

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE**  
**(SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES)**

**FOLKLORIC ANALYSIS OF TIGRAY FESTIVALS WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO “ASHENDA”**



**BY: TIQUABO GEBRESELASSIE**

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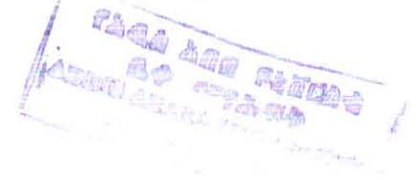
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## **Abstract**

Folklore is a collection of traditional practices of homogeneous people which are reflected through artistic, as well as expressive culture such as folk custom, folk dace, material culture and oral literature. These are transmitted from one generation to the other through word of mouth imitation and /or folk learning.

The foundation of the research is laid in chapter one. In this section the background of the study, purpose, significance, scope and methodology of the study have been discussed .To realize the objectives that are set in the first chapter, a detailed explanation is given on the descriptive concepts of folklore in the second chapter. This chapter also contains a review of different research studies that deal with folklore and related aspects. Here an attempt is made to show how this research study is different from the ones that have already been conducted.

In the light of the theoretical concepts of folklore an attempt is made to analyze the folk custom, folk arts, oral literature and material culture of Ashenda in chapter three. In this part each element of folklore has been analyzed descriptively one after the other. An attempt also made to see the social, economical and political aspects of Ashenda.

Chapter four concludes the study with some findings. In this chapter it is stated that Ashenda reflects the four elements of folklore namely folk custom, folk dance, oral literature and material culture. These are followed by some recommendations.

# Chapter –One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Folklore is a collection of traditional practices of homogenous people which are reflected through artistic, as well as expressive culture such as folk custom, folk dance, material culture and oral literature; those are transmitted from one generation to the other through imitation or folk learning.

Each society has its own traditional practices and cultural experiences. These traditional practices and cultural experiences reflect or/ and base themselves on understanding of the society concerning the world. These may include all the aspects of life, such as the society's beliefs, way of life, and way of understanding things etc. In general, folklore encompasses a wide range of practices like tales, songs, legends, dances, traditions beliefs and superstitions, proverbial sayings, customs, traditional, agricultural and domestic practices, types of buildings, utensils, and festivals among others.

The study of folklore hadn't been taken into account until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century as Abrahams (1981) points out. However, starting from this period of time, the attention given to this field has increased step by step and the act of documenting of folkloric elements in a written form had later been commenced all over the world, including the African continent. Now we can find a number of articles written on folklore and thorough studies have been made in the field. Moreover, people have been using them as a basic ground for the study of modern literature.

When we deal with the case of folklore in Ethiopia, however, we could say that almost nothing has been done concerning the field, in spite of the diversified folkloric practices within over 80 ethnic groups existing throughout the country. Of course a few studies

have been done in Addis Ababa University and in some other parts of the country. When we assess the situation in the other areas of the country, we find, related studies are very rare.

In general, festivals are part of folkloric practices in which the social, folk customs, the physical folk life, the performing folk arts and folk literature are all reflected. Ethiopia has also festivals which it shares with other African nations and several other peoples of the world. There are also unique ones specific to Ethiopia. Religious festivals like “Meskel”, “Kudus youhannes”, “Ashura”, “Ashenda”, “Hawarya” are some festivals unique to Ethiopia.

There are also special festivals in the different ethnic groups of the country. As a result, we find “Ashenda” to be unique to the Tigray region which has similar qualities with “Shaday” in the Amhara region. It is also celebrated by the Tigrigna speaking people in Eritrea. This is a festival, played by women in general and girls in particular.

In this festival social folk customs, physical folk life, performing folk arts, oral literature and other elements of folklore are reflected. Thus, the present study is aimed at exploring the folkloric elements reflected in this colorful festival and consequently other related aspect like those of religion. In doing so, the research will focus on investigating the folkloric elements of the festival “Ashenda”.

This first chapter presents the background information about the study area and its people. The figures and facts about the study area and the people are supplied in this section.

In order to make a descriptive analysis of the festival a survey was made on the elements of folklore. As a result, Ashenda was found to be a part of oral literature, material culture, performing folk arts and folk customs. In addition to, the simple description of what they use as material cultures, how they dance, and what they say about the traditions, this study attempts a thematic analysis of the folk songs of Ashenda.

For this purpose the relevant data were collected from the study area, and attempt has been made to categorize the major themes of Ashenda as recounted through the lyrics in the folksongs in four divisions. Finally, a conclusion is followed based on the four elements of folklore. This is also accompanied by practical recommendations that base themselves on the findings of this research.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Folklore describes the life experience of a community. Festivals, as part of folklore also describe the life experiences of people.

Researchers who conducted studies on folklore in Ethiopia tried to depict various living conditions of the country's people through folklore. In particular, the researchers tried to identify the limits in the preliminary descriptive analyses of oral literature (oral aspects of folklore) with regard to some specific regions in Ethiopia. In other words these studies imply that still there are some regions in Ethiopia which have not been studied in terms of their folkloric traditions.

Thus, a thorough investigation was felt crucial with regard to the different folkloric practices in different regions of Ethiopia. In this light the present study attempts to describe the folkloric essence of 'Ashenda' one of the Ethiopian folkloric practices, especially well known in the region of Tigray and tries to provide useful information relevant to Ethiopian folk traditions.

## **1.3 Objectives of the study**

### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to explore the folkloric elements in 'Ashenda' festival of the Tigray region.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

In order to find out the folkloric elements of 'Ashenda', the following are adopted as the specific objectives of the research:

- to explore the social folk customs of 'Ashenda';
- to identify the physical folk life as displayed in 'Ashenda';
- to describe the performing folk arts as reflected in 'Ashenda'; and
- to deal with the thematic elements of the folk literature of 'Ashenda'.

## **1.4 Description of the Study Area**

In this section, an attempt is made to briefly describe the study area. A succinct presentation of the geographical location, population and socio-cultural and historical contexts of the study area are given with the view that the descriptive analysis of the elements of folklore will be meaningful.

### **1.4.1 Geographical location**

Tigray is one of the seven regions /states/ of Ethiopia. It is located at the 12<sup>0</sup> and 15<sup>0</sup> latitude north and between 36<sup>0</sup>, 30<sup>0</sup> and 40<sup>0</sup>, 30<sup>0</sup> east longitude. It has an estimated total area of 50,078.64 square km. It has boundaries with the Afar region to the east, with Sudan to the west, with Amhara state to the south, and with Eritrea to the north as it is stated in Statistical Abstract Ethiopia (2008). The weather of the state is found to be

40.5% high land, 11.5% semi tropical and 48% low land. It has an average rainfall of 650-980 mm. (For further information see Map No1 in the Appendix).

#### **1.4.2 Population**

According to the figures from the Statistical Abstract (2008), the total population of the people of Tigray is currently 4,314,456 of whom 2,124,853 are male and 2,189,603 are female. The region is predominantly Tigrian, at 96.55% of the population; other ethnic groups include Amhara (1.63), Irob or Saho (0.71), Afar (0.29), Agew (0.19), Oromo (0.17), and Kunama (0.07).

95.6% of the population were Orthodox Christians, 4.6% Muslim, 0.4% Catholics, and 0.1% protestant. Its official language is Tigrinya.

#### **1.5 Study Methods**

In attending to the research objectives, the researcher used several strategies including field work. The data collection was between February the 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>. The major strategies that are employed as tools of data collection include:

##### **1.5.1 In-depth interview**

Interview with key informants was one of the strategies used in collecting data from the field. About 12 key informants were selected from various groups of the community in consultation with local elders.

These key informants were selected from various social groups i.e. four of them are males and the remaining are female. In other words, of this total population, more than 65% were females while the remaining were males. All the females i.e. 65% of the total population were among those who were Ashenda girls in their life time.

On average, the researcher interviewed his key informants two to three times a week each interview for about one hour. The discussions with the informants were held in the market places, their homes and surroundings.

Most of the interviews held with the key informants were recorded using tape recording for later transcription and translation of the data.

In the case of the thematic description of the folksongs, the researcher collected a total of one hundred fifty lyrics. Of these he selected the oral poems that explicitly show the five themes identified in this research. After the task of collecting the folksongs was successfully accomplished, formal and informal discussions were held with the informants. The informal discussion was conducted with different individuals who in one or the other way are expected to have clear understanding of the contents of the folksongs. These included journalists and musicians also.

These contexts helped the researcher learn the appropriate sense of the words and phrases in the process of thematic analysis of the lyrics.

### **1.5.2 Review of documents**

In this research the major way of collecting the folkloric elements was assessing the documents in the research setting. Consequently, various institutions and individuals were consulted in the region of Tigray. In this context, five years recent documents of the Ashenda Week are collected from “Dimtsi Weyane” radio of Tigray. Moreover, different magazines and newspapers written on Ashenda in the Bureau of Information Tigray and “Gazeta Woyin” were also collected. The different video-films documented in “Teddy Studio Mekelle” were also used as additional sources of the documents. In addition to this, video-films of the Millennium Ashenda Festivals of “Degua and Kolla Tembien” and different documents were collected from the Cultural Association of Tigray. The

photographs collected by Sibhat Gebregziabher a journalist in Tigray Information Bureau also served as good documents for the analysis of data in this research.

Finally, the folkloric elements were classified under four categories named as 'material culture', 'oral literature', 'folk custom' and 'folk arts'. In the case of oral literature, from the total oral poems collected, fifty are translated into English and discussed under different thematic categories in this research.

