *Voice, Genre, Text* (1991, p5). Todorov maintains, one starts with the other already constituted speech acts through a progression from a simple act to a complex one, so much as, to the historicist, the "interpretation of history is based on the *present*, just as that of space starts with *here*, and that of other people with *I*".

13.. The present researcher has drawn upon Dan Ben-Amos's "Taxonomy of Genres" (1975, pp168-71) in which he suggests three ways of designating the *category of form*:

cognitively, by naming it, *pragmatically* by performing it in particular contexts, and *expressively* by formulating it in a distinctive language which is peculiar to the genres (p168).

In the taxonomic system of verbal art that satisfies local conventions, and therefore "coherent and culturally valid", then, he concludes, the folkloric expression "must have stylistic, thematic, and contextual correlatives which will justify its inclusion in one class or another" (ibid.).

CHAPTER IV

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF JAARSOO WAAQOO'S POETRY

4.1 Introduction

In *Chapter III* it has been argued that the *geerarsa* folk song and the *dhaaduu* war poetry have strongly influenced the poetic content and performance of Jaarsoo's poetry. In the present chapter the *content* of Jaarsoo's poetry (*Finna San Gama I-IV*) and its role as a social critique will be analysed from a sociological perspective. The literary significance of *Finna San Gama (Beyond Adversities)* to sketch some defining criteria for and establish cultural and sociopolitical identity of Oromo literature is also examined in this chapter. Attempt is also made to provide some supporting idea for and put to practice the combination of social development theory or *metatheory* and the *finna* 'Oromo development theory' to avoid inevitable theoretical *impasse* in studying Jaarsoo's poetry. The first section discusses *ethnographic background* to the sociological study of *FSG*. It highlights influences of the environment and the sociocultural context on the poet and his work set in a given time and space. The second section sets a socio-political arena for the sociological analysis of Jaarsoo's

poetry in the macro-political context of past and present Ethiopia. The remaining part provides a conclusion of theoretical and content-related issues in the *sociological* study of Jaarsoo's poetry.

4.2 Ethnographic Background

The Booran have occupied the present day areas of southern Oromia for at least four centuries. Their territory has been fluctuating based on ethnic and resource borders (Gufu Oba in Baxter 1996: 117). The Boorana share borders with the Somali clans to the east along the Ganale River, the Arsi to the northeast, the Gujii to the northwest, and the Massai, the Samburu and the Rendille to the south. They are divided into the two exogamous moieties of *Sabbo* and *Goona* who are by tradition herds people in contrast to many other Oromo cultivators further to the north. Rearing cattle, sheep and goats is the pastoral economic base of the Boorana proper (interview with Liiban, Dabbasa and Tarri, Feb. 2002). Ton Leus, in a prefatory note to his *Borana-English Dictionary* (1995) estimates the Boorana Oromo to around half a million. He adds that about 100,000 Boorana live in northern Kenya and they speak a southern dialect of the Oromo language. According to Borana *social structure* the primary unit of organization is the *warra* 'household', which is grouped to form the *shanacha* 'homesteads'. The *Ollaa* 'settlement' is formed from clusters of such *shanacha*, and several *ollaa* build up a unit of *re'era*. District group or *dheeda* is formed from several *re'era* and composed of all members of the Boorana Oromo society and come under the rule of the *gadaa* sociopolitical system (Gemechu 1993; Asmarom 2000, 1973; Baxter 1996).

As regards to oral literature, the Boorana day to day life activities seem to be full of tales, songs, riddles and above all the oratory embellished by proverbs. The Boorana songs vary from *faaruu ijoollee kuuchuu*, love songs of boys who enter a *hariyyaa*--the same age group

(*Waakor and Dambal*)-- to *faaruu kuusamaa*, songs in praise of women like Baxter's *weelluu* of Arsi (1972) or Tasama Ta'a's *weedduu* of Wallaga (2000). Others are *karilee*, i.e., women praising men while fetching water or firewood, and on the *jila/butta* feast and *gubbisa* 'name-giving ceremony'. Songs in praise of cattle, goats and horses *sirba loonii*, *weedduu* and *yaamuu*, *sirba re'ee*, *sirba fardaa* are sung both by men and women (interview with Haalakee; also in Ton Leus 1995: 289ff). There is also *geerarsa*: the *gooba* hunting song, and the *dhaaduu* war poetry (interview with Caalaa, Feb. 2002). Such a literary background added to the *gadaa* system¹ must have influenced Jaarsoo Waaqoo from his childhood as a herd boy and that oral tradition is carefully woven into his entire oral literary fabric.

Jaarsoo's poetry shows that the *gadaa* center maintains a border of spatial integrity within which the *Nagayaa Boorana* 'the Peace of the Boorana' could be operated. The *Peace of the Boorana* is the orderly running of public affairs and the non-violent settlement of disputes and conflict, an organizational feature that distinguishes Boorana pastoralism from other pastoral systems (interview with Tarri). In Boorana local politics, issues of central importance are the ability of their social system to organise large groups of people under *Sabbo* and *Goona* for socio-political, cultural and economic purposes. To mobilise resources and make orderly and legitimate decisions on natural resource management systems is also crucial (Helland in Baxter 1996: 137). This is the matter of political viability among the Boorana pastoralist community (ibid.).

The concept of *political viability* in Boorana pastoralism is characterised by two important features. One is, the issue of the *Nagayaa Boorana* / 'the peace of the Boorana'. The other is, the issue of *territorial integrity*, resource competitions and the management of scarce communal resources like pasture and the wells. Other concepts of viability of Boorana

pastoralism, as discussed by John Helland (in Baxter *ibid.* 132-149) are economic and ecological viability. They rest on the orderly and peaceful resource management system, particularly grazing lands and well complexes, i.e., access to and the utilization of the resources between the Boorana and the neighbouring pastoralist communities through peaceful means.

Every effort by an internal or external force that disrupts those political processes in Boorana may also disrupt attempts made by the people to upkeep the fundamental economic activities on which the Boorana pastoralist community depends. To maintain well complexes and other resources that are at stake, the Boorana struggle to keep intact their political system, without which, according to Boorana community elders (Qampharre, Tarri, Dabbasa and Liiban), significant changes will occur to the pastoral production system. Such drastic changes in economic, ecological and political viability gradually results in resource competition, shifting identity or land disputes between the Boorana and the Somali, the Garri, the Gabra and others, which is the topical allusion in Jaarsoo's poetry.

Gunther Schlee interprets the resource-based conflicts between Boorana and other ethnic groups from the viewpoint of those resource competitors or 'outsiders', while Gufu Oba, Gemechu Megersa and John Helland seem to incline towards a Boorana view. A. Shongolo, however, in his article "The Poetics of Nationalism: a Poem by Jaarso Waaqo Qooxo", does not seem to take sides (Schlee 1984, 1992; see essays by Gemechu, Gufu Oba, J. Helland, and A. Shongolo in Baxter 1996). By G. Schlee's functionalist approach pastoralist communities communally share resources as long as resources are plentiful, but when there are shortages they resort to enter into conflicts to gain control over the scarce resource.² In such conflicts, according to Schlee, the weaker party makes compromises and readily accepts the ethnic label of the enemy to become a client. However, Gemechu Megersa attacks Schlee's view based on

two clear evidences: first, ethnicity is not something that people readily accept and discard as it suits them, just as a pragmatic solution to an everyday economic problem. Second, people do not automatically absorb/accept groups who do not belong to them (in Baxter *ibid.* p95).

Gemechu argues that an "Oromo is born with Oromumma" or Oromoness. To Gemechu *Oromumma* is by birth, not given by belief system alone. He asserts that *ethnicity, identity* and *belief system* are given with birth since, according to Gemechu, "the simplest definition of an Oromo would be that he/she is born of an *Oromo father*" (emphasis added)--the argument that may seem to render itself male chauvinism (see Baxter 1996:94). Hence, Schlee's functionalist approach "cannot help to explain the types of adaptations and transformations that have taken place in the different social and historical conditions in which the society has evolved" (*ibid.* p95). In terms of claiming identity one cannot be Boorana by birth alone, which seems a sheer contradiction with Gemechu Megersa's argument (interview with Tarri; see also Gufu Oba in Baxter *ibid.* p120). Gufu Oba's argument of Oromo identity is particularly from Boorana perspective, i.e., he shares Tarri's view of Boorana identity. Firstly, a Boorana without cattle cannot perform his social obligations, nor does he participate in rituals and therefore he is obliged to lose his Boorana identity (in Baxter *ibid.* p120). Secondly, a Booran who violates *aadaa seera Boorana 'the Boorana law and custom'* and the *Boorantittii* tenets, i.e., moral dimensions of peaceful well-being, respect for a common law and unselfishness is also subjected to lose his Boorana identity. He is considered '*nyaapha*' or *sidii*, i.e., '*enemy*'.

Thirdly, to the contrary, outsiders who adopt *aadaa seera Boorana* and the *Boorantittii* tenets can be incorporated into one of the two Boorana exogamous moieties, namely *Sabbo* and *Goona* to a particular sub-clan through some ritual transformation. In this view, in order to acquire access to resources an outsider may be incorporated into a Boorana clan as long as

aadaa seeraa Boorana are not violated. Close clientship ties are also established through a provision of material support, *finna* or exchange of ritual materials like incense or *qumbii* to oppose common enemies. This incorporation mechanism promotes the *Nagayaa Boorana* 'the Peace of the Boorana' that guarantees inter-clan peace and maintains peaceful relationship between the Boorana and others (see also John Helland in Baxter p145ff).³

Perhaps this is what one can observe in the skeptic words below in *FSG* questioning the identity of those *sidii* (*enemy*) among the *Boorana Guutuu* or *Guutuu Abbaa Liiban* i.e., 'Boorana proper' (*FSG I*, p73):

Booranni ka dhibiit jiraa! jabeessaa ofirraa eegaa Booran Boorana keessatt' jiraa	many re-claim to be Boorana! watch out! there is a Booran within Boorana (today)
--	---

In such a social, political and economic context, every individual is responsible for the maintenance of common moral order throughout the Booranaland at all times. The lines **watch out! there is a Booran / within Boorana (today)** (lines 2&3) warn the Boorana Oromo to be cautious if there are 'wolves in ship skin' among the Booran, i.e., if there are *sidii* (*enemy*) re-claiming their previous identity while they still pretend to be Booran (lines 2&3).

4.3 Poetic Content Analysis

4.3.1 Poems in Praise of the Boranaland

In the poetic content of *FSG* there is an equal emphasis given to describing Booranaland: fields, trees, hills, wells, ritual sites, grazing and watering lands such as Gaayoo, Dirree, Liiban, Golboo etc. Thus the verses in *FSG* are descriptive: they depict with some poetic verve the rivers, mountains, trees, birds, beasts and cattle, generally the *flora* and the *fauna* of the environment.

In *FSG III* one can foresee the kind of society, the '*ideal republic*', perhaps the poet would like to see established. But, meanwhile, the recital poetry rides one back to the Golboo plain, to the Dirree fields and to the Baddaa trees, the hills and the green pastures to capture once again the mood of the setting. The poetic lines below describe those guerrilla estuaries and a place called Booqee (p98):

tutu Booqee afranii	the four Booqee salt licks
iji midhaantuu hinbahin,	not yet attracted attention
ta lubbuu jibbaattu malee	but that which eschew the soul
ta akka duriitiin hingabin...	(of the martyr), not what had hitherto been...
5 Golboon ummata keennaa,	Golboo is our land
nu garam irraa deemna?	how come we leave our land?

Thus, the poems describe the Booranaland and mobilise the society to reclaim the land (lines 5&6). In the description of the Baddaa⁴ relatively highland in Boorana, the beauty of the land is used so accurately, convincingly and effectively for the purpose of mobilising the people to defend their territory (lines 5&6), and more than that to actively involve in the liberation struggle. In *FSG III*, the Badda relatively green area is thus praised for its beauty (p99):

isin wari Baddaa sadeenii!	those in the three Baddaa regions!
hindheessinaa warri gumaa sadeenii...	you don't retreat.
Baddaa bishingaa baafu	Baddaa, rich in sorghum
Baddaa lafa hedduu caaltu	Baddaa the Great Land of all lands in Boorana
5 miyooftuu akka bookaa	and as sweet as mead,
Baddaa urgooftuu akka midhaan doolaa	Baddaa, as sweet as grain in <i>doolaa</i> , ⁵
goggossinee irraa dhowwarraa,	we defend our land courageously
worr' cufti garaachi boollaa	Others, they are of hollow stomach
yoos amma irraa dhowwanna	thus, we defend our land strongly
hindheennu irratti doona!.	we never retreat, we defend our land!

In *FSG* the poet seems to be free to recite as he feels and sees things. In the above lines there is a strong element of commitment to an important and progressive cause (lines 9&10). This is due both to the subject matter the poet deals with, namely reclaiming the Boranaland, and to the ideological orientation, i.e., *nationalist* outlook. The confidence to declare the poet's vision without reservation can only be the result of putting theory into practice. As elsewhere argued in this study, in *FSG*, the poet not only spoke of the liberation struggle but he lived it and died for it.

Speaking of the Borana environmental zones, they are described not as a geographer would do but as a phenomenon perceived and conceptualized by the peoples themselves. In this respect, Baddaa is one of the three climatic zones representing broad conceptual categories employed by the Oromo in all the regions they occupy. Since the classification follows the *high-low* order in a vertical pattern *highland* is described "following the elevation of the land from its highest to its lowest point". Badda (highland) is the location roughly between 2000 to 3000 meters above sea-level. It is therefore the coldest region blessed with abundant rainfall, perennial rivers and forests. So being conducive for agriculture livestock production, Baddaa tends to be the centre for population concentration. The *badda-daree* zone is a temperate zone situated between 1,400 to 2000 m above sea-level.

The *gammoojjii* (lowland) is all the land area lying below 1,400 meters down to sea-level. This climatic zone is best characterised by unreliable rainfall and extreme scarce land and water resources. Thorn trees and similar other shrubs of the Baddaa, Golboo, and Dirree are typical *gadamojjii* vegetations as also described in *FSG*. About 20% of the Oromo population live in the arid and semiarid region of the *gammoojjii*. The economic base of the population in the *gammoojjii* area of Oromia is *pastoralism*, which is also true to those Oromo in Kenya border. However, based on ecological and economic factors the *gammoojjii zone* may be subdivided into two: the *Baddaa/the semiarid* and the *lower arid zone*. There is the relatively highland region '*Baddaa*', praised as an *evergreen seat of Waaqaa*. This is the upper semiarid where cattle/pastoralism and agriculture is a possible means of subsistence for its better vegetation resources. Whereas, in the lower arid zone there is extreme scarce water and grass. Camel pastoralism is therefore the main means of subsistence. The *Baddaa* that is praised in *FSG* is further sub-divided into three regions, recited thus: **isan warr' Baddaa sadeeenii**, '**you, from the three Baddaa reggions**' (*FSG III*, p99), areas where some cultivation is

possible in addition to pastoral production. These three regions are *Baddaa Hiddii*, *Baddaa Gaamadu*, and *Baddaa Areero*.

John Helland's article "The Political Viability of Boorana Pastoralism" (in Baxter 1996:149) confirms what can be the base for the lament for Dirree in *FSG*. Helland says, the conflict "now is over the inclusion of Liiban within the newly defined Somali region of Ethiopia". Helland adds that the contest is also over "the recognition of the Garre as proper representatives of the pastoralists of Dirree (ibid.; interview with Tarri). The researcher's observation of speeches on the Simintoo/Liiban Reconciliation Conference, Feb. 2002, and interviews with community elders confirms the lament for the lost ritual sites and resource lands.

In *FSG* there is a deepest concern for the Fatherland and thus the lines below are used to adorn Baddaa (*FSG IV*, p100):

Baddaa gurraattoftuu	Baddaa, the land with fog and cloud
Baddaa yoo aduullee qabbanooftuu	Baddaa, cool and suitable land even when sunny
Baddaa muka booraa	Baddaa, the land of trees of different types
Baddaa biyyee bookaa	Baddaa, the land of soil sweat like mead
5 Baddaa buna baafu	Baddaa, the land of coffee
Baddaa ilmeenn' keenna dhaaltu	Baddaa, our land, a legacy to our children
Baddaa biyyee bokoraa	Baddaa, a land of big and colourful soil
Badaaa ka biyya Booranaa...	Baddaa, the land of Boorana, our land!

From the above lines one can see that the poetic style in *FSG* is conceptual, infused with ideas which have an ideological import. Thus the purpose is more than mere description of the Boranaland. The recital poem above portrays a sympathetic picture of the setting (lines 6&8). As this elevates the poet's object of contemplation, the style remains descriptive. The focus seems to be on images as words, as verbal expression, confining itself to the significance of an image purely as a linguistic form. Words of weather/climate, landscape, season and nature: land and landed resources: grass, water, tree, plain, hills etc. *flora* and *fauna*, in the poem

describe Baddaa above. The description creates images that have a general appeal: Odaa, coffee, rain, water, etc. which in Oromo tradition represent *finna*, fecundity and abundance, perhaps the seventh and the last Oromo development phase called *dagaa-horaa*. These are public symbols with definite connotations. Thus, those images and symbols readily communicate the intended message, i.e., reclaiming the Fatherland, Oromia.

4.3.2 Resource-based Conflicts

The poetic content of *FSG* involves *resource-based conflict* in Boorana, the political viability of *finna Oromo* and its continuity protracted between the past, present and future. Hence, the content of *FSG II* may be generally put into two sections. The first part deals with *conflict resolution*. That is, it is the maintenance of traditional micro-political system in Boorana, namely, *Nagaa Boorana (the Peace of the Boorana)*. In the second part, the concern of the poetic content seems to be more with the Oromo sociopolitical life, i.e., *finna*, than with just local politics.

In the first section of the recital poetry *Dhugaa* and *Cubbuu*, i.e., *Virtue* and *Vice* are used in the Bunyan sense of allegory. *Cubbuu* is a resource competitor, in the analogy, representing the Somali, the Garri and the Gabra equally reclaiming not just the pastoral resources, grass and wells, but also land itself. *Cubbuu* demands legal and political recognition to live on and use the land as a legitimate pastoralist who lived on and used the land for generations (see *FSG II*, pp. 13-50).⁶

The second section of this part proceeds with the lament of *Aayyaa* (Mother) who abandoned her children, and her *Ilmoo* (Son) imploring her to come home. Hence, the dialogue is between *Aayyaa Bilisummaa ('Mother Freedom')* and *Ilmoo ('Freedom Fighter')* (see pp51-

64ff). There is a dialogue about the 1991 election, during the Transitional Government of Ethiopia *TGE*, between the representatives of the OLF and the TPLF-subordinate OPDO, and the Boorana community elders (pp65-83ff). The last part of this second section is a call for the resource competitors and the young generation: boys and girls all equally to nullify the Abyssinian new '*divide-and-rule policy*'. The call is for awareness about what is happening and is going to happen to the people and to unite and actively involve in the armed struggle to bring to an end the Tigre-led neocolonial rule (pp84-114). In this section, the researcher gives more emphasis to the poet's social analysis of *resource-based conflicts* between the Boorana and the southern communities.

FSG II, much like *FSG I*, is a social critique of the inter-ethnic conflict between Garri, Gabra, the Somali and Borana. The problem is not attributed to Garri, Gabra, and the Somali in favour of the Borana. In *FSG* the poet does not take sides. Rather, the recital poetry plays a great role to end the conflict and to maintain peace and social justice. This is well exhibited by the call to the resource competitors, *FSG II* (pp90-91)⁷

baruma hedduu	yet you herded together
waliin dheeddani.	for many years.
hintala walirraa fuutanii	you marry girls from each other
soddaa, walirraa ceertani.	as in-laws you revere each other.
5 mucaa soddaa kan kee dhale	yet it is the son of your brother in-law
boriyyaa tee ejjeftani.	that you kill the next day
odoo inni <i>abuuyyaa!</i> jedhuu	as he pleads for mercy, saying "uncle!"
gorraatanii biraa deemtani.	you slaughter him and go away.
isan abbaa-obboleessaa	you are affines and <i>brothers</i> ,
mee lakkisaa hammeenna kana.	put an end to this evil.

The *FSG* poetic social analysis about resource-based conflicts between the Boorana and other resource-competitors involves economic, social and cultural factors. Pastoral communities in the south, as in *FSG*, have every reason to unite rather than fight each other. More than the economic relationships, i.e., livestock as a major economic base (lines 1&2), the pastoralists are also '*in-laws*' (lines 4&5) '*affines and brothers*' (line 9). An obvious account of such a resource-based conflict portrayed in *FSG II* above is the possible observation that throws light on the social critique given in Jaarsoo's poetry. As a social critique *FSG* is not against the pastoral way of life. What is doubtless is that it is against the system (see *FSG II*, p93). In the recital poetry, the root cause of the frequent inter-ethnic conflict in the south has been the Abyssinian colonial and neo-colonial rule itself. Prior to the 1995 constitution that declares:

Ethiopian pastoralists have the right to free land for grazing and cultivation as well as the right not to be displaced from their own lands,

peripheral areas inhabited by pastoralists were politically conceived as '*no-man's-land*', and therefore regarded as state property (cf. *Proclamation* No70 of 1944, Article 130 in *the 1955 Revised constitution of Ethiopia*). Hence, land was ready for reassignment to various non-pastoral uses such as national parks and large-scale commercial farms (e.g. *the Awash Valley Authority*). In the 1950s and 1960s "nine large national parks and wildlife sanctuaries were delineated juridically alienating the pastoral herders from their dry season niche (Yacob Arsano in *Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia*, 2000, p92). The pastoralists were labeled '*wanderers*', literally '*tikfattee*' (zallan) and categorized into nomadic 'herders' and 'nomadic-hunter-cultivators'.

Most of the areas inhabited by pastoralist communities in the south (the Boran, the Somali, the Afar, and others) were artificially arranged (interview with Dabbasa, Qararsa and Tarri; see also Melakou in *Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia*, 2000:79). Accordingly, their communities were divided, their resources were confiscated, and their land reserved for game parks by the state exacerbating economic marginalisation (also the researcher's observation of Liiban/Simintoo Peace Conference, Feb. 2002). The fact that the pastoralist populations in the south have common destiny is articulated in the dialogue below. Cubbuu says (pp46ff):

Dhugaa, na jibbaallee ooltuu	Dhugaa, though you hate me
lafum' takkarratti dhalannee.	but we were born on the same land.
armaan durallee,	even hitherto,
na qofaaninii, nu lachuu	both of us made an alliance
5 mala la walti dhahannee	and reached on some consensus
armaan durallee qara...	even before...

Though literally, *Cubbuu* and *Dhugaa* do not belong to the same origin in Oromo worldview, but both are in the same domain where either side should be tolerant to live in harmony with its counterpart (lines 1&2). The allusive remark *Cubbuu* makes, i.e., the *Dhugaa-Cubbuu* 'alliance': **both of us made an alliance** (line 5) perhaps refers to the same life style and the common destiny the southern populations share as pastoralists. The marginalisation that pastoralist communities face, as elsewhere argued in this study, is a '*double face*' exemplified by the two extracts below. First, as pastoralists they are considered wanderers/nomads having no right to claim land use and tenure (pp91, 92),

warri horii ingoodaanaa	a cattle breeder is no fixed to one place
qubattanii gad hinteettani.	and thus you move from place to place

Second, as members of the dominated ethnic groups they are under national operation (p93):

odoo beettuu gaafattaa?	why you ask what you know?
wayyaaneet' gidduu seenee	the wayyane interfered
garumaa gar nu dhowwee, ...	and kept us apart, to divide us and rule us...

and (ibid.)

irreen hoomaa hinmidhaansituu,	power alone does not do good
tun waan ofumaa beettani!	is what you know!

An equally important point is perhaps the condition of autochthonous institutions deteriorated by the government institutions almost replacing the indigenous *resource management and knowledge system*. As presented in Jaarsoo's poetry, the implication of indigenous resource management system being overtaken by modern governmental structure is revealed in the social and economic resultant consequences: inner-clan resource competitions and inter-ethnic conflicts. Traditionally, the authority of land ownership lies with the *Abbaa Gadaa*, with the managers of water sources *Abbaa Herregaa* and grazing *Abbaa Dheedaa*. The Borana land sources are, in this regard, traditionally classified into *ritual, salt licks, grazing, and water sources* that there is no free and/or *wasteland* in Boorana. Traditionally land tenure rights are vested with all Boorana.

As a result of the complete neglect of mutual recognition between state and society in general, the general attitude of pastoralists to the center is one of suspicion and hostility. Consequently, they tend to view government as alien and unrepresentative of their interests and concerns, and, therefore, do not respect state boundaries created and demarcated. The three rhetorical questions put below ask, in a style more explicit and direct, the state-society relationship (p49):

gaaffiin kiyya sadii:	I have three questions:
ta qaraa waan jettuu:	the first says:
hiyyeessa hingalateeffatan	do we say,
jenna moo	the poor is not worth praising,
5 waan galataatu	or praise is not
namaa hinta'u jenna?	worth to man?
gooftaan dhara hindubbatu	do we say,

jenna moo	the <i>lord</i> speaks no <i>lie</i> ,
dharti gooftallee	or <i>lies</i> told by the <i>lord</i>
10 dhugaa jenna?	are <i>truth</i> ?

horii nama hamaatu	do we say,
horata jenna moo	a cunning person makes wealth,
nami waa horate	or a wealthy person
inhammaate jenna?	is cunning?

The voice in the recital poetry above oscillates between the witty words putting each on separate poles: ‘*poor/praise*’, ‘*lord/lies*’ and ‘*cunning/wealth*’. One may interpret thus those hypothetical questions: if man is worth praising, that is normal. It is unlawful to contempt one because he is poor (lines 3-6). If the *lord* tells lies, that is disgraceful. His lies cannot be truth only because he is lord, however (lines 7-10). If the *cunning* makes wealth through looting, corruption or nepotism, that does not justify the source of wealth is always looting or corruption (lines 11-14). The semantic relations between the three: the *poor/cunning* and the *lord* is power relation, which indicates the state-nation relationship at disequilibrium owing to unclear policies and state interventions. It follows that, the policy of land tenure designed as workable in the highlands is not by any means relevant to the lowlands without any severe implications. It is in this issue of sociopolitical, economic and cultural implications and resultant consequences that the poet's social analysis of *FSG* is anchored.

Finna San Gama is dialogic in its discoursal mode of communication and allegorical in its poetic style. The *Dialogue* is built on the Borana traditional rhetoric especially in *Dispute Settlement* and generally on the form of oratory where other ethnic genres, such as proverbs, are used to skillfully engage the audience in the subject matter. In this regard, the process of *dispute settlement*, *conflict resolution* mechanism and *oratory* in exercising the viability of the

Boorana micro-political system, i.e., the *Nagaa Boorana* is further illustrated in *FSG* (cf. *FSG II*). The community elder says (p15),

.....	
- Dhugaan si himatte	-Dhugaa has accused you (of usurping her land)
- Ihii	I see
- jidduun isin taa'aa....	-I mediate you, settle your case....
tanaaf si yaame.	that is why we are here.

The content of the first section of *FSG II* (pp12-50) is *dispute settlement* (line 3). In the process of vindicating such cases as related to conflict over resource use and management (line 1) one may be proved honest when the other part is found guilty by the established norm. The modalities of such "dualism" of moral may require a detailed discussion of the sociocultural aspects of Boorana/Oromo life. *FSG II* exhibits a vast array of political and sociocultural issues. In Oromo religion *Waaqa* is the creator of all things and the source of life. *Waaqa*, in Oromo metaphysical worldview, has appointed to all *beings* their place in the cosmic order. And, according to the Oromo knowledge system, what is *cubbuu* (*sin/vice*), as clearly demonstrated in *FSG II*, is not violating just what is reduced into the *Ten Commandments* in the Bible. *Cubbuu* is violating that cosmic order of which *Waaqa* is the source, or the *ayyaana divine being* is the guardian. Hence, as in this first section of *FSG II*, violating others' birthright, usurping people's property, intervening by force in others' sociopolitical, cultural and economic affairs are all to violate *safuu*, i.e., the *cosmic order* and to commit *cubbuu* (*sin*). The overall governing principle to maintain that cosmic order and to regulate the day-to-day life activities in certain orderly manner is the *safuu* knowledge system among the Oromo like the Ten Commandments. This is the Oromo *worldview* referred to in the allegorical poem.

In the dialogue in *FSG II* (pp12-50) the two contesters brought their case to Jaarsa (community elder). *Jaarsa* among the Oromo as in Boorana is of a very high importance for sociocultural and ritual purposes. According to Ton Leus in his *Borana-English Dictionary* (1995), in which he thoroughly discusses the details of linguistic and anthropological accounts of Borana Oromo, *jaarsa* is responsible for different areas: *jaarsa biyyaa*, *jaarsa dheedaa*, *jaarsa maddaa*, i.e. someone responsible for settling disputes, controlling graze land and managing water resources/wells, respectively. And, generally, for the management and use of natural resources including Land, as in the extract (line 3), and settling conflicts over resources *jaarsa* is a signpost among the Oromo and so is in Borana. That is why the Borana say ‘*Dubbii Booranaa jaarsa Booranaatu namaa dubbata*’, that is, ‘*A Borana case is resolved by Borana elders*’. And of course, there is also that ‘*nami ganna diqqaa akka jaarsaa injira*’, meaning, ‘*a young man can also act as jaarsaa being wise and open-minded*’ (cf. Leus 1995:476).

The kaleidoscopic structure of *FSG* is identifiable in the too formal too direct interrogatives, declaratives and imperatives in the dialogic mode of the communication below in *FSG II* (p12, 16-33):

.....	
- Dhugaa	-Dhugaa
- yee	- yes
- at’ ta eennuu?	-where do you belong?
5 - ta Waaqaa	-to God
.....	
Cubbuu	Cubbuu
- yee	-Yes
- ati ta eennuu?	-where do you belong?
10 - tan Nam’-Adii	-to ‘the White man’
-isii Dhugaa,	-Dhugaa,
dubbii tana dhageettaa?	you listen?
- indhaga’a	-I do

- lafti tan tee moo,	-is Land yours or
15 tan Cubbuu?	Cubbuu's?
-tiyya	-mine
-akkam tee?	-how yours (justify)?
-irratti dhaladhe tiyya.	-I was borne and bred here. It is my land.
-eeyyee	-I see
20 -Cubbuu dhageettaa?	-Cubbu, you hear what she says?
-Indhaga'a.	-I do.
-dhageettu dubbadhu	-so answer
-lafti dhaloota	-the land (the Boranaland) is her birthright
ta isiitiin akkasi.	is true
25 -eeyyee	-I see
-duub isiin bulchuu wallaaltee	-but she couldn't manage it
garaa namaa keessa	she lies asleep
marattee ciifte.	in people's 'Stomuch'.
an lafa abbaan bira rafu	I got the land on which the owner
30 argadhe.	is fast asleep
-eeyyee	-I see
-dhuga dhageettaa?	-Dhugaa, you listen ?
-indhaga'a.	-I do
-dhageettu dubbadhu	-so answer
35-an inciisa malee hinrafuu	-if I lie I lie awake
an injiga malee hincabuu	if I fall I don't break
il' dunuunfadhe malee	if I close my eyes
hinbannee	I lost not my sight
wal dhabanillee Cubbuu	and though we disagree, Cubbuu,
40 akka irraa wal gorsuu hin mallee.	it is wrong to lead each other astray.
-Cubbu dhageettaa?	-Cubbuu you listen?
-indhaga'a	-I do
.....	
-dubbii kana nuu kori	-lets postpone this matter
45 -eennut' sii kora?	-who will handle it for you?
-Nam'-Adiit' naa kora	the 'White Man'
-maa sii kore?	-why? Why the 'White-Man'?
-dubbii kana yoo	-if you stretch the case
-siin akkana yaatee	any more
50 a'aa	no no, I'm afraid
an lafa kanan dhaba....	I may lose the land.....

The assertive statement made by *Dhugaa* that 'Land' belongs to her (lines 16, 18) is refuted by *Cubbuu*. *Cubbuu* says *Dhugaa* lies in human 'stomach' (lines 26-30) and cannot manage land properly. Human 'stomach' to the Oromo is not just a physiological organ like "human heart"; "it is an image, a symbol, and above all the center of moral habits" (Sumner 1995:287). The fact that *Dhugaa* is from *Waaqaa* or God (line 5) and *Cubbuu* is from 'earth' (line 10) has its root in Oromo religion (Bartels 1983). The divinity of *Waaqa* 'God' is both on those *uumaa* in *waaqaa* (sky) and those on *lafa* /*dachii*, i.e., *Mother Earth*. Mother Earth is also called *Haadha Margoo* or the *Green-handed Deity*. Hence, *Dhugaa* or literally, 'Truth' is a hub around which the wheel of those three elements of Oromo *knowledge system*, namely, the *uumaa*, *ayyaana* and *safuu* revolve. What is more, *Dhugaa* in this poem is described by *Cubbuu* as weak, slow and passive or ineffectual (lines 26-30; cf. also *FSG II* p26) to which *Dhugaa* responds in a bitter and energetic tone saying: 'if I lie I lie awake' / 'if I fall I dont break' / 'if I close my eyes / I lost not my sight' (lines 35-38). The Oromo proverb describes *dhugaa* (virtue/truth) as 'Dhugaan qal'attullee hincittu', meaning 'Be as thin as it may, *Dhugaa* never breaks'.

As can be evidently seen in the poetic social analysis in *FSG*, among the Borana and other pastoralist communities in the south, the issue of land use and tenure is the normal cause of conflict. And the resultant effects of scarcity of grazing land and water resources cause inter-ethnic competitions which lead to armed conflicts among ethnic groups. One may also note the "tragedy of the commons", where the two competitors choose to degrade the resource, though they know the loss they incur, however. Behind this text of resource-based conflict and conflict resolution is the problem of policy issues and state interventions. This is what seems to have constituted the content for *Finna San Gama*.

It is such a social and political problem existing among the people that is addressed in the recital poetry. Regardless of the ecological and religious differences, it is a call for a

campaign to focus instead on the enormous common sociopolitical and economic problems that have stumbled the noble cause of sociocultural and economic developments while actively engaged in processes of national identity formation. In this respect, "national literatures and nations themselves are socially constructed," to borrow Sara M. Corse's words (1997) in a non-Corsian world, "under identifiable political and historical circumstances". This can be seen in the sociologically oriented study of Jaarsoo's poetry in which the process of constructing the nation and national literature is interwoven.

Part of the force of the poems in *FSG* comes from the rhetorical questions forwarded sometimes followed by immediate responses as in the dialogue in *FSG II* and sometimes not as in the lines below (*FSG III*, p28):

**ijoollee tan tee tun maaliif
tokkollee waa hinbaratin
bittaa, ati horii kanaatiif
ilumayyuu hinbanatin?**

**why among your children,
at least one has not gone to school?
you know, it is because of these cattle you herd
that you go blindfolded?**

For an important category of imagery some parts of *FSG* draw much on the *animal world* as that of *Jaldoo* and *Kinniisa* in *FSG III*. Imagery in *FSG II*, to the contrary, mainly comes from the cosmic worldview of the Oromo, which is an indicative of the metaphysical common knowledge system of Oromo society. Added to its dialogic poetic style, in *FSG* is the point of influence of political events during and before the poet's time, and the preoccupation with socio-economic problems of the people. As in *FSG III*, there is a dialogue about the fierce combat between *Jaldoo* (*Monkey*) and *Kinniisaa* (*'a Swarm of Bee'*). The combat is between *Jaldoo* coming down from a mountainous region in the highland to cut beehives and eat honeycombs by force and *'a Swarm of Bee'* fighting to defend their territory.

Summarily, the issue of conflict over resources, particularly land seems to be the center of the content of *FSG*. In the texts, in this study, attempt is made to consolidate the recital poetry on the basis of oral popular form of dispute settlement. The dialogic communicative mode and allegorical representation of the Oromo worldview in *FSG*, one may conclude, is an indicative of the depth of Oromo philosophy of life and the beauty of artistic values that necessitate the

study of Oromo literature from a sociological perspective. Such influences of Oromo oral tradition in *Finna San Gama (I-IV)* establish the *identity* of Oromo literature as having some didactic role.