### **1.5.3 Field Observation**

The researcher made a field observation that contributed a lot to realizing thematic descriptions and collecting data on the material culture.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

The findings of this research are hoped to be useful to different individuals, organizations, researchers and people in general. It is possible to specify the significance of the study as follows:

- It will serve as a spring board to those scholars who want to make a detailed study of this area in terms of folklore.
- It serves as a document to organizations such as a Cultural Association of Tigray, Bureau of Tourism Tigray, Bureau of Information Tigray, different Medias and NGOs.
- It contributes its share in preserving and promoting the cultural and folkloric essence of Tigray people.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study is delimited to exploring the description of folkloric elements of Ashenda with particular reference to the region of Tigray. In this research work the material culture the Ashenda attendants' follow, the dances they perform, the folk customs they say and the thematic description of the folksong (oral poetry) of Ashenda are investigated.

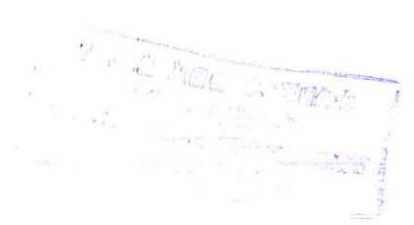
The study area is selected for the reason that the researcher has some experience regarding the subject matter as he lived in the study area for many years. The celebration of the Ashenda festival remains colorful throughout the experience of the researcher.

In this research work it is possible to say that the significance of the translation lies on its effectiveness to meet the preferred goal. In this paper also emphasis is given to present the equivalent meanings of the oral poems for the purpose of describing the oral literature in Ashenda. Apart from the issues of translation, the researcher faced budget and time constraints. The research could have been better, if the researcher attempts at least three years' Ashenda festivals with special attention to this research and with complete professional recording materials.

Analyzing the data and writing-up were challenging too. Avoiding subjectivity in describing and analyzing the data was also another difficulty that the researcher came across. As a solution for this the researcher based his interpretation on the interpretations and descriptions of the key informants.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, description of the study area, methodology, significance, scope and organization of the study. The second chapter is devoted to theoretical issues,



some local studies on folklore and the theoretical framework. The third chapter deals with the folkloric analysis of Ashenda. And the fourth chapter deals with the conclusions and recommendations.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter presents a brief critical account of what scholars have said about folklore with a view to framing a theoretical framework for analysis. Thus, the present research has drawn important insights both from the review of related literature and the theoretical approaches presented in this section. In particular, this chapter has four sub-sections: culture, folklore, festival and a brief review of studies conducted on issues related to folklore.

In the first sub sections- culture, folklore and festival are presented in a diagram to show their relation. The detailed discussion on folklore is followed by a review of related literature in this chapter.

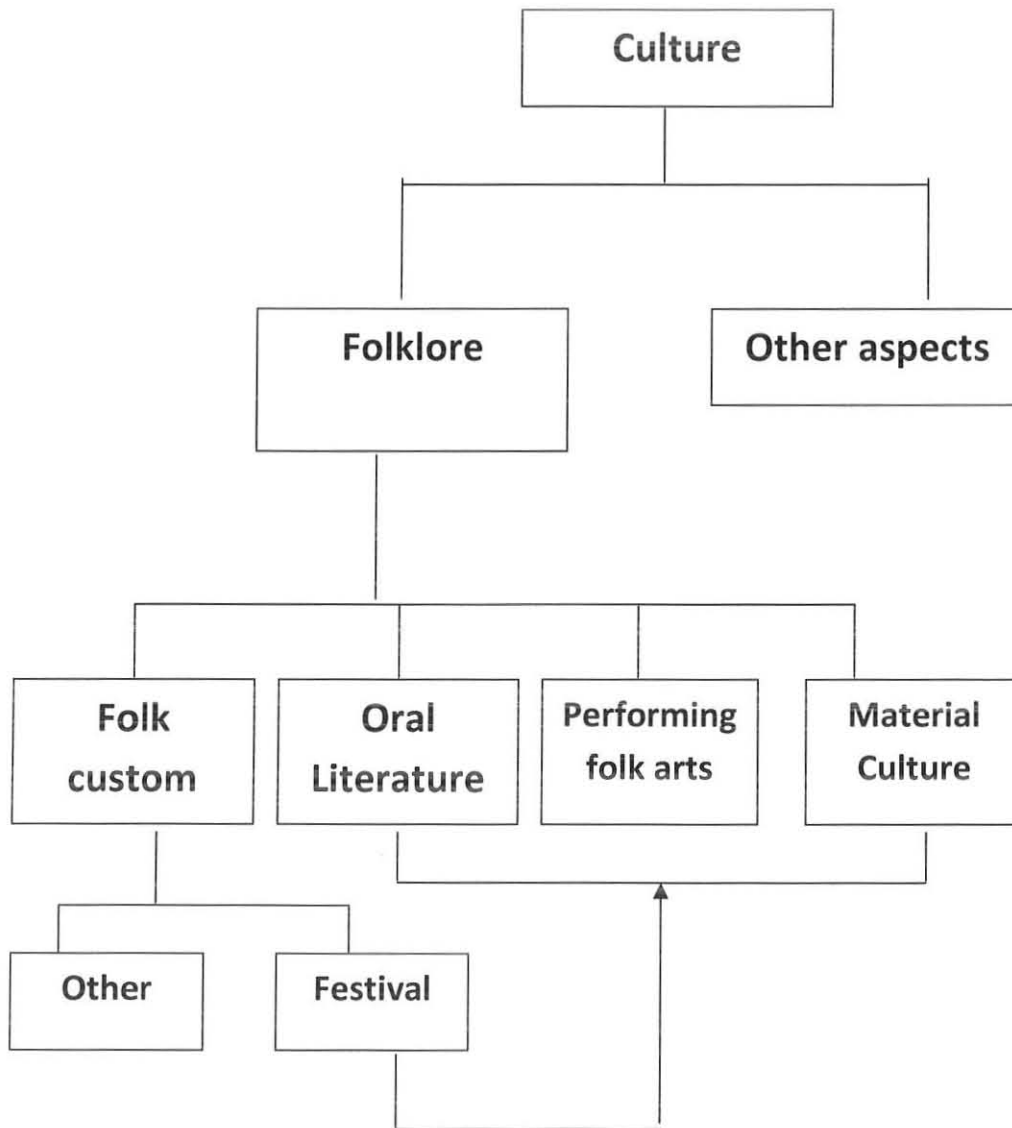


Diagram 1: Relation between Culture, Folklore and Festival

From the above diagram we can note that folklore is one part of culture. Folklore as part of culture also has folk custom, oral literature, performing folk arts and material culture for its constituents. Festival also is one aspect of folk custom. However, oral literature, performing folk arts and material culture, which we categorized under the umbrella of folklore, are also reflected in festivals. Therefore, the issues oral literature, performing folk arts and material culture that are to be discussed under folklore are also relevant to festivals.

## 2.1 Culture

### 2.1.1 The Nature of Culture

Mankind has lived in societies which are collective human institutions. The basis of society is living together which is a result of and a reason for communal understanding. Living together, a group of people evolve common understandings and values of their own. They come up with typically unique norms, values, beliefs, or share such crucial characteristics from their neighboring groups. Such common behaviors are collectively known as culture.

The researcher of this project believes that culture has a broad base that encompasses an infinite scope of practices, feelings, materials etc. As a result, scholars in different disciplines related to the study of society are found to be in difficulty of having one common definition for culture. In spite of this, an attempt is made in this research study to explain it on the basis of two definitions given by different scholars. However, they both tend to follow the same path.

“Culture” may be defined as “integrated pattern of human knowledge, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, and works of art, rituals, ceremonies and other related components...” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1989)

Another similar view is that culture means learned and shared human patterns or models of day-to-day living styles. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Another explanation states that culture is mankind’s primary adaptive mechanism (Damen1987:67). The aforementioned definitions are enough to see the comparisons of the definitions given to culture by different scholars. I take only two of them, because they are relevant to this study, even though there are other definitions of culture.

### **2.1.2 Elements of culture**

According to Brown (1995) cited in the website <http://changigminds.org.>, culture has certain visible attributes, and these attributes or elements help us to identify the elements which sustain culture. Artifacts, stories, histories, myths, legends, jokes, rituals, rites, ceremonies, celebrations, deeds of heroes, symbols, beliefs, assumptions, and mental models, attitudes, rules, norms, ethical codes, values etc., are some of the many elements of culture.

Of the above mentioned attributes, an attempt is made in the present study to focus on rituals-which are “Processes or sets of actions which are repeated in specific circumstances and with specific meaning” (ibid). This is done by giving special attention to festivals as part of rituals.

## **2.2 Folklore**

The concept of folklore has become significant since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the British antiquarians and German philologists started giving attention to the ways of living of the lower class society (Dorson, 1992:1)

Dorson adds that the English the antiquary William John Thomas and the German brothers Jacob and Wihelm Grimm were prominent in the field, starting from 1812 up to the mid- nineteenth century.