4.3.3 Social and Development Issues

The danger of alcohol, generally called *farsoo* is also recited in *FSG*. The poetic social analysis of *development* and *social* issues in the poetry is marked by changes in the socio-political and historical conditions in the poet's environment. The changes have placed their stamp on the reciter's poetic imagination producing types of poetry that seem to characterise a developing society--developing in some way.

The poetry is recited in the Orwellian sense, to say, since the narrator satirises his characters and uses allegory with a desire to push the world in a certain direction and to alter other people's ideas of the type of society that they should strive after, as Mutiso says (1974:4). The reciter seems confident that most of his public/audience share with him the same cultural background and suffer the same socio-political and economic deficiencies that constitute the content of the poetry.

The didactic role of *FSG* originates in the Oromo tradition of teaching with songs, riddles, proverbs and folktales. That is, the narrator's conception of himself as more perceptive and sensitive in his society (line 1 below), perhaps as a visionary, as a poet, might have influenced the recital poetry to assume a didactic role. This can well be exhibited in *FSG I* where the danger of alcohol, generally labeled *farsoo* among the Booran, is satirised as one most serious social problem that impedes development. The poetic lines below are from *FSG I* (p2ff):

duuba, Boorana an sitti himaa,
farsoo la fulaan dabartee
badii tan tee tana:
halaknii guyyaa machooftaa
5 daadhii booka taan naqattee

now, Boorana, listen to me!
if you drink alcohol,
here are your weaknesses:
you get drunk day and night
as you make mead and effervesce.

birrii tan loon moonaa yaaftaa
garuu, deemtee la naagaddee?

but you sell the cattle and empty the hedge,
or where else you bring the money from?

Farsoo is used to criticise the people as causes of their own socio-economic problems (lines 4-7). The people are ridiculed for selling cattle and effervescing: **but you sell the cattle...or where else you bring the money from?** they are interrogated (lines 6&7). Satire, like imagery or symbolism, is in the Oromo poetic vein. One may consider such examples as in the *geeraarsa* folk song. Because of the didactic inclination of the Oromo imagination in most Oromo oral poetry, as the *dhaaduu* war poem, there is interest in the poem above in social criticism manifested in satire. In the above poetic content there seems to be an atmosphere of social and economic crisis in which the narrator acts as a saviour/messenger who delivers his people an urgent message: **now, Boorana, listen to me!** (line 1). The message is urgent since the main concern is with the current poor social and economic condition of the people who, as recited in the poem above (line 6), sell their cattle to go to brothel and effervesce. To the above rhetorical question, *farsoo* is purportedly said to have responded thus (p4):

maa isan hinabaarre qara?
waan isanii tahe cufa beekaa:
*daallich*i na dhugu *inqarooma*,
abeebi na dhugu *injanooma*,
5 *mandiidi* na dhugu *inkasooma*,
doorichi na dhugu *inwayyooma*
oorisaa sun keessaa aqooqa.

why don't you know man,
that I am so good to you?
the *fool* drinks me to become *wise*
the *coward* drinks me to become *hero*
the *untamed* drinks me to become *well mannered*
and, the *sad* drinks me to become *fine*
i avoid all his worries

In each of the above lines are antithetic expressions: *fool/wise* (line 3), *coward/hero* (line 4), *untamed/well-mannered* (line 5), and *sad/fine* (line 5). Those expressions are carefully woven into the poetic craft to effect semantic parallelism based on antonyms: that *farsoo* can turn what is *unpleasant mood* without the drink into a much *better mood* after the drink (line 6).

The structure of most of *FSG*, as in the above extract, changes from a statement to a rhetorical question as a forceful portrayal of ideas of defeat and submissive attitude of the present-day Boorana drinking *farsoo* (p15):

duub, Boorana sitti himaa

now, Boorana listen to me!

farsoo yo fulaan dabarte
 dadiin tan tee tana
 Boorana ati waan guddaa,
 5 gurr' kee Waaqat' sii gabbisee
 laf' kee Waaqat' sii bal'isee
 bultumaan sidiin si marsitee
 waggaa waggaan si darbattii
 laf' tee dansaa siin falmittee
 Abbaa Biyyaa hintaaneeree?

if you drink *farsoo*
 here are your weaknesses:
 Boorana, you are big enough
 God has created you so legendary
 and your land so wide
 unfortunately you live surrounded by Others
 pushing you every year
 claiming your land and land resources,
 now, have they not become citizens?

Thus, the poetic content above operates on two levels giving two layers of meanings. On one level it portrays more emphatically the concern for the well-being of the people (lines 1-3). On the other level, the idea of reclaiming land and land resources, more than that, the Booranaland, is reflected on (lines 7-10). In order to convey two levels of meanings, there is a tone of a dramatised conversation in the question and answer form, though the conversation is one-sided. *FSG I* is not the only conversational and dialogic mode of narrative in *FSG I-IV*. What is unique to this recital poetry is that it is not just to blame the resource competitors and outsiders for the poor social and economic condition the people are put in, but also the people are responsible for what is happening to them.

While the people are criticised for adopting the *naftanya's* (*soldier settler's*) life style, in the poem below is also a satirical comment of the political ineptitude and economic mismanagement imposed by the Abyssinian rule. The lines below lash out at corruption (see lines 1 & 4) pointing out the bureaucratic malfunctions of the *naftanya* rule. The social evils of the system are recounted thus (*FSG I*, p38):

-aaboo birrii shantami jiraa?
 -iyyoo!
 -heec! deem asii!
 nam' duwwaa dubbatut' jiraa?...
 5 kudhan bulii deebi'i, jedhiin
 dubbii dhibiit' biiroo jiraa.
 korbeess' fidii kot jedhiin
 keessummaa jabduut man' na jiraa.
 -korbeess' kiyya hinkennu, inqoofiti
 du'at' irra naa jira!

-you got fifty Birr?
 -no!
 -go away!
 who speaks without a bribe?...
 come back after ten days
 since there are other businesses now.
 tell him to come with a lamb then,
 I will be having a guest.
 -I would rather die than
 to bring to you a lamb!

It is discernible in the poetic content above that the *naftanya* armed settler is so parasitic (lines 7&8) since he is not directly involved in the production system. The fact that the peasant failed to offer a bribe, fifty Birr in cash (lines 1&2), or fetch a *lamb* (line 7) so that his case will be handled properly indicates the historical relationships based on injustices under the

Abyssinian rule. The economic greed of the ruling class is referred to as it perpetuates an oppressive feudal structure. The feudal relations depicted in *FSG* are the local version of stories about the *gabbaar* system extracting taxes and tributes from the peasant. In Boorana, in the further north, for instance, and to the north-west (Hiddii area), the system was based on share-cropping contracts between the feudal retainer and the tenants. Whereas, in the pastoral areas of Liiban and part of Dirre the Boorana families were obliged to supply the *naftanya* with corvee labour and tributes (interview with Dabbasaa).

One may hasten to add that in *FSG* it is not just a short poem that communicates effectively but also the move to and fro on a swing in a poem asking rhetorical but crucial questions (p44):

-adoo hag fedhe hammaatee	-even if it is a hard time for us
yeroon <i>chaarterii</i> kun	this time of the <i>Charter</i>
nagaa nu hanqisaa?	but would it deprive us our peace?
- hinhanqisu beeki aaboo!	-no, it never deprives us
5 <i>bilisummaan</i> teenna la dhiyaatee,	our <i>Independence</i> is approaching
Waaqaa nuun gayi malee.	oh God! may our dream come true
e'ee! nu kadhaanne!	and thus, we pray to You!

The narrator starts by asking in an apparently innocent manner how the fate of his people would turn out after the 1991 *Charter* (lines 1-3) signed by the TPLF-led coalition parties of the then Transitional Government of Ethiopia (*TGE*). In the dialogue above the listener answers the vision of the Oromo should be one of hope to restore all the past cultural values and other legacies they have lost and to regain a state of well-being. Protagonists in Jaarsoo's narrative *claim* to have common heritage and shared destiny: **oh, God, may our dream come true** (line 6). The Boorana/Oromo image of *Waaqa* 'God' in *FSG* (line 6), is "a source of identity, of life-giving unity and continuity" (see Gudrun Dahl in Baxter 1996: 176). Parallel to the prayer and song of hope and determination (lines 6&7) there is a narrative below having a

tone of nonchalant defiance (lines 4&5) that there is no peace and stability in Boorana ever since the Tigre's incursion (lines 1&2) into the area (*FSG I*, p44):

duub, kutaa Mooyalee keessatti gaaf Tigireen laf' keenna seente kanaa ...nami garii laf' teenna 'edhaa lafuma durii Booranni irratti dhalatee 5 kan falmaa. afaanii hudduu 'saatii gar dhabani!	now, in Moyale when Tigre intruded into Boorana some <i>re</i>-claimed the Booranaland the land that the Booran lived on borne and bred on this land for ages, they claimed this they claimed that we couldn't tell their head and their tail!
--	---

The felt forceful presence of the *wayyane* among the Boorana in 1991 (lines 1&2 above) is what Shongolo declares as the "Tigre attempts of Abyssinian neo-colonialism" (Shongolo 1996:267, 268). Thus, the artistic purpose in the extract seems to convey the continuous '*divide and rule*' policy of the Abyssinian rule in the south. *Finna San Gama* has a lot to do with the Oromo socio-political and economic history. The *motif* of economic and political dependence of the Oromo under colonial rule and the consequent *Oromo nationalism* is recurrent in *FSG*.

The poem also focuses on conflicts caused by unevenness of development. That is, certain regions are placed in more advantageous positions than others and, consequently, attract more investment and skill than others (cf. *FSG II*, pp59ff.). Whereas, people in the backwash regions are considered as reluctant citizens. Even their protests are politicised and considered as mere ethnic violence, hooliganism or strictly speaking, *terrorism*. In *FSG* the poetic social analysis of nepotism or ethnic favouritism seems to be on a par with what development and conflict theorists claim. That is, the state tends to develop interests with the most commercialised regions since they provide the type of free-floating resources upon which the state depends for its function. What is more, the so-called 'state class' is often recruited from the same ethnic group which reinforces the biases as clearly recited in *FSG III*: **when the government favours one tribe / how come we battle each other?** (p37).

While the influences of the West and such big regimes as the IMF and World Bank in the Third World in the name of grants are referred to, issues of ethnic favouritism crop up again (*FSG III*, p81):

maddoo xuuxuu malee, wayyaanee faatilleen hattee luuguu malee...	we suck, we prey on what is too little and yet, the <i>wayyane</i> live on (stealing) our milk⁸
---	---

In the poetic lines above the *wayyane* is to blame for the poor life condition the Oromo are put in. Thus, as a freedom fighter the poet not only recited about liberation struggle but also he lived it and spoke it to his people with the voice of a strong zeal and commitment as can be further illustrated.

In the recital poetry, historical injustices, like the continuous aggression, conquest and genocide inflicted on the Oromo nation are recited. Rhetorical questions that elicit an emphatic answer 'yes!' are forwarded and statements full of images and idioms taken from Oromo oral tradition and from historical facts are used. The image of a *beast of burden* (line 3) below illustrates the continuous offence (*FSG I*, p50):

kanum dhufut' nu yaabbataa garbummaan gad nu hindhiifnee. haga harree harreen korteellee lukaan ofirraa hindhiinnee.	they mounted us one after another and we live under servitude ever since. even a <i>beast of burden</i> kicks as if by instinct when by force another beast of burden comes on top of it.
5 akkum laafaa jabaan buusee jalum ciifnee hinciniinne	or, even, like the week thrown by a muscular, we daren't bite while lying under.

The generalised statements in the poem come from the preceding rhetorical questions (pp48, 49, 50) and do not mention the object of criticism other than "*we*", an indicative of Oromo colonial collective experience and shared destiny.

There is a new shift of focus in *FSG*, though not a fundamental change, from the greater emphasis on the past to the present socio-political and economic deficiency of the nation. In what follows there is a shift from lamentation of the past to the song of defiance/refusal to

succumb to despair under the neo-colonial rule by the TPLF and its surrogates as couched in a tone that speaks anger and determination (*FSG I*, p55):

Oromoo bilis' ba'uu	the Oromo do not beg for permission
nam' tokkollee hinkadhatu...	to be an <i>Independent</i> nation...
Goobanaa barri kee dabree	Goobana, your days are bygone, ⁹
kan balleessite hin'gartu?	don't you see your wicked acts?
5 akka gaaf Minilik kaan	you can no more slur the name of the Oromo
Oromoo afaan itti hinhaqattu.	like during the time of Menelik.
at ulee bofaan ejjeesani	you are cursed, to be thrown
biyitilleen mana ofiitti hingalattu	like a stick with which a snake is beaten
...of eeggadhu Goobana	Goobana, watch out!

'Goobana' in this poem (lines 3&9), as elsewhere seen in *FSG* series, is a representational character, representative of the *wayyane*-subordinate OPDO. In the poetic line **don't you see your wicked acts?** (line 4), attempt is not only to champion the pan-Oromo cause, but also to project the fearless and aggressive attitude of the Oromo towards the OPDO which represents the determination of the oppressed to resist neo-colonial rule (lines 1&2).

Thus, *FSG* achieves even great power in the remaining part of the poems. The contribution of *FSG* to Oromo literature, particularly to Oromo poetry is substantial. This is because approach to the poetic analysis of social phenomena in the recital poetry lays fertile ground to establish defining characteristics of Oromo literature. That is, attempts made in *FSG* to establish the socio-cultural identity of Oromo literature/poetry is an indicative of the didactic role of Oromo literature reflecting the socio-political and economic transformation of the Oromo nation. In the context of this poetry the importance of its contribution lies mainly in the attempts made to reconcile the worldview and linguistic repertoire of a traditional society, namely, the Booran with the universal and collective life experience of the Oromo under the Abyssinian colonial and neo-colonial rule. Thus, the poetic social analysis in *FSG* focuses on the recurrent theme of *resource-based conflict*, *social and development issues* and the discourse of *colonial and neo-colonial issues*. Dialogue, in *FSG*, is a poetic style, so much as

it is the medium of *nagaa Boorana, the peace of the Borana*. In the poetry the reciter "consciously used...a 'war of words' as opposed to a war with arms" (Shongoglo 1996:269).

4.3.4 Colonial and Neo-colonial Issues

In the view of the poetic content of *FSG*, the southern conquest was nothing other than *colonialism*. There could be different theses about Menelik's southern march to invade and subjugate the Oromo and others in the south, however (cf., Messay 1999). It is thus voiced in *FSG I* (pp48, 49):

waa gaaf Aatsee Minilik kaan	of the time of Atse Menelik
badaa, an isaanti hinhimnee?	oh, haven't I told you?
qawwee qabatee gad dhufee,	armed and marched to the south,
ilmaan Oromoo hinfixnee?	didn't he massacre the Oromo?
5 ... <i>nam'-adiin</i> mal dhahatee	didn't he consult <i>white-man</i>
yaada dhibii nutti hinfinnee?	and brought to us things that were <i>newfangled</i> ?
Goobanaan nut' gargalee	didn't Goobana turn to us,
Oromoo addaan hinfillee?	and <i>divided and ruled</i> the Oromo?
...Oromiyaa maqaa jijjiiree	didn't he change <i>Oromia</i>
Xoophiyaa jedhee hinhimnee?	and <i>re-named</i> it <i>Ethiopia</i> ?

The above lament in *FSG I* substantiates the colonial thesis. It is thus recounted: a century ago Menelik (line 1) cheaply won interests of the politically irresponsible Oromo military geniuses such as Goobana (line 7) and massacred a large number of the Oromo (lines 3,4,6). He also '**brought things that were newfangled**' (line 6): imposed the *new* cultural, socio-political and production system on the Oromo who until then had lived according to the *gadaa* egalitarian system. The resources Menelik obtained by conquering and annexing the Oromo and Oromoland enabled him to build the Ethiopian empire (lines 9&10). In the poetic lines full of allusions above: **the time of Menelik, armed and marched to the south, white man, and Goobana**, one can observe that Menelik's conquest was made possible through foreign contacts, i.e., through the '*white man*' (line 5), and had a serious effect on the Oromo and the southern populations (*FSG IV: p135*):

jabaa qaroon cufa	our strong and enlightened ones
lafa akkan dhootanii	they evicted, chased, massacred
foon isaa rumichaaf	and offered the victims' flesh to hawks
allaattiif furanii	threw to the vultures' sharp claws,

5 .ilmaan Oromichaa
 akkasiin dhabanii!
 ganna dhibba tokko,
 akkasum' baranii
 ...biyya Oromiyaatti
 alaabaa hidhanii!

...children of the Oromo
 were lost thus!
 one hundred years solid,
 it has been a colonial legacy
 to see the flag of the colonial power
 flying full-mast on Oromoland, in Oromia!

Using the words **evicted**, **chased**, **massacred** (line 2) and **vultures' sharp claws'** (line 4) *FSG* projects the lasting damages and heavy losses of human lives inflicted and the socio-political and cultural systems imposed on the Oromo for **one hundred years solid** (line 7). The severe human condition under the colonial rule is recounted: they [the colonial rulers] massacred the Oromo, evicted and chased them (lines 2-5). The poetry proves Messay Kebede's argument (1999) that Ethiopian colonialism, like the European colonialism is a "violent process of conquest, annexation, incorporation and subjugation of peoples and territories involving massive use of manpower, technology and strategy whatever to overcome every resistant force of the victims"

(p11). From the viewpoint of the *colonial thesis* it is agreed that the expansion triggered by Ethiopian economic necessity, though not on the same level with that of the European domestic economic needs, is equally colonial as that of its European counterpart.

FSG confirms the *colonial thesis* that both the European and the Ethiopian colonialism were motivated by the same imperialist causes. Below is a poem that recounts the vision of Menelik's alliance with the then European colonial powers competing in Africa (*FSG I*, pp48, 49):

qawwee qabatee gad dhufee,
 ilmaan Oromoo hinfixnee?
 ...*nam'-adiin* mal dhahatee
 yaada dhibii nutti hinfinnee?

armed and marched to the south,
 didn't he massacre the Oromo?
 didn't he consult the *white-man*
 and brought to us things that were *newfangled*?