### **2.2.1 The Definition of Folklore**

There has never been one common definition of folklore throughout the history of the field. Hence, different scholars dealing with the field and related areas attempted to define it based on their own perspectives. Nevertheless, the definitions focus on the list of areas that could be put under the umbrella of folklore. This is because at the initial stage of the attempt to define the field there was a controversy of having one common

name of the field. As a result, the field has been called by different names given by different individuals. Of the names given antiquarian literature, antiquarian scholarship, popular antiquated, popular literature, literary antiquaries and folklore are some. The other reason is also that the scholars have consensus concerning what areas are to be included under the aforementioned broad field (Fekade, 1991.2-3)

Fekade in his book An Introduction to Oral Literature quotes Allan Dundes in relation to what areas should be included under the field folklore:

*Folklore includes myths, legend, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, teases, toasts, tongue twisters, and greeting and leave taking formulas (e.g. 'See you later') it also includes folk custom, folk dance, folk drama (and mime), folk art, folk belief, (superstition), folk medicine, folk instrumental music (e.g. fiddle tunes), folk songs (e.g. lullabies, ballads), folk speech (e.g. slang), folk smiles (e.g. as blind as a bat), folk metaphors (e.g. 'to paint the town red'), and names (e.g. nick names), Folk poetry ranges from oral epics to autograph-book verse, epitaphs, latrinalia (writings on the walls of public bathrooms), limericks, ball-bouncing, rhymes, jump rope rhymes, finger and toe rhymes, dandling rhymes (to bounce children on the knee), counting out rhymes (to determine who will be "it" in games), and nursery rhymes. The list of folklore forms also contains games; gesture; symbols; prayers (e.g. graces); practical jokes; folk etymologies; food recipes; quilt and embroidery designs; house barn, and fence type; street vendor's cries; and even the traditional conventional sound used to summon animals or to give them commands. There are such minor forms as mnemonic devices (e.g. the name Roy G.B to remember the colors of the spectrum in order), envelope sellers (SWAK-sealed with A kiss), and the traditional comments made after body emissions (e.g. after burps or sneezes). There such major forms as festivals and special day (or holiday) customs (e.g. Christmas, Halloween, and birthday) [1965:31]*

And now let us see some of the specific definitions given to folklore:

The International Encyclopedia of Social Science as cited by Willam Bascom in his work The Journal of American Folklore defines folklore as follows:

*Folklore means 'folk learning' it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and other techniques that are learned by imitation or example, as well as the products of these crafts... Folklore includes folk art, folk tools, folk costume, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk music, folk dance, folk games, folk gestures and folk speech as well as those forms of expression which have been called folk literature but which are better described as verbal art.*

Dan Ben-Amos (1971: 3-15) defines folklore as an “artistic communication in small groups”. He lists folk literature, folk custom and material culture under this broad field. Abrams also gives a similar description of folklore.

*Folklore, since the mid nineteenth century has been the collective name applied to verbal materials and social rituals that have been handed down solely or at least primarily by word of mouth and by example, rather than in written forms. It includes among other things, legend, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, spells, nursery rhymes; pseudo scientific lore about the weather, plants, and animals, customary activities at births, marriages, and deaths; and traditional dances and forms of drama which are performed on holidays or at communal gatherings. (Abrams. 1981:66)*

Dorson (1992:2-5) and Melakneh (2005:11-12) identified four branches under the broad field of folklore. Those are folk custom, performing folk arts, material culture, and verbal arts (folk literature). These are taken as the basic elements of the operational definition adopted for the purpose of this research work.

In most cases folklore is transmitted from one generation to the other orally. As result, the day-to- day; year to year; and season –to season -innovations remain undocumented. Moreover, there happens variation in practice, in that a folkloric practice of one year may be different in the next year.

*Folklore can not survive in a set form. Folklore continually changes, varying and developing because it is shaped by the memories, creative talents, and immediate needs of human beings in particular sections. This process of oral variation is the lifeblood of folklore. When it is halted by printing or recording, folklore enters a state of suspended animation. It comes alive again only when it flows back in to oral circulation.* (Coffin and Cohen 1966:10)

The changeability of folklore is dominantly reflected in oral literature than the other elements. This may be because other personal talent and experience of the narrators varies from one another: or it may have other reasons. This will be discussed in some detail in the ensuing sections.

## **2.2.2 Branches of Folklore**

### **2.2.2.1 Folk Custom:**

This refers to the “group interaction rather than individual performance”. Community and family experiences in relation to birth rituals, land marks, manors, etc., are parts of the folk custom (Melakneh, 2005:11). These are interrelated with the folk beliefs. According to Dorson (1992:3) telling the bees of a death in the family by dragging the



hives in blank or nailing up a horse shoe on the front door to avert witchcraft, or making a wish before testing the first fruits of the season can be good examples in this regard.

### **2.2.2.2 Performing Folk Arts**

This, as a branch of folklore refers to traditional music, dance, drama, folk songs and folk tales. In this case, folk songs and folk tales can better be grouped under verbal art. They are accompanied by folk musical instruments, dance costumes as well as scenario props. As a result, they are considered performing folk arts (Dorson, 1992:4)

Dorson also quotes Alford's statement in order to give a specific example for this: "the shaping factor in folk drama was the sword dance with its circle, chorus and carefully concerted movements. "(1992:4) Performing folk arts are of different kinds based on the occasions they are performed for:

*Performances differ one from the other, depending on such factors as the age and energy of the performer, the nature of the occasion (death or merriment) the type of setting (cult enclave or Open Square), whether or not any musical accompaniments are used specially by the performer, and whether it is a solo or a group act. (Okpewho 1992:42)*

In the real experiences of our country, Ethiopia, also we find diversified folkloric events that comprise a number of performing acts. The performing act The Ethiopian Muslims do sitting gathered in a circle shaped chorus and using a drum-"dibbe" which is known as "Menzuma dance" can be a good example in this regard.

### **2.2.2.3 Material Culture**

This is the visible aspect of folk behavior that represents techniques, recipes, formulas, transmitted across generations and with individual variations. As Dorson states:

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#### ***2.2.2.4.1 Definitions of Oral Literature***

Oral literature is “the verbal heritage of mankind transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. (Melakneh. 2005:12)

As sited in the website <http://virtualpark.uga.edu/~amdrim/orallist.htm/> by Morain (2008) “Oral lore is that part of folklore that is transmitted orally. It is the stories, legends, myths of a people.” Morain categorized it as animal tales like blazons, calls, chants: contemporary legends like curses, fables (example: folk drama, folk narrative: folk poetry; folk song; folk speech), ghost lore (example: hero tale, hollers, jingles and rhymes); jokes (example: local character, anecdote); fairy tale; memo rate; myth; personal experience narrative (example: “pour quoi” tale, prayers)’ proverbs; riddles; sage or local legend (example: saints ‘ legends, tall tale, toasts, trickster, tales whistles) etc.

***Another definition given to the field by Nandwa and Bokenya is as follows:***

*Oral literature may be defined as those utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree of the artistic characteristics of accurate observation and indigenous expression. (Nandwa and Bokenya.1983:1).*

Okpewho’s definition that folklore is “literature delivered by word of mouth” (1992:1) is also another attempt at defining. There is also a famous scholar who should be mentioned in this connection. Richard M. Dorson, in his book Folklore and Folk Life (1972:2) he defines folk literature as traditional utterances in the form of spoken, sung and voiced manner that show repetitive patterns. He adds that folk narrative, folk song or folk poetry, proverbs, riddles, folk speech, yodels, hollers, cries, chants, laments and the like as subparts of folk literature.

From the above-listed definitions we can understand that oral literature is presented in oral form and almost all the above-stated definitions show orality to be the most common

feature of folk literature. Moreover, the imaginative nature is also mentioned in all the definition of course it is mostly expressed using the word “literature’. Another feature is depicted as “verbal heritage” by Melakneh; “the stories, legends and myths of the people”, by Morain; “indigenous expression” by Nandwa and Bukenya; and “repetitive pattern” by Dorson. All these show that oral lore is traditional. Furthermore, all the definitions show that folklore is a collective property i.e. there is no individual or original author.

On the basis of the definitions given above an operational definition has been formulated for this project:

“Oral literature is a part of folklore that is traditional, anonymous collective property which is presented in oral form. “ Here oral form refers to all oral forms of folklore like speeches, songs, cries and narrations.

#### *2.2.2.4.2 Constituents of Oral Literature*

Of the above-mentioned attributes of oral literature the researcher believes that discussion on proverbs and folk songs is relevant here because they are the focus of investigation in this paper.

According to <http://www.folklore.bc.ca/orallterature.htm> “proverbs are speech metaphors”. These proverbs are used by the elderly people of different societal groups. They are used either for education, advice, counseling or criticism.

Folksong is also defied in the above –stated website as follows:

family makes a royal marriage. This kind of function, according to Encyclopedia Britannica (2005) is labeled as the escapist function.

Other functions of folklore include the etiological, justifying, pedagogic and controlling functions. When we say folklore has an etiological function it is to say that people use folklore to answer man's perennial question: how the world did begin? Who created the world?

## **B. Cultural- Geographical Classification of Functions**

According to The New Encyclopedia Britannica (2005), discussions regarding the functions of folklore should consider the social setting and culture of a community. Folklore "separates the so-called non literate societies lacking written languages from the advanced civilizations engulfed in print.

More over, folklore is assumed to functions among the illiterate while those with better education are assumed to have no folklore. Nevertheless, several researches conducted in cities depicted those urban communities possessing their own oral poetry and other folkloric element. (The New Encyclopedia Britanica: 2005)

### **2.3 Festivals**

Almost all people in the world have their own occasions of celebration that are "of special significance" to a specific social group. However, these social groups do not celebrate these events of special significance with no reasons. Many different reasons can be identified for these special moments that are celebrated. As Smith observes "They may be moments of transition from one season to another; they may be anniversary of historical events of the legend of the birth or death of a hero or a God; or symbolic reenactments of events in the life of a religious leader or the founder of a society." These occasions that are celebrated with special significance in specific societal group are known as festivals. (Smith.1992:159).

### **2.3.1 Types of Festivals**

Festivals are of different kinds. Some festivals are celebrated because of the seasonal significance, in relation to harvesting, good weather etc, while others are celebrated due to religious significance they have in relation to religious beliefs and events (Dorson 1992:161).

#### ***2.3.1.1 Seasonal Festivals***

These are festivals that have strong associations with the changing of seasons.

According to Dorson (1992:161) these seasonal festivals are common in the northern countries. Carnival and May Day seasons can be good examples in this regard.

Furthermore, in relation to seasonal festivals the Wikipedia the free Encyclopedia also states that they are decided by the solar and the lunar calendars and the cycle of seasons.

#### ***2.3.1.2 Religious Festivals***

“A religious festival is a time of special importance marked by adherents to that religion.

Religious festivals are commonly celebrated on recurring cycles in a calendar year (Wikipedia).

Ancient Roman religious festivals, Buddhist religious festivals, Christian religious festivals, Hindu religious festivals, Sikh religious festivals, Islamic religious festivals and Jewish religious festivals are good example in this regard.

The Ethiopian religious festivals have also those features as mentioned in the Wikipedia Encyclopedia. According to Desta Tekleweld “Festivals are the celebrations of festivals like 'Gena' 'Timket', 'Tinsae', “Peraclitos”, 'Meskel' 'Filseta', 'Hider Micheal', 'Miazia Giorghis', yearly feasts or “Nigisis”, religious dances, and happy events, when the followers do not go to work and keep themselves off, not having long trips.

The above definition by Desta Tekleweld lists only the Ethiopian orthodox religious festivals as festivals, due to the fact that Ethiopia is a land of diversified languages, religions and ethnic groups, this definition seems to be incomplete though the aforementioned lists are all events of festival celebration. Thus, Ethiopian religious festivals encompass the Ethiopian orthodox religious festivals plus all the religious festivals that are celebrated in Ethiopia.

Dorson cited in Fekade (1991 E.C) puts four major topics under “social folk customs”. These are “festivals and celebrations, recreations and games, folk medicine and folk religion.” He adds that festivals, recreations and folk religion are practiced in group and much focus is given to the inter group relationship rather than to individual performance. He mentions festival as an example in this regard and stresses that it is assured to be a major folk activity because it creates an atmosphere for people to gather, play and have fun. As a result of celebration and festivals the individual and the group get spiritual and psychological cleansing. Generally, a study of festivals deals with cleansing and other social, economic, political and cultural advantages. A festival is one of the contexts for folklore.

Even though special concern is given to the seasonal and religious festivals in this work of research purposefully, there are an unlimited number of festivals celebrated on different occasions throughout the world. Art festivals, film festivals, food festivals, literary festivals, music festivals, theater festivals, sport festivals, etc. are some of the many festivals we observe and celebrate on different occasions.

The word ‘festival’ is used to indicate the artistic presentation of culture, particularly, a cultural festival has its roots in certain culture and is held from days to weeks when performances can be individual or in group. Ways of living of that particular society, dances, and oral traditions of a certain culture are manifested in a festival. It is a joyful activity (Yohaness, 1997:7-9).

## **2.4 A Review of Related Literature: Local Research Studies on Folklore**

The following studies are examined in this review. A term paper was produced by Goitom Tegegn on folksongs of two festivals in Tigray: Ashenda and Hawarya (2007). In this term paper Goitom tried to analyze the folksongs of Ashenda and Hawarya. Though not detailed, his attempt to analyze the folksong is praiseworthy. However, his focus was only on the folksongs. Therefore, a thorough discussion on the overall folkloric elements material culture, oral literature and performing folk arts seem to be important for a comprehensive analysis of Ashenda.

Another unpublished study was on Ethiopian Christmass (Gena) Festival Celebration of Lalibela (1997) by Mesobework Kitaw Azene. This study focuses on the religious and socio-economical conditions of the festival in Lalibella.

Mesobework has done the analysis based on the oral literature, especially the religious folk-songs sung in this specific occasion. This research seems to be similar with what is done in the present research work. Nevertheless, the interpretation is made based on the thematic content of the lyrics. On the other hand, the present research focuses on the overall practices included under folklore.

A term paper produced by the present researcher, entitled Folkloric Analysis of The Geriba People in Addis Ababa, was supervised by Birhanu Mathews in partial fulfillment for the course academic seminar. It used a similar way of analysis adopted in this paper. However, the term paper does not deal with any special festival event and deals only with the daily life of a particular group of people.

In addition, the contribution of graduate students in discovering the role of oral literature in Ethiopia is worthy of consideration.

It was in the 1978 that oral literature got the first exposure to scholarly studies. In this year, a Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Ethiopian Folk Poetry Recreated” by Hailu Araya in

It was in the 1978 that oral literature got the first exposure to scholarly studies. In this year, a Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Ethiopian Folk Poetry Recreated” by Hailu Araya in 1978 initiated a study of oral literature in Ethiopia. Following the opening of graduate programs in the Institute of Language Studies in Addis Ababa University, a number of MA theses and senior essays were produced, (Daniel, 1998).

To mention some of the theses, Abdurkadir 1982, Berhanu 1986, Shibeshi 1986, Assefa 1987, can be cited as research attempts that explored the role of oral literature in Ethiopia in the 1980s. In particular, Abdulkadir (1982) investigated the role of folktales in reflecting Somali cultural elements. In his thesis, he described and analyzed selected tales. Then, he has given a brief description of each tale together with the cultural element it embodies through thematic analysis.

Kambatta proverbs as one the forms of oral traditions among the Kambatta native people were explored by Berhanu (1986). In his thesis, Berhanu argues that Kambatta proverbs are one of the means by which people reveal their life and experiences to the succeeding generations. He further states that the proverbs deal with various subjects. In particular, he emphasizes that the proverbs help the people to educate and criticize persons and practices.

In same year, Shibeshi (1986) explored the role of oral poetry in recounting the devastating famine that happened in Wollo. His data consists of poems collected from Sirkinka in the present north Wollo zone as Shibeshi (1986) mentioned. He analyzed the poems thematically. He has found that the oral poetry developed in response to the famine in the study area clearly documented how harsh and severe was the situation at that time. Therefore, from his paper’s finding one can learn that oral poetry helps people to document their life situations.

Another M.A thesis conducted on oral poetry in and around Wollo was by Assefa (1987). In his thesis, Assafa presents the Amharic religious oral poetry called Menzuma. He

it is more useful for the religious leaders to transmit religious instruction than its counterpart is. He evaluates Menzuma Bequchita as religious oral poetry, but states that it is predominately full of secular messages.

In the 1990's, other theses emerged in the field of oral literature in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa University). These include Melakneh 1990, Tesfaye 2007, Berhanu 1998, and Daniel 1998. Melakneh (1990) explores the major themes and motifs of southern Agaw folk tales.

Berhanu (1998) described some of the prominent features of Islamic oral poetry in Wollo and indentified the various genres incorporated in it. He found out that the Wollo Muslims designate their songs as Menzuma. For him, Menzuma is composed and sung in both Arabic and Amharic. Poems sung in Arabic are generally called *Arabity* while those composed in Amharic and written in Arabic script are known as Ajam. Ajam for him is poetry composed to be performed in religious ceremonies, which are agreed to be Islamic. This study can be possibly classified as the second one following Assefa's (1987) attempt on a similar topic.

Daniel (1998) thematically analyzed Amharic oral poems associated with the Derg's red terror in Gondar and Gojjam. In his analysis, he vividly shows how the oral poems clearly documented the situation relating to his topic. Therefore, one can learn that oral poems can describe a community's historical records in an effective way.

Since 2000, research attempts were carried out relating to oral literature by postgraduate students at Addis Ababa University. In this regard, Mesfin (2000), Yeshaw (2001), Meseret (2004), Biniam (2005), and Tesfay (2007), can be mentioned.

Mesfin (2000) presents Abbawudde begging poems in South Wollo. He describes the poems collected in their social contexts. In other words, Mesfin describes the occasions, training, performance, and classification of the Abbawudde poems.

Yeshaw (2001) analyzed Amharic folk anecdotes from the Arisi-Robe region while Meseret (2004) thematically analyzed the oral poetry of Tamari. Biniam (2005) analyzed Kembatta proverbs reflecting the images of women in the community. Tesfaye (2007) analyzed the thematic concerns of Amharic oral poetry in Raya. He shows that, the oral poems in his research area describe multiple facts of life and experiences of the people.

As can be seen from the above brief review of postgraduate research works, it is possible to conclude that oral tradition is a very great mechanism in reflecting people's life style and experiences. Different social phenomena may become causes for the creation of oral poems that can be handed down from one generation to the other through verbal means.

## **2.5 Theoretical Frame works**

As mentioned in the account above, scholars have tried to investigate the role of folklore in Ethiopia, in general. Nevertheless, none of these researchers attempted a descriptive analysis of the elements of folklore in any integrated manner to create a complete picture of folklore. Furthermore, no investigation seems to have been made on festivals in particular.

The present research aims at a description of the material culture, traditional folk arts, folk customs, and thematic elements of the folk literature in relation to an important festival-called Ashenda celebrated in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Thus its contribution will be an addition to the study of Ethiopian folklore.

## Chapter -3

### Practical Folkloric Analysis of Ashenda

As mentioned in the preceding chapter (chapter two), folklore encompasses four elements, namely folk custom, performing folk arts, material culture and oral literature. This chapter aims at interpreting Ashenda based on the above stated elements.

#### 3.1 Introduction

Starting from the time of Queen Sheba, it is believed that religious faith has flourished in Ethiopia. About three thousand years ago after the arrival of Queen Sheba from Israel to Ethiopia the religion of Judaism was brought to Ethiopia by Queen Sheba and her son Minilik I. Then Queen Sheba's new religion widely spread throughout the nation. Christianity presently is found in different denominations such as Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Each of these denominations has its own way of practicing the Christian faith.

The Ethiopian Orthodox religion, as one form of Christianity has its own ways of believing, worshiping, celebrating festivals and fasting. These are some among the many ways of practicing the religion.

Among many religious festivals, Ashenda is celebrated by women in the regions of Tigray, Amhara and Eritrea (a former region of Ethiopia). In Amhara region it is known as Shaday.

“Ashenda” after which the festival is named, is a kind of grass that grows in the month of “Nehase”. Daniel explains that depending on its contextual use, the word Ashenda may represent three different things. In the first place it represents the plant Ashenda planted on the field. Secondly, it represents the bundle of grass the Ashenda girls wear around

their waist. And thirdly it represents the festival that is celebrated starting from the 16th of Nehase. It falls on 21 or 22 August each year, (Daniel, 1998 E.C). The festival marks the end of sixteen days of fasting by Orthodox Christians in honor of the Virgin Mary. Ashenda is said to have been introduced along with the gospel to Ethiopia at the time of Abune Selama Keste Birhan (34 A.D).