The motif of *nam'-adii* '*white man*' (line 3) is very important in the poetry. It is strongly believed in the recital poetry that Menelik couldn't have succeeded in conquering the Oromo

without the European support (line 3). In *FSG II* the western intervention is condemned for having always favoured the Ethiopian colonial policies. Menelik's land policy, for instance, is the *siisoo* system in the south whereby two-thirds of the land was confiscated and declared state property. Whereas, the natives could claim only the remaining third (*FSG I*, p35):

lafti inni qotuu cufti ka daanyaa isaa! hark' dhibba keessaa tokkee qofat' ka isaa yoo xaasaan tokko bade isaabi gar' isaa	the land he tills is the colonial agent's/landlord's! out of one hundred hands only one goes to the <i>tenant</i> if one <i>xaasaa</i> (<i>a weight measure</i>) was missing, he had to pay from his own share of the crop
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and, in *FSG III* (p41):

ebalu yaayyuu deegge beettaa. ilaa waan nyaatee dhugu qabaa?	So and So is already impoverished you see, he has nothing left to bite?
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The above two lines indicate the consequences of such a major disruption and degradation of the traditional economic life of the Oromo and others in the south: poverty, resource competitions, environmental degradation and border conflicts that usually lead into inter-ethnic wars. The same exploitation and unrest has been evident throughout the successive historical regimes (*FSG I*, pp48, 49, 50):

waa gaaf Aatsee Minilik kaanOromiyaa maqaa jijjiiree Xoophiyaa jedhee hinhimnee?	of the time of Atse Menelik: didn't he Christianize <i>Oromoland</i> and <i>re-name</i> it <i>Ethiopia</i> ?
...Hayila Sillaaseen dhufee haga kaan 'illee nu hinhanqifnee?	didn't Hailesilassie do to us much more evils than his predecessor?
...Mangistuun Tafarii 'jjeesee reeffa lafa irra hinharkifnee? foon ilmaan Oromoo nyaataa harraagessi hinkaakkifnee?	didn't Mengistu kill Teferi [Banti] and drag the corpse on the ground? and to grab their claws at the flesh of the <i>Oromo</i> , didn't hawks cackle and croak?

In the dialogic mode of communication in *FSG*, rhetorical questions are forwarded about *what would be like the fate of the Oromo in the macro-political context of Ethiopia under the neocolonial rule*. The plight of the Oromo under colonial rule is clearly articulated thus: 'divided and ruled' (*FSG I*, p48, line 8) and 're-named Ethiopia' (line 3 above). Whereas the traditional system of *rist* (inherited land) secured the right to land and to production for domestic consumption to each peasant in the north, the system of tenancy was introduced to

the south. The *siisoo* (one-third) land policy made it possible for the state to hold large estate, to broaden cash crop production which stimulated new northern settlers among the Oromo (*FSG I*, p65):

Oromiyaa nagaa buufna 'etteetuu achiin gaarren nutt' qubatee, akka Oromoon bultee kaatuu cufa keessa yaatee ubatee 5 qabeenna Oromiyaa keennaa walumaan qabdee xuuxxatte.	to pacify Oromoland, to civilise the Oromo, as it were, they 'descended' and settled among us, then learned the Oromo and Oromoland, in and out and at last they sucked the resources of the Oromo and Oromoland (like a vampire)
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Following the Ethiopian colonial system, socio-cultural and political oppression became evident in the south. The first two poetic lines above show, the Habasha ‘descended’ and ‘settled’ (line 2) among the Oromo and imposed the hierarchical and individualistic system of the north predominantly Semitic population on the egalitarian and solidaristic population of the essentially Cushitic south, particularly the Oromo who up until then had lived by and exercised the *gadaa* democratic system. Of the origin of the Oromo (see *Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1998: 155-172), below are the poetic lines in *FSG IV* (p117):

garii gad hindhufnee, bar kuma, lafti asitti dhalannee guddanne!	we didn't come from the North, you know, for thousand year, this is the very land, where we were borne and bred!
---	---

The words '*bar kuma*', literally, '*thousand year*' (line 2) is not just to mean '*one thousand year*'. It is rather to corroborate *re*-claiming the origin of the Oromo in the south so much as it is to illustrate picture of the invaders from the north as outsiders to the southern populations. The Oromo traditional, communal or collectivist system is demonstrated in *FSG* as despised by the northern class-based system oriented by imperial ideology of *expansion*. The poems above: ‘to pacify Oromoland, to civilise the Oromo...(line 1) ’ show the Abyssinian invasion of the Oromo and the southern population was, purportedly, not without a civilising or pacifying mission. In the lines to follow, cultural oppression by the Ethiopian colonial power is no less depicted in *FSG* than the political and economic degradation of the Oromo. That is, the *naftanya* (*armed settlers*) not only forced the Oromo to enter the colonial political life

but also Christianized them by force to effect assimilation (see lines 5 & 6 below). The past is recaptured thus (*FSG I*, p64):

barri durii kaan ya hafee!	the good old day is now bygone!
akki gaaf durii dur qalloo.	all that's in the past is no more.
seerri <i>gadaa</i> kaan ya galee...	the <i>gadaa</i> system is considered obsolete...
Oromiyaan hindanadamannee:	and Oromia is not yet recovered:
5...irreen <i>kirstinnaa</i> kaatee	...christianised by force
cufti aadaa ofii dhabdee!	and lost all the cultural legacies!

By the same historical derive as that of its European counterparts Ethiopian colonial expansion catered for its domestic economic needs through similar methods of conquest, administration, and surplus extraction. Theoretical abstractions supported by factual evidences prove what a certain scholar has said about the contribution of the southern peoples and the Oromo to the integrity and wealth of Ethiopian Empire. It is noted thus: without the blood and the sweat of the Oromo and the southern populations, first, the battle of Adwa might not have been won; second, Menelik II might not have built the empire (qtd. in Messay 1999:15; see also Asafa 1998, chapter 9 *passim*). Despite the recital poetry that raises Ethiopia to the level of a colonial power, but there is an assumption that a backward country such as Ethiopia cannot be on a par with European colonial powers which have a definite expansionist ideology.

By the theory of *dependent colonialism*, which is a classical form of *neo-colonialism*, colonial possessions are now no longer justifiable. It therefore holds that so much as European colonial powers have surrendered their colonial dominions in Africa "so too must Ethiopia release its conquest by according the right to self-determination" to the nations and nationalities it has still subjugated (Messay *ibid.* p17). Since the content of *FSG*, the researcher believes, is a socio-political and cultural standard bearer of the poet's people, it is not surprising that socio-political assertiveness in Oromo (oral) poetry is a predominant

preoccupation, particularly in *FSG*. A unique identity seems to be curved for the Oromo as opposed to the outsiders (*FSG III*, p19):

eessatt' baqannee gallaa, nullee laf' kanum qabnaa?	where else can we go, we have this and only this land?
--	---

The poetic content of *FSG* is anchored in the sea of Oromo socio-political, cultural and economic milieu as the narrator declares ‘we have this and only this land’ (line 2 above). Hence, the issue of land is very important. Land ownership to the Oromo means wealth, dignity, stability and honour. It is also a symbol of identity. There comes a shift from the cultural and the political to the socio-economic matters as economic hardships become obvious in the penultimate line below referring to the highland (*FSG III*, p19):

lafti dhaloot keenyaa gaaraa, waan nyaannullee keessaa 'garraa?	our native land is far north, do we get anything to bite, (if we happen to live there)?
--	---

The contents of *FSG* include the idea of a protracted liberation struggle and optimism in the minds of the majority of the Oromo symbolised by a humming voice of the multitude ‘we’ (*FSG III*, pp81-88) until the conclusive poetic line follows (p88):

hubattu malee waa hintahin! jedhe, jaarsi guddatee waa bare.	do not get involved without any deliberation! says an elderly man well experienced and matured.
---	--

Thus, *FSG* is a social and political satire in which the pace of the poem quickens and the various images come in quick succession one after another having an irresistible cumulative effect on the poetic content (cf. the issue of *farsoo* (alcohol) recited in *FSG I*, *Cubbuu* and *Dhugaa* (Vice and Virtue in *FSG II*). These can well be exemplified in *FSG III* by the interplay of multiple images and symbols such as *Jaldoo* (monkey) marching down from the highland mountainous region to cut beehives and eat honeycomb, and a *Swarm of Bee* chasing and ravaging the Monkeys (p19):

eessatti baqannee galtuu, nullee laf kanum' qabnaa? waan ati hinbeenne si barsiisa ollaana wal dhabama qabnaa 5 lafti dhaloot keenyaa gaaraa, waan nyaannullee keessaa 'garraa?	where else you think can we go, we have this and this land alone? I tell you what you do not seem to be aware of we are not in good terms with the neighbours our native land is far north, do we get anything to bite?
--	--

The issue of land and property right to land is an important issue in *FSG* (lines 1&2 above). *Jaldoo (Monkey)* say that they have nowhere to go since their “**native land is far north**” (line5), and they have nothing to bite lest they leave this land. Characters in *FSG III* are as allegorical as *Dhugaa* and *Cubbuu* in *FSG II*, except that *Dhugaa* and *Cubbuu* relate to the Oromo metaphysical view. The character '*a Swarm of Bee*' in *FSG III* is the previous symbolic stance repeatedly appeared in *FSG I* (p32) used as a refrain:

maqaa irraa jijjiiran	they changed the <i>name</i>
gudayyoo biyyi isaa	the <i>name</i> of Great Land
gubbaan maqaan dhokate,	never heard was the <i>name</i> ,
Oromoo tuuta kinniisaa	of the Oromo, of ' <i>a swarm of bee</i> ' ¹⁰

The refrain lifts the imagery to the realm of poetic excellence so much as it depicts the large number of the Oromo nation: ¹¹ despite their numerical majority the Oromo are considered, politically speaking, the minority ethnic group, under the Abyssinian colonial/neo-colonial rule.

The joys and sorrows of the society as experienced by the poet himself, since he is the sensitive part of his society as a poet and a freedom fighter, is articulated bluntly. That is, the poet's socio-economic orientation throughout his poetry indicates the poet's commitment to social, ideological and class-consciousness. There is a marked concern about the desperate condition of his people and about the oppressed (pp22ff):

isii mee warri baranaa	those who fled to the bush
qabsoo 'dhee raasaa seenee,	and joined the liberation <i>struggle</i> ,
ka sa'i bilisum' teennaa,	our cows expectant of <i>freedom</i> ,
dhaluu didee maseenee?	they remained sterile?

The question in the lines **our cows expectant of *freedom* / they remained sterile?** (lines 3&4) produce effects of a tone of embarrassment arising from the very dim prospect of seeing 'freedom' (line 3). The question **dhaluu didee maseenee? (remained sterile?)**, i.e., freedom is too late to come? (line 4) bears quite a desperate tone. The narrator is skeptical about the coming of freedom so much as once a cow has become barren, by that analogy, it does not bear a calf. However, a two-line verse from *FSG IV* (p149)

geette giseen! ka'aa barbaadaa:	it is time! get up and seek the <i>unended quest</i> :
bilisummaa, jiruu biyyee lafaadhaa!	<i>freedom, independence</i> and all that is <i>finna</i> !

reminds the researcher of one Oromo saying: *obsaan aanan goromsaa dhuga*, meaning, *one who can wait in patience drinks even the milk of a heifer*, which in turn echoes the adage *better later than never*.

Speaking of the current socio-political conditions in Ethiopia, the replacement of the Amhara-led previous successive regimes by the Tigre-led *neo-colonial* regime is also recited. The dictatorial EPRDF regime (lines 1&2) is thus described by the unfree and unfair elections (*FSG III*, 74):

mootummaa nat gubbaa jiraa!	I am the dictator!
mircaan' seer kiyyaan tahamaa	election is under my authority
warr' boson jiru fayyaa nitii	those who boycotted are not sane enough
kan filannoo kan didu beekaa	watch out! anyone who rejects the election
eger waraanaan hadhamaa	will be harassed and executed

Such conflicting views are exploited to convey what the *wayyane* preaches and what it practices: in the name of democracy and free and fair election but harassment and execution (lines 4 &5) have become the rule of the day under the neo-colonial Tigre-led system.

As the poetic line 'I am the dictator' (line 1) shows one characteristic feature inherent to the *neo-colonial* order is that one ethnic group has dominance over the other(s). It is also characterised by interests of the "*national*" sabotaged by interests of the ruling 'outsiders' (line 2). One method of survival that *wayyane* uses in Ethiopia today, as in the lines below, is granted by assembling different ethnic groups and tribes along their linguistic and socio-cultural boundaries and then hatching many such *PDO*'s as the *OPDO*, i.e., the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation. In the four poetic lines of *FSG III* the *OPDO* is described as the *wayyane neo-colonial* agents (line 3) in Oromia (p.77):

daallee na herreguut' jirtaa	you consider me as foolish
gugguba na hinqabu mataan!	no brand is on me like cattle!
OPDO wayyaanumaa,	OPDO is a wayyane-subordinate,
keenni imbarte malee afaan	but she learnt our language.

In this poem, only by virtue of their linguistic background (line 4) non-Oromos in the *OPDO*, with few irresponsible native Oromos, claim to work for the Oromo nation under the *wayyane*

‘nation building’ project. It is such a neo-colonial doctrine characterised by *wayyane's* political system of ethnic favouritism and foreign alliance that is strongly condemned in *Finna San Gama 'Beyond Adversities'*.

In the final analysis, the socio-political and economic condition of the Boorana, and of the Oromo in general, could improve if the people maintain their local and macro-political viability and defend their territorial integrity. The Oromo have had such a complex theory of social and cultural development as *finna* that well dictates Oromo literature and now, *Finna San Gama I-IV*. While he is *reconstructing* the past and *deconstructing* the present, as he has no confidence in the *status quo*, and foreseeing the future, perhaps it is the narrator's mission to direct the vision of his generation towards building free and independent Oromia State *beyond all adversities*. Thus, in the sub-section below the content of *FSG* as recounting the past and its role as actively commenting on the *status quo* and depicting the historical, social and cultural life situation of the Oromo will be analysed.

4.3.5 Rethinking Issues of Nationalism

Like in other poems in *FSG*, in *FSG IV* there are also multiple trends. Some of these trends are conflicting: the national, tribal, human, personal and public concerns are not singled out. The tensions and the conflict of allegiance between the Oromo and other ethnic groups in the immediate environment are recited and issues of the Oromo liberation struggle throughout Oromia are repeatedly raised in the recital poetry.

Though there is a shift towards local politics in the middle of the recital poetry the focus is still on the pan-Oromo cause of self-determination including independence (*FSG IV*, p90):

lafee keenya abaaranii	they cursed our bone
laaf' keenya jaalatanii.	and loved our land.
jaalala goggoyidduu nu 'garsiiisani	they pretended to love us
qolee nu harraabani,	and licked us in the nape.
5 teessum' goggoyidduu nu 'garsiiisani	they became citizens, while we, subjects,

maas' keenna nu qotatanii,
fudhacha lafa Oromoo...

were pushed into the dry land,
they annexed our fertile land...

The opening lines in the above poem (lines 1&2) make the route very clear as a prologue to the following descriptive and political verses. The theme of *nationalism* (line 5: **they became citizens, while we...subjects**) as in the above poetic lines is the major concern of the recital poetry that runs through the enchanting collection of the poems. In most part of *FSG* the recitation opens with the Oromo past and leads on to the present as it comparatively goes on to give the poetic social analysis. The purpose of the recitation seems to mark where "the rain started to beat" the Oromo while it forecasts when it would end. Thus there are repeated rhetorical questions to which there are no immediate responses as in the following lines in *FSG IV* (p. *ibid.*):

dhiibbaa dhuma hinqabneen,
akkuma Oromoon dhalatteen
durii duraan hinargamne
jijjiirama akka har'aa kana,
5 Oromoo!
at' fagoott' hingarree?

under a boundless pressure
in the history of the nation
experience non-existent hitherto
such changes as today's challenges
Oromo!
never did you expect? never ever you
expected it to happen?

Perhaps unlike most other Oromo (oral) poetry, *FSG* can afford to be so forthright in the assessment of the contribution of each and every individual Oromo elite or otherwise. This is so because the reciter was there in the Oromo liberation struggle up until he died in 1994, and therefore what he says he says it from direct experience, as the poetic line below asks energetically with an authority: **Oromo! / never did you expect? never ever you / expected it to happen?** (lines 6,7).

As conveyed below the sacrifice of *freedom fighters* and individual martyrs is not the end of the struggle; it is rather the responsibility of each and every Oromo to be committed in and be serious about the liberation struggle to determine one's fate under the continuous neo-colonial aggression (cf. *FSG III*, p79). **Get up! I awake you!** it voices (line 1 below):

si dammaqsee lafaa ka'i!
gam' kan keetiin jirti hafoon,

get up! I awake you!
there remain a lot to be done on your side

atoo si qofa hinta'inuu
 nama ka jaartiillee, akkoon
 5 haa qorattu xiloo ofii,
 WBO callaa miti marroon

and, not only you but
 every old man and woman
 should grind spear,
 or, not the OLA (Oromo Liberation Army) alone.

It is said that the fight against enemies, both external and internal, has to be seen as an ongoing process (line 2) that one has to continue courageously and with full hope for a free and independent Oromia State. In the next extract a tribute is made to the Oromo martyr, *Elemoo Qilxuu*, and *abbaa seeraa* (a lawmaker), which declares that one has to start off the long journey where the martyr stopped up (ibid):

Abbaa Seeraa wareegamee,
 faanum *Elemoo Qilxuutii*
 seelee inni nut lakkise
 fakkeenna qiiqee hir'uutii.
 5 eennut' seelee kan nuu guuta,
 kun jabaa gabbisa irbuunii?

the law maker is martyred
 following *Elemo Qilxu*
 the unended quest that he left
 is like an incomplete part of the body.
 who will fill up the gap?
 this renews the solemn promise.