On the occasion, women of different ages and from different walks of life dress in white just as the women of ancient times did when they “witnessed” St. Mary’s “ascension to heaven”. Girls of Tigray, come together, to sing very attractive cultural songs, and dance to celebrate this unique traditional occasion or festival.

According to the interview by the present researcher conducted with Like-Likawnti Yared Kassa, it is also said that St. Mary passed away on January 29 when she was 64 years old and her ascension was not known to every one. As a result, the apostles went on fasting for sixteen days and were able to see the incarnation of St. Mary being on a field of long grass known as “*Demahro*”. It is said at that time ,the grass started to move when the apostles took this news to the Israelis the ladies cut *Demharo* grass and tied them to their waist and chanted and danced for almost a week. As Likawnti Yared Kassa adds the grass represents the beauty of St. Marry, her virginity and dignity. Hence the Ashenda grass that the young girls of our time use is a representation of *Demharo* and symbolic of Virgin Mary.

Ashenda is a name widely known around Tigray. However, it is called as “*Ayni War*” around Aksum and “*Maria*” in some other parts of the region.

When the girls play Ashenda they are absolutely impressive and full of fun and happiness. The girls all go round singing, dancing and surround any male until he gives them some money; offering even a few coins could get him off the hook. It is just fascinating to see the transformation that the day brings in the Ashenda girls.

On the morning of Ashenda, the place vibrates with drum beats they get louder and louder. A bevy of young girls in their traditional fineries is seen. They move from door to door clapping, chanting and dancing.

### **3.2 Folk Custom**

Melakneh (2005:11) describes folk custom as " group interaction rather than individual performance". Throughout the festival, there is a significant interaction among the girls and the target individuals and target family. This can be reflected through the groups created by the Ashenda girls and the overall interaction they have among themselves. Moreover, while the girls are praising the passers by and also families they use aesthetic words and expressions that enable them to highly interact with their target people.

### **3.3 Performing Folk Arts**

According to Dorson (1992:4) folk arts are traditional music, dance, drama, folksongs etc. that are accompanied by folk musical instruments, dance customs as well as scenario props.

This is found to be reflected in Ashenda. Ashenda, according to the focal documents, is full of group dances that give color to the festival. Both the Ashenda girls (Ashenda Chorus) and the people whom they praise dance together.

Through this research it was found that Ashenda dances are of three types. The first one is the group dance forming circle in which two of the choruses interchange their places. Here, the one jumps side ways and the other move side ways in harmony with each other. This is a traditional dance called "*Awrīs*".

The second kind of dance is known as "*Guayla*". This is also a chorus performance in which the members of the chorus move round in an anticlockwise direction.

The third one is the group dance they perform while they move from place to place and on streets. In this style, all the members of the chorus move forward jump in a similar way. Furthermore, the youngest little girl among them climbs on the shoulder of the strongest. The little girl is known as \_\_ "a stick made of gold". They usually sing to this little girl while moving from place to place saying

"Take care of yourself not to fall down" (look at picture number seven in the Appendix)

In all the three styles, the girls dance by shaking their shoulders and moving their necks side ways in a rhythmic way.

In this way, Ashenda dances are full of group performance that involves all the participants as well as members of the public

### **3.4 Material culture of Ashenda**

Dorson defines material culture, saying "It is how men and women in tradition oriented societies build their homes, make their clothes, and prepare food, fashion their tools and implements"

This definition includes the traditional ways of making clothes and fashioning tools, and these points are important in the case of Ashenda. The documents collected for the purpose of this research work show that in the celebration of Ashenda the girls fashion themselves and their tools in a special way. In doing so, they use different practices of material culture that are reflections of their society.

According to the focal documents of this research, the material culture used in Ashenda can be categorized into two. Under the first category we found the ornaments the females use to decorate themselves with. The musical instruments they use while singing this Ashenda folksongs that is the traditional drum which is another category of material culture in Ashenda.

The Ashenda girls tie round their chest including their left hand either by a traditional scarf or a long rope made of very small pearls known as "Sindid". (Look at Picture number four in the appendix).

They also wear a tiny scarf called "Mekenet" and Ashenda Siye, a rope round their waist. The plant Ashenda is of three kinds. The one is "Ashenda Siye" i.e. the best of the Ashenda plants. If the girls could not get this because of different reasons they use "Shigurti Zibie" which is similar to Ashenda Siye. Kids also use the third type of Ashenda plant i.e. available around their houses. "Ashenda Bukaria".

In addition to the above ornaments, the Ashenda girls wear different styles of dresses. They are dressed in their most beautiful cotton Zuria (a traditional dress with a patterned border at the bottom), Tilfi (richly embroidered wear) and Buffoy (the traditional attire of the people of Raya, southern Tigray) etc.

Furthermore, the Ashenda girls wear round their ankle a chain made of silver and bronze known as "Albo". (Look at Picture number five in the Appendix).

All the above sated items of material culture are products of traditional hand crafts. They are the innovations of the expert Tigray artisans and skilled professionals in handcrafts.

### **3.5 Oral Literature**

As mentioned above, the group performance of dance is accompanied by chorus, singing and other folkloric elements. Of them songs constitute a crucial part. These songs mainly touch upon five major themes. On the bases of their themes these songs may be divided into five categories. Some of these songs are illustrated and discussed in this sub section, and they are treated as part of oral literature.

### 3.5.1 Folk Songs that Praise the Festival Ashenda

Song No.1

**አሸንዳ አሸንዳ ዓደይ**

**ብወራውር ዶ ከንጉዳ ኢደይ/ክሰብራ ኢደይ**

“Oh! Our Ashenda, do I have to wear all the jewelry and break my hand so as to celebrate it?”

According to the key informants, in this verse we can clearly observe that the Ashenda girls use different jewelry to makeup and beautify themselves. The second line of the verse is a hyperbolic way of expressing the over using of jewelry to magnify their beauty while celebrating this best event of girls. They say that they use jewelry until their hands are broken. The first line of the verse **አሸንዳ አሸንዳ ዓደይ** also indicates the endless love they have towards Ashenda. The word, **ዓደይ /my country/**, in this case, states that the event of Ashenda is special to their original place, Tigray. Of course it is also celebrated by all Tigrigna speaking people in North Ethiopia, Eritrea and in some parts of the present Amhara region-particularly around Lasta (Lalibela). This word used metaphorically gives the bond of a region to the festival-Ashenda. In this special event, as it is mentioned earlier when we discussed material culture the girls decor themselves with different make ups and jewelry. Therefore, this lyric describes the material culture the girls use to make themselves special. As we discussed in the review of literature with regard to material culture, we could see that material culture is a reflection of the identities of specific groups of people. This is also found to be reflected in the case of Ashenda.

Ashenda folksongs are also reflective ways of describing the social practices including the material culture the particular society uses. Moreover, if these folksongs are studied people can easily understand the experience of a certain society in relation to the extent



that they consider appropriate to the intention. In other words, the folksongs are found to be best way of describing the material culture. Look at another example:

Song No.2

*አሸንዳ ማለት  
አንጥልጥል ደረት/አንዝብዝብ ደረት  
አሸንዳ ኢላ ክፃወትዬ  
አይ ቆልፃንድዬ*

“Ashenda means a necklace; I will play Ashenda for I’m still young”.

In this lyric two thematic elements are mentioned. In the first two lines, the decorations they use are necklaces which are mentioned to be many and of different kinds. Here the phrase *አንጥልጥል ደረት* in some places and *አንዝብዝብ ደረት* in the other places, which shows volatility because of colloquial difference and creates an image of different kinds of necklaces, both traditional and modern, on the chest of an Ashenda girl. In the two lines of the lyric, especially in the last line, from the phrase *አይ ቆልፃንድዬ*, we can clearly see that Ashenda is a festival of young ladies.

The volatility nature of oral literature is also depicted in the Ashenda folksongs because of colloquial differences among smaller ethnic groups, /hinzibzib / and /hintiltil/ .

Song No.3

*አዋልደዬ ከዳ ዕበዳ  
ገዕገይ ሰማይ ዶ አሎ ሜዳ*

This one seems to have a literary meaning “Ashenda girls, play as if they are mad, because there is no playground in the after life.” The theme of the lyrics in this, as to the key informants is that Ashenda is celebrated by young ladies and this moment of beauty can not come back in the old age of the girls. Therefore, it has a message of encouraging

the girls to recreate themselves and do their best to show their beauty in this event of freedom.

In this case the phrase *ላዕላይ ሰማይ* which has a direct meaning of “the upper sky” is used as metaphor for the time after death.

Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:1) defined oral literature as “Those utterances, whether spoken, recited, or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree of the artistic characteristics of accurate observation and indigenous expression”

When we come back to oral song number 3 above, we can clearly see the indigenous expression the Tigrian people have concerning young age is reflected in a remarkable manner.

Song No.4

*አሸንዳ ናይ ዓመራይ ናይ ዓመራይ*

*ተጋኒና ሎመራይ*

“Ashenda — which we celebrated last year, was colorful and it is welcome to be celebrated at the same season now”

This verse shows that Ashenda girls are eager to celebrate the festival. As it is interpreted by the key informants the girls praise the last year Ashenda to express that they are earnestly happy to welcome the present one. Hence, they sing this folksong every year. As a result, ‘last year’ here represents the continuity of the Festival.

Daniel Teklu (2000 E.C.:15) has identified repetition as one feature of oral literature. This is also revealed to be a nature of Ashenda as the same folksong is sung for successive years.

Song No. 5

አሸንዳ አበባዬ ፣ ዕምበባዬ

አሸንዳ አደዋዬ

“*Asahenda*, young females’ festival that is inherited from our ancestors “

In this lyric also the girls express their love for Ashenda. They use two contrasting expressions in meaning. The one is *አሸንዳ ዕምበባዬ* meaning ‘Ashenda flower’. On the Tigrinya speaking culture a flower is a symbol of youth. Therefore, the expression ‘Ashenda flower’ clearly indicates that it is a festival of young girls. In the other hand, *አሸንዳ አደዋዬ* which has a literal meaning of “Ashenda my mother” describes the historical inheritance of Ashenda from generation to generation (mother to daughter).