Stretching far back his memory to 1973 one may recapture the early days of the OLF commencement in the following lines (*FSG IV*, p95):

ganni torbaatamii sadii
Oromoon jalqabamee
 wal-dhageessi yayyabamee
 kan egertii boruu yaadamee
 5 *finna* lafaan yayyabattiif
 jireenna Waaqaa argattii
 dhala raa'achaaf eebbifattiif
 baandiraa ka ofii 'rra dhaabatti

the year nineteen seventy three,
 'Oromo' was launched
 there was consensus reached,
 and the future was planned:
 for the foundation of *finna*
 for worshipping *Waqaa*, source of life and continuity
 for blessing our children to grow to meet the blast
 for planting the flag flying high

In the *content analysis* of *FSG* the use of a wide range of imagery is evident. Variety of imagery is used referring to animals and freedom seekers, named *Abbaa Barbaadaa*, *Haa' Barbaadaa*, i.e., the Father and Mother of Freedom Seeker, namely *Barbaadaa/Murataa* (see *FSG III* pp23ff). There are also other children who *Abbaa Barbaadaa* calls 'My Children': *Garaa* 'Stomach', *Gurra* 'Ear', and *Karaa* 'Road' (pp39ff). Unlike the determined and committed son, *Murataa*, those three are considered by their father as traitors, or in a more connotative term as 'Goobana'. To what *Abbaa Barbaadaa* asks what would be the fate of the Oromo under the Tigre neo-colonial rule, they unanimously answer '*We don't know!*' (p66):

-dukkann waggaa dhibbaa duunee
 Oromo fuuldurri maal?
 -hinbeennu
 -eega isin irri barraaqqattan,

-one hundred-year of darkness!
 Oromo, what will be your fate in the future?
 -we don't know.
 -after it is dawned,

5 gaafadhaa,
 dukkan waggaa dhibbaa duunee
 biyyi fuuldurri kee maal,
 lafti dukkan duubaan bari'ee?

I better ask,
 one hundred-year of darkness!
 our people, what will be our fate,
 is it dawn after the long night?

These rhetorical questions lead into another narrative which begins by 'lafa maaniin bariisise?' 'what the hell is dawn about?' (pp. 60-70), forwarded by the three '*children*'. An extremely important set of images in *FSG III* is the category of images which projects mixed feelings of optimism and skepticism as in the above poetic lines. Such group of words as **dukkana waggaa dhibbaa** / 'one hundred year of darkness', **fuuldura**/'future' relate to certain time in history (perhaps the poet's own time) bringing about a better future, and time resolving current problems: **Oromoo fuuldurri maal? / Oromo, what will be your fate in the future?**

Finna San Gama is a kind of poetry that reflects the concrete reality of a people fighting for freedom and social justice. Jaarsoo's poetry is not made by an intellectual elite using revolutionary language devoid of practice. What is articulated in *FSG* is not based on mere abstraction; it is rather the result of active participation in the actual Oromo liberation struggle. Jaarsoo's poetry, one may argue, is therefore the meeting ground for theory and practice as the reciter is another Barbaadaa/Murataa, i.e., a *freedom fighter* himself. The people's sense of unity and purpose is called for to grow in the determination, to defeat the Abyssinian domination and build a new *finna* for a just society. In *FSG III* there are constant references to unity and determination (p66). The questions forwarded in the extract above (lines 1&2, 6&7) are not very rhetorical. Such questions sound to demand urgent answers:

-dukkana waggaa dhibbaa duunee
 Oromo fuuldurri maal?

-one hundred-year of darkness!
 Oromo, what will be your fate in the future?

In *FSG III* above, hope (line 2) is described as something achievable based on the observable progress of the struggle. Which is to say, hope is something unachievable on speculation and wishful thinking alone. Thus, a *cow* is satirized that it is an expectant but too late to bear a

calf, while analogically speaking of the inconsistent but ultimate goal of Oromo liberation struggle, i.e., *free Oromia* (pp22ff).

Perhaps one *last word* in a refrain and choral repetitions was a call for unity of purpose (line 2) to see a free Oromia Sate (*FSG IV*, p149):

wal hinjibbinaa yaadaa yaadaa	do not abhor one another, rather adore
tokkummaa yaadaa,	think of <i>unity</i> with deliberation,
jiruu garboomaa ofirraa hadhaa	avoid sense of servitude and submissiveness
ilmaan Oromoo cuf garaa haadhaa	children of the Oromo, borne in the same
womb	
5 geette giseen! ka'aa barbaadaa:	it is time! get up and seek <i>the unended quest</i> :
bilisummaa, jiruu biyyee lafaadhaa!	<i>freedom, independence</i> and all that is <i>finna</i> !

In *FSG IV* there is some degree of radicalism and commitment (line 5) as in other *FSG* poetry.

The new trends in *FSG IV*, as in the above piece of poem, relate to themes, radical viewpoint, language and form which involves choral repetitions and songs. Choral repetition makes this last series very distinct from other Jaarsoo's poems. The songs and choral repetitions in the last *FSG IV* are said to be used to fill the little gap left incomplete by the tragic death of the poet and freedom fighter in the liberation struggle on Sept. 21st 1994 (interview with Tarrii, Qararsa, and Haalakee Feb. 2002).

To sum up: the content analysis of *FSG I-IV* has shown the usual tone of conviction and genuineness that one can observe. Issues of development, socio-political and economic problems come again and again in an ordinate manner in *Finna San Gama*. In the same manner, apart from national focus and trends there are regional issues: resolving resource-based conflicts and maintaining the Nagaa Borana (Peace of the Borana), issues of development, acute needs for education, and other similar social problems recited in *FSG*. The reasons for the regional difference are partly ecological and economic and partly socio-cultural set within the Ethiopian context of colonial and neo-colonial influences analysed in this chapter. Thus, the liberation movement of the time of *FSG* was, or still is, response of the Oromo to the unpleasant state the people are put in. Turning inward, attempt in the recital

poetry, *FSG*, is to criticise the Oromo to be mainly responsible for their problems, which makes it more plausible to talk about the poetry as a social critique.

ENDNOTES

1. The Boorana community is one of the Oromo society in which the *gadaa* system remains intact. *Gadaa* is the system which is interpreted by Asmarom Legesse (1973, 2000) as a politico-military system, which is denied by PTW Baxter, and M. Bassi who, to some extent, recognises the limited political significance of *gadaa* (Asafa 1998:39). To Baxter, *gadaa* leaders do not exercise direct political power, and they do not control economic resources. Hence, *gadaa*, in this view, is a mere 'ritual and conceptual system' (Asafa, *ibid.*; cf. also Baxter 1978a: 1-36; Bassi in Baxter 1996: 150). However, to Jaarsoo Waaqoo, *gadaa* has political as well as legal functions, to which Gemech Megersa contends (Gemechu 1993). Thus, Jaarsoo recites of *gadaa* political power (*FSG*... p):

example

2. The resource competition may eventually lead into the ecosystem disaster called '*tragedy of the commons*'.

3. Such an incorporation process '*Oromoomsuu*' or *Oromaization* of outsiders for mutual socio-political and economic purposes in Boorana is what A. Triulzi, citing Asafa Jalata, calls *moggaasa/guddifacha* 'clan adoption' among the *Macca* Oromo (in Baxter *ibid.* p253). It should be also noted that because of the egalitarian nature of the *gadaa* system and the non-assimilative character of the Oromo culture *Oromomsuu / guddifachaa*, smooth *shift of identity* is not cultural and linguistic subordination of the clients, which the Habasha colonial expansion did to the Oromo. It is rather based on symbiotic relationship since, by the Oromo tradition, one should be willing to make such a decision as shifting identity.

4. *Baddaa* is the highland, mountainous region with fog, cold, and many trees. In Boorana there are three important *Baddaa* regions. One is *Baddaa Hiddii*, the area around the place *Hiddii Lolaa*, south. The other is *Baddaa Gaamaduu*, in the area of *Dho'qollee*. The third is *Baddaa Areeroo*, the area of the small town of *Areeroo*, to the east

5. Big container made of Oryx, camel or cow skin

6. *FSG II* is part on the Oromo metaphysical worldview and is allegorical in style centering on the dialogue between *Cubbuu* and *Dhugaa*, i.e. 'Vice' and 'Virtue'. According to the underlying Oromo philosophy, and of the poet indeed, the former (*Cubbuu*) dwells in this world of *becoming* or in the shadowy image of this world. On the other hand, *Dhugaa* 'virtue' dwells in the world of *being* which is both transcendental and eternal, '*iddoo-dhugaa*', '*lafa du'aaf*' *dullumi hinjirre*', i.e. 'abode of truth' 'there where no old age nor death dwell' as the Oromo call it (Bartels 1983; Gemechu 1993; Baxter 1996; Knutson 1963).

7. Cf. Shongolo for this part of *FSG II* (in Baxter 1996:286).

8. In Boorana to milk cow during herding cattle in the the day is *luuguu*, i.e., *to steal milk*, which is something very bad for the Boorran, and they say: "Hannati irra gooma, meaning, 'theft is not as bad (interview with Haalakee; see also Ton Leus 1995: 549).
9. Goobana (ca.1821-1889), Menelik's warlord is the "proverbial quisling". Goobana's campaign did not include the Booranaland and he is "never mentioned" in Boorana oral tradition. However, Jaarsoo might have been informed of him as a historical personality took part in Menelik's conquest of the Oromo when he was a freedom fighter himself in the OLF (Schlee 1992; Shongolo 1996:271, cf. *footnote no.13*).
10. Of the metaphor '*a swarm of bee*' the researcher contends with what Shongolo says: "it has many connotations: the Oromo are many and by working together in unity, they are also powerful (in Baxter p278). He adds, citing Haberland (1965), "In North East Africa bees are often a symbol of wealth and power connected with kinship".
11. It may be difficult to define 'nation'. In his article "The Development of Nationalism" Mohammed Hassen says, citing Alter (1989:11), that 'a nation may certainly exist without its own state, and a state without a unified nation'. Mohammed thus concludes that "The Oromo do not have their own state, and yet the existence of the Oromo nation is a recognised fact of political life" (see Mohammed's essay in Baxter 1996:72). As to what constitutes a nation some scholars agree that it is "language, culture, historical consciousness, mores, social communication and political goals" (Alter 1989:11 in Mohammed *ibid.*). Some also stress that 'members of a nation must feel they are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture and national consciousness'. In this view a nation exists if 'a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation'. Hence, noting that he draws on Emerson, Mohammed goes on to add, the Oromo "are 'a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of common heritage and that they have common destiny for the future'" (*ibid.*).

CONCLUSION

The primary concern of this study has been to sociologically analyse the poetic content of Jaarsoo's poetry and examine the socio-political, cultural and historical identity of Oromo literature. Attempt has been also made to explore the defining characteristics of Oromo literature, particularly Oromo poetry set within the general areas of its socio-political identity, as having a didactic role in the Oromo nationalist movement. Such a committed poetry as *Finna San Gama (Beyond Adversities)* is used as means of reversing the negative socio-economic order of its time so that justice will prevail.

As argued in *Chapter I*, the writing of *FSG* in this study has been a matter of *transcription*, i.e., the transcoding of one medium (*speech*) into another (*text*). But, there is no reason to suppose it simple to *transcribe* and *translate* such texts from a culture whose verbal arts come from a dialect other than the researcher's dialect. The art of transcription, in this study, was therefore not a one-time activity. So much like writing, transcription too was a process. In the gradual transformations of words from elements of sound into elements of orthography tends to bring in elements belonging to writing. Thus, it has been observed that the act of *transcription* is also *textualisation*.

In *Chapter II* the theoretical *impasse* in studying Oromo literature has been discussed. Accordingly, the problem of theoretical demands about 'protest-bound' perceptions of the role of art more complicates the task of identifying the role of oral poetry such as *Finna San Gama*

to serve as an effective tool of establishing the social/cultural *identity* of national literature. This can be true at least for two reasons. First, added to the limited range of exploitable experience of protest ethos, the critic or the theoretician is perhaps less involved in any concrete way in the liberation struggle. To the contrary, the poet and the freedom fighter composed and delivered such poetry under the dynamics of concrete situations set in the 'furnace' of the liberation struggle. Second, another possible reason to the problem of setting the role of art and settling the theoretical *impasse* is the relationship between history and literature. The relationship between literature and history is not a cause-and-effect and a one-sided direct one. However, in a given time and space literature may serve a didactic role of directing in some way the *finna* of the respective society out of which the poet is borne.

A theory of *sociology of literature* is constructed from the *finna* / life experience and demonstrated as having explanatory power in setting the role of literature in national movement and in defining the cultural *identity* of (oral) art. It may also serve as a '*grand theory*' / '*metatheory*' from which many other relevant theories derive but scarcely relevant to the real life variation of a world in which simplistic dichotomies and generalizations have little meaning or utility. What one can conclude from all this is that there is no alternative to an eclectic approach which examines everyday experience from a number of different points-of-view and then synthesises the results into a higher-level explanation. The combination of approaches in the present study, i.e., sociology, anthropology, political economy and other paradigms derives from the dynamic nature of the *finna* 'everyday life experience' of the (Oromo) society.

The spirit of sociopolitical situation is revealed in Oromo literature and in related Oromo studies. The study of the sociological analysis of the *geerarsa* generic system in *Chapter III* clearly illustrates that Oromo oral literature reflects the daily struggle, achievement or failure,

tensions and conflicts as recited in *FSG I-IV*. The *generic system* of Oromo oral literature, particularly *geerarsa*, described in *Chapter III* has undergone historical transformations influenced by dynamic cultural and sociopolitical situations.

At this historical juncture when literature, such as *geerarsa* and Jaarsoo's poetry, is taking the side of the people and observing critically the politics of the nation, the prevailing situation not only dictates the literary trend, it also conditions the direction of its development. In *FSG*, in order to persuade his people, the poet evolves his approach, his own social theory that he firmly believes will help the society to achieve a better sociopolitical condition. In the *content analysis* of *FSG* it has been clearly demonstrated that the subject matter of Jaarsoo's poetry comes from the sociopolitical, economic and cultural realities of Oromo society.

As argued in *Chapter IV*, in its poetic social analysis Jaarsoo's poetry attempts to go beyond the reconstruction of the past or beyond the mere deconstruction of the existing social formation. It tries to answer the questions: where now? what next? where do we go after the demise of the 'Tigre-led Abyssinian neo-colonial rule' in Oromia. Jaarsoo's poetry, like the *geerarsa* folk genre, demonstrates some lack of ideological clarity which could give Oromo nationalist movement a sense of direction towards the intended goal (*cf. FSG III*). Despite the deficiencies labeled as ideological, Jaarsoo's poetry is not simply taking on the conscientising role of art, which could degenerate into didacticism and protagonist view of a politician. *FSG* rather reinforces a sense of determination and forwards new possibilities, relationships and values during the course of the liberation struggle and after (*cf. FSG IV*). In this view, Oromo literature is expected to carry the Oromo sensibility, culture, worldview, and today, response to the people's own historical and socio-political reality. By virtue of its shared experience as a subject for new insights and artistic imagination Oromo literature, particularly *FSG*, is understood as utilitarian. In the *geerarsa* folk genre and in the much *dhaaduu-like* Jaarsoo's

poetry Oromo artists seem to struggle with their medium for relevance, i.e., relevant mode of communication. This can be well observed in the need for generic historical transformations of Oromo literature as described in *Chapter III. Geerarsa*, for instance, is nowadays transformed into protest song or a prison song. Similarly, the late Jaarsoo innovated the *dhaaduu geerarsa* sub-genre to recite, in a much *dhaaduu-like* tone, the sociopolitical reality of his people at his time and before.

Thus, the search for relevant mode of communication is presumably to respond to the socio-political and cultural realities of the Oromo today, to the dilemma of the Oromo contemporary situations, to the 'problems of/for the Oromo', and to the possibility of emergent free Oromo nation state in the Horn. To find such a necessary medium relevant to what time and place impose on the Oromo nation and on the Oromo artists depends on many factors. Experiences and responses to historical, socio-political and economic reality may not seem to have been homogenous because of external pressures and internal limitations: ecological, religious, individual and class variations among the Oromo. As a result of such a disparity there can be sometimes opposing and apparently contradictory trends in the same literary tradition, forcing the poet to redefine his aesthetic distinction. At such a historical juncture, therefore, in Oromo literature, it is unthinkable to attain a common style, though the purpose of the present study is *content analysis*, however. The age in which a common style is possible is the age when the society has achieved a common moment of order and stability, of equilibrium and harmony. The age of maturity in Oromo poetic style is expected not now, but when the society has a critical sense of the past, a confidence in the present and no conscious doubt of the future. If that variety (religious, cultural, economic, and political) is healthy to create political pluralism, so much so, it leads to literary positive growth. Thus, the Oromo stylistic or aesthetic distinction is highly determined by various factors that both the old and the new

literary trends can be rooted in the same (oral) literary tradition, namely, the tradition of a *didactic* role in directing, first, the nationalist movement, second, the movement towards national literature.

FSG does not tell the story of an organised and systematic struggle guided by a clear ideology directing the dynamics of the Oromo nationalist movement with consistency and tenacity. The progress and direction of the OLF as a political organisation leading an armed struggle, *FSG* criticizes, is far less discernible than expected by the Oromo nation engaged in the struggle (cf. *FSG III*). That is, by the poetic social analysis of Jaarsoo Waaqoo in *FSG*, national liberation struggle necessitates a clear *ideology* to adhere to. A struggle for liberation is much more than the isolated sacrifices of individual freedom fighters. It is not a task to be accomplished as a part-time activity by exiled revolutionaries/activists living abroad under some traumatic effects of the death of relatives and their comrades in the struggle. Liberation struggle is not the role of Oromo youths alone who are bluntly declaring, up until recently, that they are fully committed to stand before the Tigre-led neo-colonial policy in Oromia.

The intensification of nationalist movement adhered to a clear ideology in turn helps committed Oromo poets and artists to clearly identify their role and their social responsibility and to promote Oromo literature that shows a balance of ideological orientation and artistic excellence. Such is the hope forwarded by T. A. Abdi, poet and OLF founding member, in a prefatory note to his *Billiqa* (1981:vii): "The fire of Oromo literature shall twinkle all over, glow, and keep pace with the liberation struggle". Where art has no clear ideology to adhere to, there will be no clear vision or mission and art gradually tends to remain subordinate to mere rhetoric. Consequently, art fails to communicate concrete facts and to maintain its artistic quality. In the content analysis of *FSG* the authorial ideology seems to be derived from the socio-political and historical system under which the poetry is composed.