In this lyric also as folksong number 3 we find indigenous expressions like *አደዋዬ* and *ዕምበባዬ*, in this case, are symbols of tradition and youth respectively.

Song No.6

ከይ መሸየኒ ፀጧዕኒ ለምዬ

አሸንዳዬ አሸንዳዬ

“Call me Ashenda in my young age before I get older”

This following has a similar theme in relation to young age and Ashenda girls.

Song No. 7

አሸንዳ ለይበለት ጋመ

እንታይ ንዕድመ

“A girl who has not participated in Ashenda will not live long.”

As per the discussion with the key informants, the *ጋመ* refers to a hair style Tigrayan girls who are not married usually make as a sign of virginity. Hence, in Tigray region one can identify girls by looking at their hair style. Looking at the half bare and half 'Kuno' style anyone can easily identify the unmarried girls from the married ones. Therefore, the lyric is sung to call out all girls to participate in Ashenda.

Song No.8

*መፀት መፀት*

*አሸንዳ ዕምበባ መፀት*

“Welcome Ashenda as colourful and as young as a flower “

This is said on the first day of the festival. As it is mentioned earlier *ዕምበባ* or flower is a symbol of young children in Tigray. In addition to this, the time when Ashenda is celebrated is start from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nehase E.C. and this is a time when the land is evergreen and covered with flowers like “Gilgele Meskel”. Therefore, it may mean that Ashenda is an occasion when the land is green and colourful covered with different kinds of flowers.

Ashenda is celebrated for three days in most parts of the Tigray region. The third day, i.e. the 18<sup>th</sup> of Nehase EC are the last day when Ashenda girls are to accompany Ashenda. They do this by singing as if there is a farewell party. They bid good-bye to Ashenda with their pleasant songs. The following are some of the songs:

Song No.8

*አደት ..... አደት*

*አሸንዳ ዕምበባ አደት*

“There it goes, sweet Ashenda is going.”

Song No.9

*አሸንዳ ክትከድ ኢላ ዓዳ*

*ሓዛላይ ብኸላዳ*

“Ashenda is about to leave, please hold it not to go”

Song No.10

*አቦይ ቀሼ ዳንዩና*

*ዕምበባ ከይዳ ዓዳ ሰኣን ዋና*

“Dear Abbot the priest, please intervene, Ashenda is going away.”

In all of the above songs of accompanying Ashenda the key informants pointed out that Ashenda is personified. They tell us as if Ashenda could go to her home; Ashenda has a neck /the word ብኸላዳ indicates this/; it needs a go-between like humans. This technique of attributing the human qualities to non human and inanimate objects is known as personification. This is usual in written literature. Therefore, from Ashenda folksongs we can see the base of the techniques of written literature is the folk literature. Moreover, the same thing as we discussed earlier concerning welcome to Ashenda, at the commencement of the celebration, there is also a farewell party at the concluding session. In this session they praise Ashenda more than ever in the celebration time. They feel as if they are accompanying either their closer friend or a member of their family. These songs vividly show how Ashenda has become an integral part in the life of Tigray girls.

### **3.5.2 Songs that Praise the Beauty of Ashenda Girls**

Song No.11

*አወላደ - ስኒ ፀባ*

*ምስላ - ዕምበባ*

“Ashenda girls, your teeth as white as milk, makeup yourself until you look like a flower”.

This is simply said at about the evening when the girls are back to their village after praising people and families all around in their surrounding. It is not another person who praises them, but they sing the songs that praise themselves and the whole day performing on their own. Another thing that needs to be considered is that the first phrase of the second line in the lyric which says ኣብ'ቲ ማዕድ ጎቦ describes the wide spread place the girls cover while praising people. Moreover, the second phrase in the same line which says ሰብ ዘይኸዶ means that no one is permitted to perform the task of celebrating the festival except to the girls. That is, the the celebration belongs only to these girls.

The second line as a whole is ገረብ ማዕድ ሰብ ዘይኸዶ which means the same as ኣብ'ቲ ማዕድ ሰብ ዘይኸዶ. This practice of using different expressions to mean the same shows the volatility of Ashenda oral literature and its repetitive nature.

Song No.14

ቀልዑ ኣሸንዳ ከመይ ዝበላ'ዩን  
 ከም ሻምብቆ ለይለይ ዝበላ'ዩን  
 ቀልዑ ኣሸንዳ ከይ ዝበላ'ዩን  
 ከምሻምብቆ ዝረበባ እዩን።

“What do Ashenda girls look like? They are as tall as bamboo trees; they make as perfect queue as bamboo trees.”

In this verse the key informants felt that the center of the theme is the word ሻምብቆ which mean bamboo tree. Bamboo trees are tall. As a result they are symbols of tall men and women. In the above lyric in the second line the word ሻምብቆ is put as a collocation of the adverb ለይለይ to show that Ashenda girls are tall/ as tall as bamboo trees/. In the fourth line of the lyric also we find the word being a collocation of the adverb ዝረበባ which mean they make a perfect queue. This perfect queue is a symbol of attractiveness and similarity in height in the Tigrinya culture. Nevertheless, it is even sung by a

collection of short girls. It is simply sung to praise the Ashenda girls in spite of their height. Moreover, the “perfect queue” in has an exaggeration/ hyperbole because the queue which the Ashenda girls make is not a perfect queue. They use the word **ዝረብባ** /perfect queue/ to show the attractive grouping they create while moving from place to place.

Song No.15

**አሸንዳ ስዩ**

**አይጓል እንድዩ**

**ክጫወት'ዩ**

"I have to play Ashenda wearing Ashenda Siye around my waist"

Ashenda Siye in this verse refers to the grass that the girls wear round their waist. This is a material culture they use while celebrating the festival. The name of the festival Ashenda is derived from this plant. The second line **አይጓል እንድዩ** means “I am virgin” and the last phrase says **ክጫወት'ዩ** “I will celebrate Ashenda,” in this verse the interrelationship between the plant Ashenda, virginity and the festival Ashenda is clearly seen. The main message conveyed through this lyric is that someone who celebrated Ashenda and put Ashenda plant round her waist should be a girl, who is a virgin. Therefore the norm of celebrating Ashenda does not permit to participate in this special event the deflowered ones or the ladies who got married or those who gave birth to a child or children.

Song No.16

**አውላዶ-ከምሪላን ማዕዶ**

**አኸመሚኸን ዶ**

"Girls, You are as pleasant as 'Rihan'"

As to the key informants, Ashenda is known as an event when girls are chosen for marriage. Most of the young males choose a fiancée on this special occasion and send go-betweens to arrange marriage either for “tiri” or Easter ‘Fasika’, the specially chosen times of marriage in Tigray. Taking this experience into account the Ashenda girls sing the above lyrics which literary mean “I don’t want to be married this year”. This verse has a message behind it. If an Ashenda girl got married this year she won’t participate in the next Ashenda. Therefore, they sing this song to show that they are eager to participate again in Ashenda the next year.

Unfortunately, if a girl is chosen for a marriage during a specific Ashenda year and got married in the following months of ‘Tiri’ or ‘Miaziay’ she cannot celebrate the next Ashenda with her friends. However, if she got married this year, in the next Ashenda, the last Ashenda group members come to her home and sing the following song:

Song No.21

ኩሒላ - እገለ ኩሒላ  
ዓሚ'ለዬ - ምሳና ውዲላ  
ሎሚ'ለዬ - ዓዳ ውዲላ

"Last Ashenda you were with us however today not"

The girls sing the above song to their last year's Ashenda member. The above lyric according to the key informants, means that the one whom the girls come to praise for having to celebrated the last Ashenda and now stay at home for the present Ashenda because their culture does not permit young married women to participate in this celebration. I use “young married women” here because in this research survey it was found that old women are allowed to participate in Ashenda in order to impart their experience to the young generation.

After singing the above song the girls let their last group member to dance in the compound singing the following song.

Song No.22

ኣብ'ዚኣ እንከለ'ኹ ምነውያ

እንድሕር ኬድኪ'ማ ሓዳር'ያ

“Enjoy Ashenda being in your compound for you are not allowed to go out of your gate.”

This as the key informants report is the duty of females to respect their husbands and vice versa. The Ethiopian culture as a whole and the Tigirian culture specifically also forbid all married woman to be free as those who are not married. Such freedom is considered as promiscuousness. Going out of her compound for Ashenda on the part of a married woman according to the findings of this research is believed to be indicative of her detestation for her husband and this results in divorce of the couple.

### **3.5.3 Songs that Praise People and Family**

Ashenda girls move from home to home and here and there around the city. They praise people in order to get money or other gifts. The best sight here is when they intercept men passing by. They sing for the passers-by or housewives admiring them with pleasing words and put pressure on them to give them either money or other gifts like local liquor.

When Ashenda girls ask for money or other things, admiring a person on the street or a family in their house, the response varies depending on the nature of the target people or family. Those who refuse to give them anything are insulted and publicly harassed. When these girls humiliate men or households it is a norm that the insulted party should not speak back and do any harm to these girls. The proverb ቆልዓ አሸንዳ ዳይና የብለን “there is no judge to Ashenda girl” clearly illustrates this. One of the findings in this research

survey was that there has never been any Ashenda girl who went to prison or accused of the insults, after others refusal to give her money or gifts.

Here follows the folksongs they sing to praise people and families:

Song No.23

ሐዛለይ ሐዛለይ

ከይት ሰዳለይ

“Please, hold him, don't let him go”.

This according to the key informants is sung when they hold a passer-by to let him give attention to their songs of praise. Then this is followed by songs that admire the man/ boy. Some of the songs are given below:

Song No.24

መኸምቢያ ላዛይ

ኣብ'ዙይ እኒኦ ጎይታ

“Here is a lord, who is full of sweet words”

This is an expression they use to describe the man's good behavior.

Song No.25

አያይ ስጋኻ ስጋኻይ

ክፅቦ ውዲላ ንግኻ

“I swear to you Sir, I have been waiting for you the whole day.”

This is also another way of flattering the target person. There is also a similar way of saying this:

Song No.26

ጎይታኒ ኣብ'ዙይ ዶ ኣለኻ ኢኻ  
ገረብ ገረብ ክፅበ ንግኻ

“Oh Sir, are you here? I have been looking for you in the forests”.

Song No.27

ወርቁ ሰዓቱ - ወርቁ ሰዓቱ  
ስዩ ቕመቱ

“His watch is gold, and he is gracefully tall.”

In this verse the key informants explain that the phrase **ወርቁ ሰዓቱ** is a metaphoric way of describing that the targeted person is rich and wears a watch made of gold. Though none of the target people may have a watch made of gold, the girls use this to flatter the men to give money generously. The other phrase in the second line, which says **ስዩ ቕመቱ**, to mean "gracefully tall" is also another way of flattering the donor.

Song No.28

ባኖ ኸዳኑ ወርቁ ሰዓቱ  
ኣያዋይ ስዩ ቕመቱ

“Sir always wears a suit and a watch made of gold.

He is as tall as a palm trees”

The above verse also has similar meaning as the verse discussed above which says **ወርቁ ሰዓቱ ስዩ ቕመቱ**. The only different phrase added in this verse is **ባኖ ኸዳኑ** means “always wears suit”. This may be interpreted as the man is wealthy. Therefore, the objective of the girls here is to get much money as possible. They say this to flatter the passers by in these ways. Look at another song:

Song No.29

አብ ዙይ እነሆ ገዴታ

በዓል-ድርብ-ዋልታ

“Here is a warrior lord with a double shield”

The key informants explain that the main theme in this song is heroism. In this lyric the word ገዴታ which means “my lord” shows respect. In most of the Ashenda songs, the girls' politeness is revealed. It is a polite expression used only for males. The second line that says በዓል ድርብ ዋልታ can be interpreted as heroism. During the ancient time when modern weapons weren't invented, Ethiopians were using a shield and a spear to fight against their enemies.

Therefore, the girls praise the passers-by praising them as heroes. Moreover, it was found that Ashenda folksongs to be the best way of approaching people. They are composed of special ways of expressions.

Song No.30

ንሱ በሊፁ - ንሱ በሊፁ

ፀሐይ'ዩ ገፁ -ወርቁ መወፁ

“He is the best, who has a bright face as the sun and a shining teeth made of gold”

In this song the local documents come up with interesting interpretations ፀሐይ'ዩ ገፁ which mean “his face is like the sun” is a metaphoric expression that represents a bright face and this is used in the Tigrigna sayings to refer to someone who is always happy. It can also be a good description of someone who has a good approach for people. The second phrase in the second line ወርቁ መወፁ which is to mean “who has a golden teeth brush” is interpreted as a wealthy person. Therefore, the Ashenda girls use this to mean that the passers-by are rich. However, this is not only sung to the rich ones, it is sung to whoever they want to praise and get money from them. Therefore, through this folksong



anyone could understand the Ashenda like the other folkloric practices has folksongs which function as an effective means to describe the economic situations of the Tigray people

Song No. 31

አንታ ወዲ-ፀሐይ ገፁ

አንበሳ'ዩ ድምፁ ይብላኝ አለዋዩ

“You have as bright face as sun and hoarse voice as a lion’

This oral poem tells as about the qualities of the target person. This is sung by the Ashenda girls for praising the passers-by and getting an award, most probably money from him. When we go deep into the lines we find the phrase **ፀሐይ ገፁ** in the first line. This, phrase according to the discussion the researcher had with the key informants, refers to the people who have a bright face. It also refers to people who have a good nature of treating others. The key informants also gave the same interpretation of the first phrase of the second line which says **አንበሳ'ዩ ድምፁ**. This phrase, as per our discussion is interpreted as describing the attractive external personality the donor has. Actually looking at the phrase ‘a hoarse voice’ one can feel that this refers to a negative quality of the man’s voice, but the key informants' interpretation is the one mentioned above, perhaps, the last phrase in the second line as ' a lion' imbues the negative expression to "hoarse voice" with a positive meaning.

Oral literature as stated by Daniel Teklu (2000 E.C: 13-16) focuses on socio-economical aspects of a specific society. Therefore, the above phrases seem to contribute to day-to-day interaction among the members of a certain society. They are the best ways of approaching people. Consequently, using these expressions in modern literature as well as in the day-to-day interaction may have a noticeable significance in the development of the Tigrigna language.

Song No.32

ጉይታይ ብሀፃነት

ዲኖ ነብሪ (አንበሳ) ኸዳኑ

“Oh my lord, in his younger ages,

He was wearing a quary made of a leopard's or lion skin”

The general idea of this oral poetry is praising people. This is done by mentioning the most dangerous wild animals like a lion and a leopard. In the second line of the lyrics this is clearly stated through the phrase ዲኖ ነብሪ (አንበሳ) ኸዳኑ. This literally means “he was wearing a quary made of a leopard or a lion skin.” In our discussion with the key informants a controversial view emerged with regard to the quary made of a leopard /lion skin. Some of the informants interpreted this as a symbol of a social status, the donor or his family has in the society. They argued that the source of wearing a quary made of a lion or a leopard skin lies in the period of feudalism. During the feudalistic period there were two extreme social positions, the landlords and peasants. The landlords of that time were wearing the quary. When we say this it does not necessarily mean that all were wearing a quary made of a lion or leopard skin, but all were wearing a quary irrespective of the material it is made of. The key informants explained that wearing a quary made of a lion or leopard skin and a quary made of silk show difference in the economic and social status among those who wore the quary. Therefore, wearing a quary as a whole, and a quary made of a leopard or a lion skin in specific are both symbolic of richness.

Besides, most of the key informants including the researcher also agreed that the quary made of a lion or tiger skin is a symbol of heroism also. These informants focused focus on the source of the skin. Consequently, they said in order to get the skin people need to hunt either the leopard or the lion. Hunting these dangerous animals needs bravery and heroism.. Therefore, the girls use this description to magnify and to flatter the heroic nature of the passers-by.

Here, the second argument seems to be convincing being a good gambit for flattering an ordinary man as a hero. There is also an exaggeration in the expression which the

Ashenda girls use for an aesthetic effect. In our discussion, it was also found that in some places the girls refer to a lion and in other places they refer to a leopard. This is good example of the volatile nature of oral literature as as pointed out in the chapter on review of literature.

The above discussed poems No 23to 32are oral poems the Ashenda girls use to praise the passers-by.

In addition to the passers-by the Ashenda girls also praise a family while moving home to home. In this case they praise the husband, the wife or the family as a whole. Here follow some of these folksongs they sing moving from home to home.

The task of praising a family commences by announcing that the Ashenda girls have come to the donors' home. This is done by singing the following lyrics when they reach the target home.

Song No.33

አጋፋሪ ጎይታይ አጋፋሪ

ክፈተላይ በሪ

“Dear usher open your door, we are at your gate.”

According to the mass media documents, the researcher consulted for this research paper, the word አጋፋሪ which means usher refers to the owner of the targeted house. In this case it may be specified that this is an address to a male owner of the house. This is because calling a specific family by the name or the title of the husband (usher) is strictly advisable as to the dominant culture in the study area as stated in the documents. Here we can see that there is a male dominance in the culture. The information from these documents also adds that the Ashenda girls do not praise women on the streets for they believe that “women should stay at home.”,as the patriarchal culture of their society.

When Ashenda girls sing the above lyrics targeting a specific house, immediately after one or more of the members of the family heard the song, the door will be opened and the girls start singing songs that praise the focal family. The following are some of the lyrics they use to praise their prospective donors, in this context

Song No.34

አይ ጉይታይ ፀሐይ/አዲ እምበይታይ ፀሐይ

መጻኤ አለኝ ካብ መብጻዩ

“Madam/Sir, is similar to the sun,

I have come to fulfill my promise.”

The girls say this after the targeted house is opened and they are able to enter the compound. The general idea of the lyrics is praising people in order to be awarded, either money or other gifts like liquor, ‘*difo*’, ‘*siwa*’ etc. According to the key informants and the documents, the word መብጻ means a ‘religious promise’ which implies that the festival is celebrated continually /year to year as part of their religious faith. Hence, the people of Tigray in general and the Orthodox Tigrians in particular have a tradition of promising for the next celebration. This is also reflected in the other gatherings like ‘*edir*’. The field survey of this research revealed that the owner of the target house is expected to dance and award the girls as per his /her last promise and again promise to give something for the next Ashenda. This contributes greatly to the continuation of the festival which is religious and therefore holy in nature.

Thus, the sense of promising to award the Ashenda girls has its own role in transmitting the tradition of Ashenda to the next generation. As it is stated in the review of literature, oral literature is characterized by performance. This is found to be a reality in the case of Ashenda. Both the Ashenda girls and the members of the target house accompany the folksongs by dancing. It is also evidence to the fact that oral literature is a public property. Not only girls but also the society encourage the oral tradition to survive for ever through promising the girls to award again in the next Ashenda event.

The above song is one of the songs the Ashenda girls sing when they are praising a specific family. They sing many songs on this occasion. Here are some of the folksongs they sing to praise the family.

Song No.35

እዞም ዓዲ አምበሳ ዶ አለዎምዬ  
ሕዝም በለ ኣብ ድሕሪ ገዝአምዬ

“In this house, do they have a lion?

It goes roaring from their backyard”

They say this to flatter the courage of the family as if they had a lion to guard over their house. A lion is a symbol of bravery, singing like this touches the hearts of the inmates of the house hold, particularly the head of the family.