Jaarsoo's poetry is not *oral-formulaic* in the sense that Albert Lord analyses Homeric epics. Jaarsoo does not use in his recital poetry regular epithets but refrains which come in his recitation at every irregular interval. Jaarsoo may have used refrains and repetitive phrases perhaps to help him keep his memory on track, or for emphasis or for some artistic effect. He also *re-creates* myths as in *FSG II* (cf. *Dhugaa* and *Cubbuu*) and in *FSG III*, *Jaldoo* and *Kinniisa*. Thus the poet influences his audience's consciousness by appealing to their own oral experience. He communicates to the oral society by drawing on what the society knows of its own culture and history. Jaarsoo uses oral tradition in his poetry as a means of communication so much as he uses it to recapture the past. Such a combination of mythical and allegorical elements that Jaarsoo uses, the researcher contends as a practitioner of Oromo poetic art himself, has greatly influenced the oral poet as a successful satirist who widely uses speech devises as apostrophes and tropes.

Hence, the communicative importance of Jaarsoo's poetry is meant to articulate the inadequacies of the Oromo as a nation and to indicate alternative visions towards the betterment of his people and others. The textual clarity of *FSG*, one may rightly argue, is on the surface level since Jaarsoo's poems may have deeper layers of meaning. As they seem to be composed for performance, his recital poetry takes cognizance of the evanescent nature of drama. By embracing his ethnic Boorana, and national Oromo culture, Jaarsoo realises that most of his people share with him the same traditional background. *FSG* in the given socio-political, cultural and economic context is created on the bases of the ideas and problems which have existed in the poet's own society during and before his time. The concept of *content* in the study comprizes both the wider Oromo socio-political, cultural and historical backgrounds and the narrower Borana context of the immediate situation of utterance.

From *literary* point of view, relating *FSG* to its cultural, socio-political and artistic contexts, one may adapt Peter Verdonk's model of *contextualised Stylistics approach*, (1998:112-133) applied to the Irish Seamus Heaney's poetry and distinguish the following basic situational contexts in which *FSG* is set: first, the actual audience of the recital poetry *FSG* assumed as elements of its context, and their interpretations affected by their own beliefs and attitudes, second, being part of the context themselves, the audience search for clues to the poem in its space and time, third, the interpersonal context, i.e., human relations as recited in the poem, fourth, the genre of discourse influencing the language of the recital poetry, as Verdonk has it, "speakers/writers normally inclined to adapt their style to the discourse genre they are engaged in" (ibid. p13).

Politically speaking, there is a strong sense of politics and history in Jaarsoo's poetry. The great political and historical issues he raises are colonialism and the *naftanya* (*soldier-settler*) rule, culture conflict, ethnic war, socio-political and economic domination under neo-colonial rule. Currently, as he indicts in his recital poetry Jaarsoo ironically refers to the new Abyssinian neo-colonialism and to his disillusionment about the repressive EPDRF forces falling short of their social, political and economic ideals. In his poems Jaarsoo draws ideas from a common cosmic pool of socio-political and economic injustices and atrocities he witnesses inflicted on his people by the Tigre-led EPRDF repressive forces today. Jaarsoo's imagination seems to be unitary and collective and therefore uniform throughout his poetry. In his poems he revolts against social injustices, corruption, oppression, and ethnic favouritism as long as those problems prevail in his environment. As he satirises the Abyssinian repressive forces Jaarsoo became a victim of political rulers, persecuted for his outspokenness and subjected to death, a shared destiny of his people; his death that he had already prophesied.

With respect to *development* Jaarsoo stresses the need for political, economic, and social freedom of his people suffering from the mismanagement and corruption imposed by bureaucrats and politicians under the oppressive Tigre-led rule (*FSG III*, p86). Jaarsoo's tone sounds pessimistic that as long as his people have no political freedom, there will be no social and economic development. *Culturally* speaking, the indigenous culture and socio-political reality has functioned effectively in Jaarsoo's *Finna San Gama* by giving it deep and solid roots, concrete and relevant background and setting. The culture has provided *FSG* with moral and ethical imperatives, allusions, images, symbols and aesthetic direction to depict the colonial and neo-colonial onslaughts on Oromo socio-political and cultural life situations. Hence, Jaarsoo's poetic social criticism in the four tapes presented in this study has been more concerned with *what ought to be* than *what is* in the context of *finna* Oromo. The poet's social analysis of *finna* Oromo follows *normative approach*. In its normative aspect, a process of growth that does not lead to the fulfillment of basic human needs, and more than that to freedom of expression, self-realisation in work is said to be a travesty of development, not real development. Thus, Jaarsoo's poetic social analysis of *finna Oromo* indicates the tenet of *normative* social science is concerned with *what ought to be* instead of just *what is*.

One may be forced to conclude that the search in Jaarsoo's poetry in the past, present, and future shows, the false promises, as he says, that Abyssinian oppressive forces have always made in the name of democracy does not offer concrete solutions for the Oromo concerning better economic and socio-political problems. In his poetry the hope for development is one of the poet's key perceptions of the future, the position that is paradoxical. It is so paradoxical because in *Finna San Gama* the poet convincingly speaks that the Oromo are not politically well organised, nor are they economically established internally, and yet they call upon themselves the duty to provide national freedom for themselves and moral leadership for the

oppressed. This is the paradox that remains puzzling aspiring Oromo poets/artists caught at the crossroads striving towards *national Oromo literature*.

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APPENDICES

A

CHAPTER IV: FINNA SAN GAMA TEXTS

4.2 Ethnographic Background

Booranni ka dhibiit jiraa!
jabeessaa ofirraa eegaa
Booran Boorana keessatt' jiraa
warri gargar isan baase,
yoo feetanii rafuut' jiraa?

1
many re-claim to be Boorana!
watch out! there is a Booran
within Boorana (today)
those who divided you and ruled you,
are they lying asleep you think?

(FSG I, p73)

4.3 Poetic Contents of Finna San Gama

4.3.1 Poems in Praise of the Boranaland

tutuu Booqee afranii
iji midhaantuu hinbahin
ta lubbuu jibbaattu malee
ta akka duriitiin hingabin
Golboon ummata keenna
nu garam irraa deemnaa?
yoo hinbeenne isanti himaa
Golboon tun illee laf' keenna
Golboo illee hinlakkifnuu!
loltuu itti haa kaafnu

2
the four Booqee salt licks
not yet attracted attention
but that which eschew the soul
(of the martyr) not what had hitherto been...
Golboo is our people, our land
how come we leave our land?
let me tell you if you really don't know
that this Golboo is our land
we defend our land and never ever give up!
lets deploy our force to the land

(FSG IV, p98)

cibra tolfanna
ka ilmeen teenna dhaaltu
nu kana callee to'anna!
isan warri Baddaa sadeenii
hindheessinaa warri gumaa sadeenii
Baddaa bishingaa baaftu Baddaa,
Baddaa lafa hedduu caaltu Baddaa,
miyooftuu akka bookaa
Baddaa urgooftuu akka midhaan doolaa
goggossinee irraa dhowwarra
warr' cufti garaachi boolla
yoos amma irraa dhowwannaa
hindheennu irratti doona.

3
lets get organized
what we hand down to our children
is this (land) and this (land) alone!
those in the three Baddaa regions
you don't retreat
rich in sorghum
the Great Land of all lands in Boorana
and as sweet as mead
Baddaa, as sweet as grain stored in *doolaa*
we defend our land courageously
'Others', they are of hallow stomach
thus, we defend our land strongly
we never retreat, we defend our land.

(FSG IV, p99)

Baddaa gurraattoftuu
Baddaa yoo aduullee qabbanooytu
Baddaa muka booraa
Baddaa biyyee bookaa
Baddaa buna baaftu

4
Baddaa, the land with fogs and clouds
Baddaa, cool and suitable land even when sunny
Baddaa, the green land of trees of different types
Baddaa, the land of soil sweet like mead
Baddaa, the land of coffee

Baddaa ilmeen keenna dhaaltu

Baddaa, our land, a legacy to our children

Baddaa biyee bokoraa
Baddaa ka biyya Booranaa!
Baddaa ka balee soofaraa
dhiiro!
Baddaa ka ilmee Booranaa!

Baddaa, a land of big and colourful soil
Baddaa, the land of Boorana, oh our land!
Baddaa, the land with plain land
alas!
Baddaa is the land of our children!

(ibid., , pp99, 100)

4.3.2 Resource-based Conflicts

yaa gos teennaa
Gabraa, Garrii,
si dubbisaa na dhageettaa?
siif' Booranni tokkumaa
atiin akkana taatuu beektaa,
abaaboo akaakuu hedduu,
marraa-bisaan waliin dheeddani?
odoo walumaan yaatanuu
guyya tokko, quba ila wal keettan
guyya lama sadeen tokkoo
girriftanii gargar dheettan.
yoo guyyaan sadeessoo gahuu
dachaatanii waliin teettani
akkuma kalee kaanii
marraa-bisaan waliin dheeddani.
warri horii ingoodaanaa
qubbattanii gad hinteettani.
namuu walitti isin hinqorree
garaa keessaa wal hinbeettani.
babbaduma kan keessa,
de'irama har'aa waliin geessan.
horii walirraa fuutanii

baruma hedduu
waliin dheeddani.
hintala walirraa fuutanii
soddaa, walirraa ceertani.
mucaa soddaa kan kee dhale
boriyyaa tee ejjeettani.
odoo inni abuuyyaa! jedhuu
gorraatanii biraa deemtani.
isan abbaa-obboleessaa

5
oh! our clansmen of
Gabra and Garre
do you hear me?
you and Boorana are one
do you know that you are
flowers of different color?
that your ancestors shared water and grass?
thus you lived and shred communally
and yet one day you poke finger each other
in the eye. for about two or three days
you stampede and flee from each other
but on the third day
you return to live together
and just like it was yesterday
you share pasture and water again.
a *cattle breeder* is no fixed to one place
and thus you move from place to place
no one has arbitrated between you,
inwardly you do not seem congruent.
in such dire circumstances
you have survived together until this day.
you raided livestock from each other

yet you herded together
for many years.
you marry girls from each other
as in-laws you revere each other.
yet it is the son of your brother in-law
that you kill the next day
as he pleads for mercy, saying "uncle!"
you slaughter him and go away.
you are affines and brothers,

mee lakkisaa hammeenna kana.

put an end to this evil.

...dallaa keessan walit' dhaabaa
kaarraa buusaa seelee tana
kottaa waliin yaana jedhaa
mee lakkisaa deenee tana

make your pens closely
and avoid your weaknesses
'come, lets unite!' you may say
and avoid your reluctance

(FSG II, pp90-91, 92)

har'aa! sesseeddittii!
akka durii na seetaa
mee nyaataa qarriffaan quuffadhii
naaf si'i wal hindubbannuu
afaan kee narraa duuffadhii
ya galaa karaa ka'ee
warr' kan kee na duraa guurradhi
ani kaan waan tochu nan tochaa!

6
alas! you vagabond!
you assume me (weak) as usual
you may eat what you need to your fill and
we never see eye to eye or never talk to each other
don't talk to me any more
I am on my way to go home
tell your people not to stand in my way
I know what I'll do to others!

Dhugaa, na jibbaallee ooltuu
lafum' takkarratti dhalannee.
armaan durallee,
na qofaaninii, nu lachuu
mala la walti dhahannee
armaan durallee gara...

Dhugaa, though you hate me
but we were born on the same land.
even hitherto,
both of us made an alliance
and reached on some consensus
even before...

(ibid., pp46ff)

warri horii ingoodaanaa
qubattanii gad hinteettani.

7
a cattle breeder is no fixed to one place
and thus you move from place to place

(FSG II, p91, see append. no. 5 above)

odoo beettuu gaafattaa?
wayyaaneet' gidduu seenee
garumaa gar nu dhowwee, ...
-bineensi beekan
nama hinyaatuu yoos.
walitti deemaa wal irbadhaa
maaliif wal biraa deeddani?

8
why you ask what you know?
the wayyane interfered
and kept us apart, to divide us and rule us...
the beast that you have already seen
does not devour you.
unite and bring together your might.
or else, why are you impoverished you think?

(p93)

(Dhugaa)- nallee lafa inargaa
urriin mataatti na hinmarannee
lakkii Cubbu si hinamannuu.
an afaan lama hinbarannee
(Cubbuu)-afaan lama barachuu baattu
nuu kori.
-yaa sii kore
guyyaa koraa hinoolin kootti.

9
-I can see the ground
I haven't lost my sight yet
no, Cubbuu! We don't trust you.
I do not know cheating
-even so,
let's postpone this matter.
-we did it already
don't be absent on the day scheduled

-korri eessa?	-where will the conference be held?
-Finfinnee	at Finfinne
-e'ee! jenne.	-agree.
(Dhugaa)-amma odoo kor'	
sullen hingennee	-but, before that
an waa tokko isan gaafadha,	I have a few questions for you.
gaaf korri sun walitti deebi'e	you will answer me
deebii tan naa deebifan,	on the conference
* * *	
gaaffiin kiyya sadii:	I have three questions:
ta qaraa waan jettuu:	the first says:
hiyyeessa hingalateeffatan	do we say,
jenna moo	the poor is not worth praising,
waan galataatu	or praise is not
namaa hinta'u jenna?	worth to man?
gootaan dhara hindubbatu	do we say,
jenna moo	the <i>lord</i> speaks no <i>lie</i> ,
dharti gooftallee	or <i>lies</i> told by the <i>lord</i>
dhugaa jenna?	are <i>truth</i> ?
horii nama hamaatu	do we say,
horata jenna moo	a cunning person makes wealth,
nami waa horate	or a wealthy person
inhammaate jenna?	is cunning?

(*ibid.*, p49)

10

The Narrator's Prefatory Note:

(This is about Dhugaa (Virtue) and Cubbuu (Vice): Dhugaa and Cubbuu are at odds and could not settle their dispute. Both brought their case to me to mediate as they made me their Abbaa Seeraa, i.e., their Judge. Here I tell you the story just as I witnessed and arbitrated. Dhugaa thus presents her case first. Listen.)

Cubbuu	yes
Dhugaan si himattee	Dhugaa has accused you (of usurping her land)
ihii	I see
jidduun isan taa'aa...	I mediate you and settle your case
tanaaf si yaame	that is why we are here.

(*FSG II*, pp 12, 15)

11

.....	
- Dhugaa	-Dhugaa
- yee	- yes
- at' ta eennuu?	-where do you belong?

5 - ta Waaqaa	-to God
.....	
Cubbuu	Cubbuu
- yee	-Yes
- ati ta eennuu?	-where do you belong?
10 - tan Nam'–Adii	-to 'the White man'
-isii Dhugaa,	-Dhugaa,
dubbii tana dhageettaa?	you listen?
- indhaga'a	-I do
- lafti tan tee moo,	-is Land yours or
15 tan Cubbuu?	Cubbuu's?
-tiyya	-mine
-akkam tee?	-how yours (justify)?
-irratti dhaladhe tiyya.	-I was borne and bred here. It is my land.
-eeyyee	-I see
20 -Cubbuu dhageettaa?	-Cubbu, you hear what she says?
-Indhaga'a.	-I do.
-dhageettu dubbadhu	-so answer
-lafti dhaloota	-the land (the Boranaland) is her birthright
ta isiitiin akkasi.	is true
25 -eeyyee	-I see
-duub isiin bulchuu wallaaltee	-but she couldn't manage it
garaa namaa keessa	she lies asleep
marattee ciifte.	in people's 'Stomuch'.
an lafa abbaan bira rafu	I got the land on which the owner
30 argadhe.	is fast asleep
-eeyyee	-I see
-dhuga dhageettaa?	-Dhugaa, you listen ?
-indhaga'a.	-I do
-dhageettu dubbadhu	-so answer
35-an inciisa malee hinrafuu	-if I lie I lie awake
an injiga malee hincabuu	if I fall I don't break
il' dunuunfadhe malee	if I close my eyes
hinbannee	I lost not my sight
wal dhabanillee Cubbuu	and though we disagree, Cubbuu,
40 akka irraa wal gorsuu hin mallee.	it is wrong to lead each other astray.
-Cubbu dhageettaa?	-Cubbuu you listen?
-indhaga'a	-I do
.....	
-dubbii kana nuu kori	-lets postpone this matter
45 -eennut' sii kora?	-who will handle it for you?

-*Nam'–Adiit'* naa kora
 -maa sii kore?
 -dubbii kana yoo
 -siin akkana yaatee
 50 a'aa
 an lafa kanan dhaba....

the 'White Man'
 -why? Why the 'White-Man'?
 -if you stretch the case
 any more
 no no, I'm afraid
 I may lose the land.....

(pp16-33)

ijoollee tan tee tun maaliif
 tokkollee waa hiinbaratin?
 bittaa, ati horii kanaatiif
 ilumayyuu hinbanatin?
 yoos nuti ummati keenaa hundaa
 horiif ofiif hinbaratin
 qabeenna ofii kana herregaaf
 bilisoomee hintabatini!

12
 why among your children
 at least one has not gone to school?
 you know, it is because of these cattle you heard,
 that you go blindfolded?
 so, our people *in toto*
 is not educated just for herding cattle
 feeling content with his cattle
 our people seem to ignore fighting for freedom
 (FSG III, p28)

4.3.3 Sociopolitical and Development Issues

duuba, Boorana an sitti himaa,
 farsoo la fulaan dabartee
 badii tan tee tana:
 halaknii guyyaa machooftaa
 daadhii booka taan naqattee
 birrii tan loon moonaa yaaftaa
 garuu, deemtee la naagaddee?
 wayi goomtiin tan tee
 yoo tokko lam' dhuddee galtee,
 eegii ijoolleen foolisii
farsoo fuula 'rratt' si 'gartee
 bultii afurtama
 taffiin si nyaattee dabartee...
 jedhi ittiin naan jedhan.

13
 now, Boorana, listen!
 if you drink alcohol,
 here are your weaknesses:
 you get drunk day and night
 as you make mead and effervesce.
 but you sell the cattle and empty the hedge,
 or where else you bring the money from?
 you feel happy
 only when you take one or two, and come home late at night
 and then when the policemen
 see you got drunk
 they throw you into prison, where you stay for forty days
 ravaged by jiggers and flees...
 I'm urged to condemn you oh my people!

(FSG I, p2ff)

maa isan hinabaarre qara?
 waan isanii tahe cufa beekaa:
daallich na dhugu inqarooma,
abeebi na dhugu injannooma,
mandiidi na dhugu inkasooma,
doorichi na dhugu inwayyooma
 oorisa sun keessaa aqooqa.

14
 why don't you know man,
 that I am so good to you?
 the fool drinks me to become wise
 the coward drinks me to become hero
 the untamed drinks me to become well mannered
 and, the sad drinks me to become fine
 i avoid those his worries

(p4)

-ab' lafti dukkanaa'ee
 bishaan kan dhuddanii amma?
 at dandeessee gaangeenuu
 hindeemtuu hayyee amma?

15
 oh father, it is getting dark for you to go home
 have you drunk your feel?
 and you cannot go home now
 even on horseback?

duub, Boorana sitti himaa
 farsoo yoo fulaan dabarte
 badii tan tee tana:
 Boorana ati waan guddaa,
 gurr' kee Waaqat' sii gabbisee
 laf' kee Waaqat' sii bal'isee
 bultumaan sidiin si marsitee
 waggaa waggaa si darbattii
 laf' tee dansaa siin falmittee
Abbaa Biyyaa hintaaneere?

now, Boorana, listen!
 if you drink alcohol,
 here are your weaknesses:
 Boorana, you are big enough
 God has created you so legendary
 and your land so wide
 unfortunately enemies live surrounding you
 and pushing you every year
 and claiming your land favourable,
 now, have they not become citizens?

16

adoonni nu ejjeesee
namni lakkii jedhu jiraa?
Yoo an inhimadhaa dhufee
Biiroollee warrat' keessa jiraa,
An Afaan Amaaraa hinbeekuu

even, if he (the Habashaa officer) kills us
is there anyone to save us?
if I come to appeal to the high court,
they are the same people there as well,
and, I do not know Amharic

namni na dhagahu jiraa? is there anyone who can understand my case?

Ijoollee kottaa naa deebisaa.
-aaboo birrii shantami jiraa?
-iyyoo!
-heec! deem asii!
nam' duwwaa dubbatut' jiraa?...
kudhan bulii deebi'i, jedhiin
dubbii dhibiit' biiroo jiraa.
korbeess' fidii kot jedhiin
keessummaa jabduut man' na jiraa.
-korbeess' kiyya hinkennu, inqoofiti
du'at' irra naa jira!

come on my people, you answer me.
-you got fifty Birr?
-no!
-go away!
who speaks without a bribe?...
come back after ten days
since there are other businesses now.
tell him to come with a lamb then,
I will be having a guest.
-I would rather die than
to bring to you a lamb!

(p38)

17

ijoollee iyyeessaa
geessee dhumachiisaa
tokkochi nut' galee,
meete harkaa-miili isaa?
cufa hallaattiit' nyaataa,
mee awwaalli isaa?
.....
'xorataa' madaawaan
hingabu haqi isaa
adoo hag fedhe hammaatee
yeroon *chaarterii* kun
nagaa nu hanqisaa?
-hinhanqisu beeki aaboo!
bilisummaan teenna la dhiyaatee,
Waaqaa nuun gayi malee.
e'ee! nu kadhaanne!

he (*Habasha*) takes the poor to war *en masse*
and, at the cost of the blood of the poor
he lives long on throne! has one come home safely,
where are his limbs left?
vultures devour his corpse,
or, show me his tomb?

no pension for the handicapped
and no concern
-even if it is a hard time for us
this time of the *Charter*
but would it deprive us our peace?
-no, it never deprives us
our *Independence* is approaching
oh God! may our dream come true
and thus, we pray to You!

(pp43, 44)

18

duub, kutaa Mooyalee keessatti
gaaf Tigireen laf' keenna seente kanaa
...nami garii laf' teenna 'edhaa
lafuma durii Booranni irratti dhalatee
kan falmaa. afaanii hudduu 'saatii
gar dhabani!

now, in Moyale
when Tigre intruded into Boorana
some *re*-claimed the Booranalana
the land that the Booran lived on
borne and bred on this land for ages,
they claimed this they claimed that
we couldn't tell their head and their tail!

(p44)

19

maddoo xuuxuu malee
wayyane fa'atilleen
hattee luuguu malee...
hag 'mircaa' baranaa
gulum quufuu malee!
.....
dafnee hindandamannee
mal' nuu fuudhuu malee.

we suck, we prey on what is little
and yet, the *wayyane* live on
(stealing) our milk
till the end of this unfree and unfair election
we feel we too are contented!
.....
but we should think of the matter with great care
otherwise we are at loss!

(FSG III, p81)

Oromoo! Obboleeyyan tiyyaa,, hallaattii wal nyaachisuu isan haga har'aa hinlakkifnee!? kanum dhufut' nu yaabbataa garbummaan gad nu hindhiifnee. haga harree harreen korteellee lukaan ofirraa hindhiinnee. akkum laafaa jabaan buusee jalum ciifnee hinciniinne	20 oh! Oromo, my brethren, how come you throw your brother's flesh to hawks and vultures even as yet!? they mounted us one after another and we live under colony ever since. even a beast of burden kicks as if by instinct when by force another beast of burden comes on top of it. or, even, like the week thrown by a muscular, we daren't bite while lying under. (FSG I, p50)
21 Oromoo bilis' ba'uu nam' tokkollee hinkadhatu... Goobanaa barri kee dabree kan balleessite hin'gartu? akka gaaf Minilik kaan Oromoo afaan itti hinhaqattu. at ulee bofaan ejjeesani biyitilleen mana ofiitti hingalattu ...of eeggadhu Goobana dhiitichi maan harree garaa wal hinbaqassuu. yaa ilmaan Oromoo ati akkan taatuu beektaa? happen to you? Oromiyaa tee bulfachuu atiyyuu hagan itti geettaa... own. ..	the Oromo do not beg for permission to be an <i>Independent</i> nation... Goobana, your days are bygone, don't you see your wicked acts? you can no more slur the name of the Oromo like during the time of Menelik. you are cursed, to be thrown like a stick with which a snake is beaten Goobana, watch out! the kicks of beasts of burden never pierce stomach. oh! Oromo, my brethren, have you ever expected this would but sometime, you'll administer yourself and determine your own fate by your (<i>ibid.</i>, p55)
4.3.4 Colonial and Neo-colonial Issues waa gaaf Aatsee Minilik kaan badaa, an isaanti hinhimnee? qawwee qabatee gad dhufee, ilmaan Oromoo hinfixnee? ...<i>nam'-adiin</i> mal dhahatee yaada dhibii nutti hinfinnee? Goobanaan nut' gargalee Oromoo addaan hinfillee? ...Oromiyaa maqaa jijjiiree Xoophiyaa jedhee hinhimnee? Goobanaa nut gargalee Oromoo addaan hinfillee asum walit' galagalee sabi Oromoo wal hinfixnee? Oromiyaa maqaa jijjiiree Xoophiyaa jedhee hinhimnee? Oromoomii '<i>gaallaa</i>!' ennaan, jalaa owwaachuu hindidnee? Ijoollee dhiiraa qabanii gurmuutt' harkaa irraa hincirree? Ijoollee dubraa qabanii Hundaa harmaa irraa hincirree?... ...Hayila-sillaaseen dhufee haga kaaniillee nu hinhanqifnee?	22 of the time of Atse Menelik oh, haven't I told you? armed and marched to south, didn't he massacre the Oromo? didn't he consult the <i>white-man</i> and brought to us things that were <i>newfangled</i>? didn't Goobana turn to us, and <i>divided and ruled</i> the Oromo? didn't he change and <i>re-name</i> it <i>Ethiopia</i>? didn't Goobana turned against us and divided the Oromo to rule divided? didn't the Oromo turn to each other and killed and harassed his fellow Oromo? didn't they (the Habasha) change the <i>name</i> of Oromoland into that of the colonizing power Itoophiyaa? and when they <i>labeled</i> Oromoness <i>galla</i>, didn't our people turn down such an unrepresentative <i>new</i> name, <i>galla</i>? didn't they chase the Oromo boys and amputate their hands? didn't they chase the Oromo girls and cut off their breasts <i>en masse</i>?... dint Haila Silassie come and kept us lowly? (FSG I, pp48, 49)

goodaa boollaata' galtee
yoo lafee hanqattanii
barbaada bilisummaa
akkan *jammartani*.

jabaa qaroon cufa
lafa akkan dhootanii
foon isaa rumichaaf
allaattiif furanii
...ilmaan Oromichaa
akkasiin dhabanii!
ganna dhibba tokko,

akkasum' baranii
...biyya Oromiyaatti
alaabaa hidhanii!

qawwee qabatee gad dhufee,
ilmaan Oromoo hinfixnee?
Oromoo teenna
fardaan haatee
bara hedduu akkanaa hindhibnee?
...*nam'-adiin* mal dhahatee
yaada dhibii nutti hinfinnee?

dhiiri ilmaan Oromoo
akkan akki isaa:
ya qotiin gad gossite
jilbaa' hidhaan isaa
lafti inni qotuu
cufti ka daanyaa isaa
harka dhibba keessaa
tokko qofa ka isaa
yoo xaasaan tokko
isaabi gara isaa

23

live d in holes and bushes,
remained in bones and skins
in search for *freedom*,
and thus, you began the long journey towards *freedom*.

our strong and enlightened ones
they evicted, chased, massacred
and offered the victims' flesh to hawks
blessed to the vultures' sharp claws,
...children of the Oromo
were lost thus!
one hundred years solid,

it has been a colonial legacy
to see the flag of the colonial power
flying full-mast on Oromoland, in Oromia!

(FSG IV, p135)

24

armed and marched to the south,
didn't he massacre the Oromo?
though the Oromo
fought hard courageously,
but didn't he (Menelik) conquer us by force,
with the help of the *white-man*? didn't he bring
to us things that were *newfangled*?

(FSG I, pp48, 49)

25

oh! pity the Oromo:

if the harvest fails to yield crop
he is put in jail., servitude has broken his back
the land he tills
is the colonial agent's/land lord's
out of one hundred hands
only one goes to the tenant
bade if one *xaasaa* (a *weight measure*) was missing
he has to pay from his own share of the crop.

(*ibid*, p35)

26

...(Garaa) -ebalu yaayyuu deegge beetaa.
ilaa waan nyaatee dhugu qabaa?
Miil' deemu raaga-an dhugumaa
silaa waan deemuufuu qabaa

... (*Stomach*) so and so is already impoverished
you see, he has nothing left to bite?
a wanderer feet is a seer is true, (as the proverb goes)
(so am I) or, do I have any business to toil,

anattuu deemanii hafaa? those hard times are also heading to me?

...(Abbaa Barbaadaa)
-Garaa, keetilleen ya dhaga'ee
mee atilleen diidatt' bahi

(*Father of the Freedom Fighter*)
Stomach, we have also heard yours,
and, you may wait just a minute.

(FSG III, p41)

27

.....
Goobanaan nut' gargalee
Oromoo addaan hinfillee?
...Oromiyaa maqaa jijjiiree
Xoophiyaa jedhee hinhimnee?

.....
didn't Goobana turn to us,
and *divided and ruled* the Oromo?
didn't he change *Oromia*
and *re-name* it *Ethiopia*?

...Hayila Sillaaseen dhufee
haga kaan 'llee nu hinhanqifnee?

didn't Hailesilassie do to us
much more evil than his predecessor?

...Mangistuun Tafarii 'jjeesee
reeffa lafa irra hinharkifnee?
foon ilmaan Oromoo nyaataa
harraagessi hinkaakkifnee?
Oromoo! Obboleeyyan tiyyaa
hallaattii wal nyaachisuu
isan haga har'aa hindhiifnee?!

Oromiyaan reefuu baddee!
Oromiyaa ofii bulfachuu
Oromoon teenna ya dhadhabdee ?
Oromiyaa nagaa buufna 'etteetuu
achiin gaarren nutt' qubatee
akka Oromoon bultee kaatuu
cufa keessa yaatee ubatee
qabeenna Oromiyaa keennaa
walumaan qabdee xuuxxatte.

Oromoon kun gos kam?,
duuban isan gaafadhee
gos hedduu maqaa gaafadhee
afaan dubbachaa mamee
yoo kaayyoo hirraanfadhee
biyya latiidhaa
ka dhalootaa gaafadhe
.....
Oromiyaa jecha mamee
oduu quufee miyeeffadhee
yoos oolmaa bultiin kam,
a day
ka har'aa isan gaafadhee?
oolmaa bakka duruu dhabnee
horma sodaa mataa jalaa gad qabannee?
garii gad hindhufnee,
bar kuma, lafti
asitti dhalannee guddanne!

yaa ilmaan Oromoo
gadaa keetiin bultee kaataaa
Alamiin cufti sii kakatee
wal-ga'atii adda-addaarratti
simaan mootummaan galatee
barri durii kaan ya hafee!
akki gaaf durii dur qalloo.
seerri *gadaa* kaan ya galee...
Oromiyaan hindanadamannee:
...irreen *kirstinnaa* kaatee
cufti aadaa ofii dhabdee!

eessatt' baqannee galto,
nullee laf' kanum qabnaa?
Akkanaafuu hinbaqannu
kanuma irraa jibbuut' wayyaa
nam' yaada akkas sii dhiyeesse
hagum inni gahu inqabnaa?

didn't Mengistu kill Teferi [Banti]
and drag the corpse on the ground?
and to grab their claws at the flesh of the *Oromo*
didn't hawks cackle and croak?
oh Oromo! My brethren,
you haven't stopped even now
throwing each other's corpse to vultures and hawks?!
(FSG I, pp48, 49, 50)

28
the Oromo are now lost!
to determine the fate of Oromia
are the Oromo weak and incapable ?
to pacify Oromoland, to civilise the Oromo, as it were,
they 'descended' and settled among us
then learned the Oromo and Oromoland, in and out
and at last they sucked the resources
of the Oromo and Oromoland
(like a vampire)

(*ibid.*, p65)

29
what nation is this Oromoo?
then I asked you
and I also asked Others,
since language alone wont do
and if a *cause* is ignored
as simple as any thing, then I asked
a place of birth
.....
not satisfied still with what they call Oromia
which they designed in their own image
so, where can we spend a night or pass
of these hard times? let me ask you my people?
nowhere?! nowhere to go, nowhere to live?
should we take it for survival strategy,
to lie, to fear, to bow at our enemies and live long?
we didn't come from the Highland you know,
for thousand years, this is the very land,
where we were borne and bred!

(FSG IV, p117)

30
oh! Oromo
you'll live and abide by your gada system
the whole world has promised
on various conferences not to interfere
in your sovereignty , but
the good old day is bygone!
all that's in the past is no more.
the *gadaa* system is considered obsolete...
and Oromia is not yet recovered:
...christianised by force
and lost all the cultural legacies!

(FSG I, p64)

31
where else can we go,
we have this and only this land?
this is why we don't abandon (the land)
better we fight here that we live or we die!
who can share with you,
such a noble idea?

(FSG III, p19)

32

maddii isaa keessaa
danfi coccobsiisaa
ya aduun luqqifte
mataa folaqqisaa.

Maqaa irraa jijjiiran
gudayyoo biyyi isaa,
gubbaan maqaan dhokate
Oromoo tuuta kinniisaa

-isii mee warri baranaa
qabsoo 'dhee raasaa seenee,
ka sa'I bilusum' teennaa,
dhaluu didee maseenee?

-waan beek na hingaafatinii
lakkii akk' waan qara hinbaratinii.
Eega badee hindhalatinii
gudoo dhugeeffadhee, duraan
an akkam hinbaratinii?

-warr' qabsoof seenaa
taa'ee wa lama kakata:
yoo kaan bilisaan galata
yoo kaan bilisuum barbaaduuf
cuf' du' lubbuu amana....
Akki kun hunduu sii gadaanaa,
gos kee waraanaan dhabamaa
Urrisii hidhannoot' tolchi
eger ka dhibiit' dhalataa...
present...

-ilmaan Waayyuu Meeroo
maan jette ree?...

-mootummaa nat gubbaa jiraa!
Mircaan' seer kiyyaan tahamaa
warr' boson jiru fayyaa nitii
kan filannoo kan didu beekaa
eger waraanaan hadhamaa
...jedhee sodaachisee daallee
afaaniin ofiin taphataa!

nam gumiin feetuuninii
IHDG-tu irreen filaa
jaarsa Booranaa qaqqabee
iltumaan man' hidhaa jiraa
warra OLF-ii jaalatu
cufa *IHDG*-iit' fixaa.
chaarterii biyya hinjirre
OLF-ii callaat' jiraa?

nam'-adii didee diddaa'ee
sobdee na hingaadituu tanaan!
daallee na herreguut' jirtaa
gugguba na hinqabu mataan!
OPDO wayyaanumaa,
keenni imbarte malee afaan

from his cheeks
sweats drop
his body scorched in the sun,
And his head as heavy as a log.

they changed his *name*
and the *name* of his Great Land
never was heard his name,
Oromo, a *swarm of bee*

(FSG I, p32)

33
those who fled to the bush,
and joined the liberation struggle,
and our cows expectant of *freedom*,
they remained sterile?

don't ask me what is known
as if you haven't known it already.
it is not to be reborn once it passed away,
my friend, I have now understood it
but how come I couldn't understand it soon?

(FSG III, pp22, 23)

34
-those in the liberation struggle
are committed in two solemn oaths:
either to fight, win freedom and come home with trophy
or be a martyr so that the next generation
shall be liberated and see the light of freedom.
if all these are for you immaterial,
but you see, your innocent people are ruthlessly killed?
so get up and join the armed struggle right now
for tomorrow will be worse than the

-so, what did *Children of Waayyuu Meeroo*
(i.e., *the wayyane*) say?

-I am the dictator!
election is under my authority
those who boycotted are not sane enough
watch out! Anyone who rejects the *election*
will be harassed and executed,
thus frustrating the coward,
they pass time joking and turning us into their plaything!
(FSG III, pp73, 74)

* * *

not the one who the mass need to elect
it is the EPRDF forces who elect with power
they deceived the Boorana elders, they
approached elders only to put them in prison.
those who support the OLF
the EPRDF decimated.
since the *Charter* is violated,
how come the OLF alone respect it?
(see also FSG I, p90 of election)

35
I strongly disagreed with you your consulting
the *white-man* as to how to put me in shackles!
you consider me as foolish,
there is no cattle brand on me like a cow!
OPDO is a *wayyaanee*-subordinate,
but *she* learnt our language.

(ibid., p.77)

'gaallaan' waan jibbanii,
 hubattanii?...
 lafee keenya abaaranii
 laaf' keenya jaalatanii.
 jaalala goggoyidduu nu 'garsiiisani
 qolee nu harraabanii,
 teessum' goggoyidduu nu 'garsiiisani
 maas' keenna nu qotatanii,
 fudhacha lafa Oromoo...

gaallaa is what people rebuff,
 you see?...
 they cursed our bone
 and loved our land.
 they pretended to love us
 and licked us in the nape.
 they became citizens, while we, as subjects,
 were pushed into the dry land,
 they annexed our fertile land...

(FSG IV, pp90ff)

dhiibbaa dhuma hinqabneen
 akkuma Oromoon dhalatteen
 durii duraan hinargamne
 jijjiirama akka har'aa kana
 Oromoo!
 at fagoott' hin'garree?

37
 under a boundless pressure
 in the history of the nation
 experience non-existent hitherto
 such changes as today's challenges
 Oromo!
 never did you expect? never ever you
 expected it to happen?

laf' teenna infudhatanii,
 Oromoon fulaa hinqabnee!
 maqaa 'gaallaa' kan
 jibbumaaf nutti hinbaafnee?

they took our land by force
 and Oromo remained with no land!
 and this dehumanizing 'name' *gaallaa*,
 didn't they foist unto us simply for their contempt?

(*ibid.*, p90)

seerradhee kan na hingaafatin
 irraa na qabatti qandhoon
 otherwise
 adoo bilusum naa yaaddee
 wanni tokko hinjirtu rakkoon!
 forbid you, never!

38
 I am already determined, don't tempt me any more
 the *qandhoo* (i.e., the *farsoo*) may lead me astray,
 if you really are committed to the liberation struggle
 to fight for freedom, nothing can ever

si dammaqsee lafaa ka'i
 gam' kan keetiin jirti hafoon
 atoo si qofa hinta'inuu
 nama ka jaartiillee, akkoon
 haa qorattu xiloo ofii,
 WBO callaa miti maroon

get up! I awake you!
 there remain a lot to be done on your side
 and not only you but
 every old man and woman
 should grind spear
 or, not the OLA (Oromo Liberation Army alone..

(FSG III, p79)

Abbaa Seeraa wareegamee
 eaanum *Elemoo Qilxuutii*
 seelee inni nuu lakkise
 fakkeenna qiiqqee hir'uutii.
 eenmut' seelee kan' nuu guuta,
 kun jabaa gabbisa irbuunii?
 seerumaan barii irbuutii
 inguutamtii irraa hinshakkin
 hedduu karroorri jinfuutii,
 tokkoon akkana jedha gurbaan,
 an arraba ilkaan gidduuti!

39
 he *Law Maker* is martyred
 following *Elemoo Qilxuu*
 the quest that he left unended
 is like some an incomplete part of the body.
 who will fill up the gap,
 this renews the solemn promise?
 the promise we made is still confirmed
 the promise will be fulfilled, no doubt
 there is a way, no doubt,
 says to someone the boy,
 who knows I am a tongue betwixt the teeth!

(*ibid.*)

ganni torbaatamii sadii
 Oromoon jalqabamee
 wal-dhageessii yayyabamee
 kan egertii boruu yaadamee
finna lafaan yayyabattiif

40
 the year nineteen seventy three
 'Oromo' was launched
 there was consensus reached
 and the future was planned
 for the foundation of *finna* [Oromo]

jireenna Waaqaa argattii for worshiping Waaqaa, source of life and continuity

dhala raa'achaaf eebbifattiif
baandiraa ka ofiirra dhaabatti
Abbaan Gadaa ya jaalatee
Gadaan Oromoo ya jabaate
aadaa ofii ya argatee
Oromichi ya jabaate
Oromoon gadaa argatee...
jireen kan harkaan qabatee
Waaqayyo ofii yoo waammatee
kadhanne!

for blessing our children to grow to meet the blast
and for planting the flag flying high [on Oromoland]
Abbaa Gadaa is now strong
the Oromo gadaa system is once again practical
and the Oromo culture is performed and thus maintained
the Oromo are united and that is strength
exercising the gadaa system,
and now the *finna* is in his hand
praying to Waaqaa (God) for success
in all the adversities.

(FSG IV, p95)

41

-dukkan' waggaa dhibbaa duunee!
Oromoo, fuuldurri maal?
-hinbeennu!
eega isin irri barraaqqattan
gaafadhaa,
dukkan waggaa dhibbaa duunee
biyyi fuuldurri kee maal,
lafti dukkan duubaan bari'ee?

one hundred year of darkness!
Oromo, what will be your fate in the future?
-we don't know!
after it is downed
I better ask
one hundred year of darkness!
our people, what will be our fate,
is it dawn after the long night?

-lafa maaniit' bariisise?
ka butumeen karra diddet'
duroom horachuu jiraa
ka qamaleen midhaan fixxet
qoccaasee qotachuu jiraa
ka ilchoon dir' dirmameessut'
sodaatee soqachuu jiraa
ka duraan saamich' geesses
deebi'ee soqachuu jira....

no dawn as yet?
he who has no a single calf
is now attempting to make wealth
he whose farm beasts / monkeys ravage
is but plowing as much as he can
he who is whipped in his back
is but now frightened lest he is killed
and he who was severely hurt before by looting
and injustices now seems to change and submit...

(FSG III, p66)

42

ya kaate dhiiroon hobbaatiit' ga'ee
ga'e ga'e...
har'a guyyaan hobba'ee
wal hindhibinaa yaadaa yaadaa
tokkummaa yaadaa,
jiruu garboomaa ofirraa hadhaa
ilmaan Oromoo cuf' garaa haadhaa
geette *giseen!* ka'aa barbaadaa:
bilusimmaa jiruu biyyeee lafaadhaa!

it is time now be free
it is time, it is time
today it is the day to sing of freedom
do not abhor one another, rather adore
think of unity with deliberation,
avoid sense of servitude and submissiveness
children of the Oromo borne in the same womb
it is time! get up and seek the unended quest:
freedom, independence and all that is *finna!*

(FSG IV, p149)

B

GEERARSA SAMPLE TEXTS

I. 'Traditional' Geerarsa Songs

I. Historical Songs

Inxooxxoo dhaabatani
caffee ilaaluun hafee!
Finfinnee loon geessanii
hora obaasuun hafee !
oddoo *Daalattii* irratti
yaa'iin *Gullallee* hafee!
Gafarsatti dabranii

watching down the meadow [in *Finfinnee*]
from the top of *Inxooxxoo* is no more!
driving cattle to drink
from the *Finfinnee* well is no more!
the *Gullallee* elderlies meeting
on top of the *Daalattii* hill is no more!
collecting firewood, oh our girls,

qoraan cabsuunis hafee!
Hurufa Boombii irratti
 jabbilee yaasuun hafee!
 bara jarri dhufanii
 loon keenyas indhumanii
 eega *Mashashaan* dhufee
 birmadummaan inhafee

from *Gafarsaa* is no more!
 grazing our calves
 in *Hurufa Boombii* (now *Jan Meda*) is no more!
 when They (the *Habasha*) came [to the Oromoland]
 then our cattle vanished
 and since *Mashasha* came
 freedom was no more

(see in *Calanqoo*, 1996:17)

mee akka arbaa caraanuuree
 hamma an gahu ilaaluuree!
 silaa Daannoottan gala
 biyya bineensa Beeraa
 ganama namaa laatee
 galgala fuudhaaf malee

let me hail like an elephant
 and see what I am up to!
 I would take refuge in Daannoo's country
 the country of the brave son of Beeraa
 but he borrows in the morning
 to claim for the repay in the evening

silaa Garbiittan gala
 biyya bineensa Jiloo
 jannatu taa'ee mugaa
 dabeessat' dadhii dhugaa
 dhiirat' itillee hafaaf malee

I would take refuge in Garbii's country
 the country of the brave son of Jiloo
 but while heroes sleep in their chair exhausted
 and cowardice effervesce drinking mead

silaa Kafaattin gala
 Kafaa Galiitoo Kaamoo
 biyya mootii Busaasee
 kan an dur jibbee dhiisee....

I would take refuge to Kafaa
 Kafaa of Galiitoo Kaamoo
 the country of the king of Busaasee,
 which I didn't want to go to before...

(A historical *geerarsa* song in praise of Oromo warlords. Trans. mine. see Cerulli 1922:26-32, 100; Sumner 1997: 39-40)

2. Hunting Songs

a) of a Successful kill

Elephant

hoomaa oofee, hoomaa oofee yaa arbaa!
 yaa arbaa yaa guungumaa
 situ caala hundumaa
 arbi tokkicha hinqabuu
 bu'ee malkaa booressaa
 soiled
 nami arba tokko qabu
 lammii guutuu miidheqsaa
 hoomaa oofee, hoomaa oofee yaa arbaa
 nami sarbaa kee ilaalee
 mooyyeetti tumee hinyaatu
 nami gurra kee ilaalee
 baadheen bishaan hinbaatu

I drove you in a herd oh elephant! elephant!
 oh elephant you roar like a sky expectant with rain
 you are the master of all animals,
 one elephant is no one
 one goes to river by itself and the river water gets

a hunter with one trophy of an elephant,
 the whole community is proud of him
 I drove you in a herd oh elephant! elephant!
 one who sees your massive leg
 cannot but avoids pounding in a mortar
 one who sees your dish-like ear
 cannot but avoids carrying water with a gourd

Buffalo

.....
 gurree goodaa dammaqe
 yooman sodaadhe kolbaa
 ittann adeeme kolfaa!
 gurree faachoon sooriidhaa
 abbaa 'jjeeseef horiidhaa
 gurree gaanfa qoraattii
 nama nyaata qofaattii

.....
 the black fierce bull running scared in the field,
 I was not afraid of its huge horns
 but I advanced and stood in its way!
 the graceful black bull
 makes a big trophy for one who kills
 gurree is the black bull with thorn-like sharp horns
 it deavours one when found alone

gurree gaanfa barcumaa
hinsodaanne tasumaa

gurree is the black bull with stool-like big horns
I was not scared, I advanced and stood in its way!

Lion

.....
yaa durbee wayyaa xurii
wal ilaalla ijaa durii!
yaa durbee borongodeee
an booran korokkodee
abbaa joffee abbaa joffee
abbaa joffee daggalaa
nat' ajjeesee maggalaa
ishoo obboo ko ya daalee
an sanyii keen wallaalee
gammoojjii hintaa'in jedhee
baddaattin si baase kaa
lafa hinadeemin jedhee
mataattin si baadhe ka

.....
oh girls of my clansmen and women
you considered me womanlike, but now, you see!
ugly ones, (you considered it womanish not to kill)
but now, I made it! I killed the colourful and proud
oh lion with a thick mane
having thick mane, thick like a hay,
it is me who killed and danced round it
hurray! I killed lion
your kind I cannot tell for sure
but I brought you home to live with you
I took you to the highland
I carried you on top of my head
not to let you walk on foot

Giraffe

sattawwaa morma dheeraa
huqqattuu akka beeraa
sattawwaan mirga miti
takka dibacchuuf malee.
gursummaan niitii miti
takka itti hirkaachuuf malee

oh giraffe, you are beautiful, with a long neck
you are thin, thin like a tall woman
your trophy is not like other trophies
to praise oneself with. but I meant to anoint myself.
your trophy is the same as marrying a divorcee
that she is not marrying kind but to pass time with.
(cf. also "Giraffes and Poetry", Baxter 1986)

Enemy

namichi gosaan Soomalee
hinwaraanne inqabee
hinajjeefne inqalee
nabsee nati harkaa fuudhee
qawwee Waaqat' harkaa na fuudhe!

the *guchii* (ostrich) loves the sun
I have descended to the narrow valley
and I have pulled down the horsemen...
the beautiful girls will adorn my comb
my friends will kiss my mouth
the children will say to me "You have killed
well!"

(Cerulli 1922, p102)

the person/victim is a Somali
I did not strike but caught him
I did not shoot but slew him
his soul did I conquer
and so did God his weapon!

(in FSG)

b) of an Unsuccessful kill

ajjeerraa mana faaqii
bagan bare kabaa ishee
ajjeechaan bara Waaqi
baran bare karaa ishee

the skill of thatching of tuners
I am happy I learnt
and the way to the bush for hinting
I am happy I learnt
but time will come to kill and to make trophy

c) of those who abstain from hunting ventures

an hinbarbaadu arbaa
qonnaa kootu na darbaa
hinbarbaadu gafarsa
an daabii koon afarsa.

I don't need elephant
my farm is much better than a trophy
I don't need buffalo
I winnow my daabii (my red teff).

baqsaa garaatti nyaatuu
raatuun mataatti haa baatuu,

butter fills the belly, cools stomach when eaten
but the idiot carry it on the head,

dilbiin koo dilbii haggaa
kolbaa gafaarsa keetii
andaaqqoot' yaabee itti' haggaa.

my grain that I deposit will bear another deposit
but the trophy that you keep for years
chicken spoil it with feces on the roost

3. Geerarsa as Song of Success / Failure in Life

a) of Success in Life

.....
miila koo ishee qaqqalloo
hormi caba ishee eegaa
anat' keessa ishee beekaa
itti beeka mucaan kee:
argannaan callaan buluu
dhabnaan calleensa buluu
yaa da'ii Noolee Kaabbaa
lafa hiriyyaan koo geesse
eessa fa'aan oolee gaabbaa

.....
my thin leg, thin like a stick
Others expect it to break
but I know it wont
your son knows how to make it well:
to eat corn if I get
or to spend the night empty belly if no corn
oh my mother of the Noolee Kaabbaa
who falls who? have I failed to achieve
there where my age-mates achieved?

b) of Poverty

yaa Waaqayyo maal laataa
yoon maal godhe naa naataa
eegan dhaladhee hinteenyee
iddoo garaa koo hingenyee
an hunuman kurkuuraa
didee na shugurguraa.
yooman taa'ee mucaan kee .

ankaasseet' cabe malee
akka isheen dhabe malee.
yaa warra keenya qaataa
isin maal ooltan laataa
tulluu maaliin naanna'e
cubbuu maaliit' naan ba'ee?

gabaabaan saggoo hintolu
dheeraan mogolee hintoluu
namni Waaq' itti tole

of pride,
afaan namatti hintoluu.
mukarbaa duufte taane
kan abbaan arge yabu
ilma abbaa guyyee taane
kan abbaan arge dhaanu,
akkam taanee akkas taanee
fallaanaan raafuu haanee
utuu akka ishee beennuu
wallaalaa raatuu taanee.

oh God, what should I do
so that You heed to my cries?
I have been toiling since I was born
and not achieved my endeavours as yet
I face all these ups and downs
but it seems all is in vain.
I, your son, am not idle.

my staff often breaks
and sometimes I get lost
oh my ancestors,
what evils did you do in the bygone times,
what ups and downs I face today,
what evils you handed down to me?

the short is ugly about his shoulder
the tall is ugly about his ankle
one who God has favoured, his heart is full

and heeds not to the cries of the poor.
we turned to become a fallen tree
which any passer-by mounts
we turned to become children of the lowly
whom anyone looks upon and orders
but how come? and what is this?!
we frked cabbage, we lived on it
though we know it all, know how it'll turn,
but we are considered ignorant, even idiot.

(cf. Addisu 1990)

II. 'Contemporary' Geerarsa Songs

(For 'Contemporary' Geerarsa see Chapter III in this study: "The Sociological Poetics of Geerarsa Genre".
See below Luccaa Abbaa Tuggoo's (Macca Oromo) Prison Songs)

jirti manattiin tokko
kan hiddii irra adeemanii
kan dirqii itti aseenanii.

there is a house
into which one walks on thorny scrubs
into which one enters only when forced to.

jirti manattiin tokko
Mana Poostaa gararraa
mana mootummaan goodaa
gaafa achii seenanii

there is a house
above the Post Office
beneath the administration office,
once put into the house

kan halagaadhaa maalii
firatu namaan oodaa.

akuukkuu jala teessee
afuufuun narra keessee.
mana-hidhaa yaa tafkii ishee!
dirqiin keessa gad ciisee,
keessaa inni gadii gidduu,
akka inni nama hidduu
keessaa inni gara goodaa
cinaacha nama waadaa!

alaa 'zabiit' nuu eegaa
'*masskeetoo*' gombifatee,
keessaa tafkiit' nu reebaa
qarriffaa jallifatee.
balbalaan gad hinbaanee,
boroodhaan gad hinbaanee.
akka akka ishee wallaallee
mana keessatti albaanee.

ganama '*wuxuu*' jedhu
akka saroota isaanii
galgala '*gibuu*' jedhu
akka sangoota isaanii
takaalanii nu eegu
akka waan ganyaa taanee
yaasanii nu lakkaawu
akka waan sangaa taanee.

manni-hidhaa silaa hinjiguu
inni utubaan 'saa hoomii
inni saanqaan waddeessaa,
abbaan-seeraa nu hinhiiku
beellama faffageessaa.

let alone the 'Others'
but close kin also do abandon.

just sit under the *akuukkuu* tree,
and the hearsay slurred my name.
oh! imagine the flees in a prison house!
when forced to lie in it day and night,
particularly the class in the middle,
ah me! how terribly the flees sting?
lying on one side in the class in the lower
burns and itches the side the back!

there is a police guarding us from without
carrying the *masketto* rifle,
there is the flee from within
devouring us with its sharp incisors.
couldn't see the light in the front gate,
nor could we see the light through the back gate.
so confused we could not make its head and tail,
and defecated in prison.

they drive us out at morning
like the pack of their dogs
they force us in at night
like a herd of their cattle / oxen
they tend us in shackles
as if we were their horses
and they drive us out again as if to count us
as though we were their herd / oxen.

a prison house never falls
especially that with a *hoomii* tree column,
and its gate made of a *waddeessaa* tree,
the judge never settles our case
he postpones our case for another unfixed time.