“Oral literature reflects the socio-economic situations of a specific society” (Daniel Teklu 2000 E.C. 14). This is clearly shown in the above lyrics. In the social context of Tigray a lion is a symbol of bravery. This can also be a good example of that oral literature is full of figurative language.

Song No.36

እሶምስ ለምለም ዮም አኸዛዬ  
ፈትፊቶም ዘብል ዑኻ ከም ብዋዛ

“Sir, is so kind that he feeds, you in a great manner.”

This lyric, as per the discussion with the key informants, explicitly describes the generosity of the specific family. In this case feeding others, according to the Tigray culture, is interpreted as the nature of generous people. Through this lyric we can understand that oral literature is a reflection of the actual cultural norms of the society. The culture of the people of Tigray encourages helping others and forbids them to be



greedy. This culture is practically reflected in the above oral poetry. Therefore, this can be a good example of those Ashenda folksongs that reflect the actual culture of the Tigrians.

Song No.38

ክንወድሰን ክንወዳድሰን

አበይ አለዎ ንሰን

“Where is madam,

We want to praise her again and again.”

It has been stated above that the main objective of Ashenda songs is to praise the likely donors. Hence, the above lyric calls upon the madam of the house to be available so that she will hear their songs admirations.

#### **3.4.4 Songs of Thanks and Insults**

In our discussion so far, we have seen that Ashenda girls praise the passers by and people who are in their houses. According to the discussion the researcher had with the key informants and as per the focal documents of this research work, the response the girls got after praising the people can be either getting money or going back the way they came with empty hands. If they are awarded they thanks and go to other people or individuals to praise them by singing the folksongs. Otherwise, they insult the people individuals. Here follows the description of the folksongs they sing when they want to thank. For example, immediately after they are awarded they say:

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Song No.38

ክንወድሰን ክንወዳድሰን

አበይ አለዋ ንሰን

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Song No.39

**ፈሰስ ከምግይ ነሐስ**

“Money has rained like the rain in Nehase”

This is the most popular and common way of thanking. The findings of this research have shown that no matter how much money they get, it is common to appreciate the donor in the same way. They would also use the praise already cited above:

Song No. 40

**እስምስ ለምለም” ዮም ኣኸዛዩ.**

**ፈትፊቶም ዘብልዑኻ ከም ብዋዛ**

Sir, is so kind that he feed with great manner.

“Nehase” is a month known in Tigray for its heavy rain. Hence, the phrase **ግይ ነሐስ** “Nehase’s rain” in the above thanking lyric stands for the contentment from the award which the target people give to the girls. This is said to all kinds of people who give any kind of award to the girls no matter how much they give. In this case the girls do not show any partiality. More than the money, what counts is the good gesture. The research also found that **ፈትፊቶም ዮብልዑኻ ከምብዋዛ** which means “who feed in with a great manner” has also the same purpose of thanking people. This expression is directly associated with religion. The Ethiopian Orthodox religion, as stated by the key informants, exhorts its followers to help each other, especially to help those who are disabled; therefore, the above stated expressions encourage the virtue of generosity in the target people. Moreover, it has found in our research survey that the people in the study area use the above expressions in their day-to-day communication also.

Okpewho (1992) argues that people use oral literature to express their outlooks about the world. This is true of the above Ashenda lyrics. In the above lyrics we can clearly see that the people in the study area encourage generosity and helping others. This is also possible

to inherit the next generation through oral literature. Ashenda folksongs may be characterized as the best means for such a transmission of noble values from generation to generation through word of mouth.

As stated above, there is another side of the same coin. If the girls of Ashenda are given nothing by the target people they start insulting them with the following songs:

Song No. 41

አታዬ ገደኛዬ

ጓልዶ አለዋ ዳኛ

“You stubborn, do you think a girl has a judge?”

Song No. 42

አይፈልጠካንድዬ ወዳ ዓደይ እንዲኻ

ብለኸታ ጊሔ ክትልምን ዝሓገኻ

“I know you, we are from the same village, and you spent the whole winter begging for food”

Song No. 43

እንጣፅ ቡኸላ ማይ ሳውአዬ

አደንጉር ባሕሪ መጠቆኑዬ

“She is not so good in womanly house works”

The general idea of the above poems is to insult people who do not give either money or other gifts to the Ashenda girls. This, as per the discussion with the key informants is a norm or a culture. As a result, no one becomes furious of being insulted by the girls. The phrase **ጓል ዶ አለዋ ዳኛ** “do you think a girl has a judge?” clearly shows that the girls are free to insult in this event of freedom for them. Though a sense of equality flourishing

in Tigray, especially after the dominance of the Tigray People Revolution Front, we couldn't conclude that females are equal to males. They have been inferior for many centuries. However, in the time of Ashenda what the girls do freely shows that this is the best time when they are free even to insult others.

All the key informants provided the same interpretation to the oral poem እንግጥዕ ቡቕላ ማይ ሳውዳዩ አደንጉር ባሕሪ መጠቆላዬ. They have given a common interpretation that this insult finds fault in the skill of the target women in her household work. Tigrian women are well known by their traditional liquor known as “siwa”. However, linseed has never ever been used for the preparation of “siwa”. They usually use barely for the fermentation purpose while preparing “siwa”. Hence, the above insult to the woman who hasn't given any award to the Ashenda girls : she is not skilled in the house, the woman cannot prepare even siwa which is a skill common to all Tigrian women. This insult, therefore, is the worst of its kind.

As we tried to discuss in the review of literature folksong is mainly realized through performance in specific contexts, with more emphasis face-to-face communication and interaction between the singer and the audience. When we apply this to the case of Ashenda we can see a face-to-face communication between the folk group or the Ashenda girls and the target people. The dance of the Ashenda girls is also a good example regarding this point. In the communication between these parts any one can see responses from both parts. The target people respond by giving or forbidden awards the Ashenda girls by praising or insulting. Therefore, Ashenda folksongs like the other folksongs that are investigated are realized through face-to-face communication and performance in specific context of Ashenda. More over, it holds an active interaction between the Ashenda group and target people.

Song No. 43

አያዋይ - ሰላላ ቼመት

ኩሕል ውዲላቶ - ኪዳነ ምህረት

“My Lord, you are gracefully tall Saint Marry has taken long-time to create you.”

This verse depicts the attractive appearance of the man, praises the target man as handsome. In the Ethiopian culture specifically as it is believed by the followers of the orthodox religion a task of taking care of women and the feats belongs to Saint Mary. The beauty of the new born babies is also believed to be decided by St. Mary. This can be witnessed when old men and women bless woman who gave birth to a new baby. They bless saying እንኳል ማርያም አውዓትኪ. to mean “Thanks to St. Mary for letting you gave birth with no problem”. Some Tigrigna sayings like ማርያም ኢዳ ተሐዳባ ዝሰኣለቶ to mean literary Saint Mary creates him being washed here hands describes that the baby is handsome. The second line of the above stated verse ኩሕል ውዲላቶ - ኪዳነ ምህረት also describes that Saint Mary make the target man handsome.

This lyric is sung to all kinds of males in spite of that whether they are handsome or not. In this case the target is getting money by praising and flattering.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The main focus of this thesis is the folkloric essence of certain ‘female’ festival in Tigray, namely “Ashenda”. In the analysis an attempt was made to find out the detailed description of Ashenda from the perspectives of folk custom, material culture folk arts and oral literatures.

Ashenda is unique religious festival of the followers of orthodox Christianity in Tigray. This festival is celebrated by Tigrian girls. However, in addition to girls, women in general also celebrate the festival is celebrate the festival colorfully. Similar to the other festivals throughout the world the four elements of folklore (folk custom, material culture, folk arts an oral literature) are found in this festival.

Ashenda is celebrated by different groups of girls. As a result, it comprises high interaction among the groups the groups of Asheda among individuals with in the same group and with the target people. Hence, every member of the society is part of the interaction through the common folk customs established among the Tigrian people.

Ashenda is rich in oral literature. The festival is found to be an occasion when the people of Tigray sing folksiong, dance their own traditional dances like “Awris” and “Guayla” and use a traditional musical instrument known as “Kebero” which is a drum in this case, Ashenda dance involves all parts of the performers’ bodies in an active movements. Through the Ashenda dances the girls show different performances including carrying of a little girl on the shoulder by the strongest member which looks like modern acrobatics.

Ashenda is a festival in which the participants use different items of material culture. The ornaments Ashenda girls use to beautify themselves in a unique way are

part of the material culture. They style their hair in a specific Moreover, they decorate their eyes with a traditional eye shadow (Kuhli), and their necks are also rounded up with different handicraft necklaces. Furthermore, they use “Kebero” as a musical instrument as part of the material culture .As a result, the festival is found to be a source of inspiration for innovation in different handicrafts and best occasion for marketing their products for the artisans and professional craftsmen.

The folksongs of Ashenda as demonstrated in this research study revolve around certain themes. The main objective of the girls who play Ashenda is praise and main the mast of their praise through the Asheda folksongs are wealth, beauty, attractive physical appearance, bravery and societal virtues like generosity. Through the folksongs they praise Ashenda, themselves (i.e. Ashenda girls) other people and families.

Along with folksongs of parsing this research survey has also identified folksongs that hurl insults at miserly people and cause public harassment. The Ashenda girls sing folksongs that praise people in general and individuals in order to be awarded. However if they haven’t got any award they sing folksongs that are insulting and they can not be blamed for this as to the religion-cultural norm of Ashenda.

Unlike the other occasions in the Tigrian female are free in this special occasion. This is also found in the research to be an opportunity for the females to develop their own confidence that enables them to be free out of the chains of patriarchy. The final day of Ashenda is also known for its fighting among the different groups of Ashenda. This is also done through aesthetic expressions of the Ashenda songs. Therefore, Ashenda folksongs are full of figurative language and literariness. Consequently, they are found to be spices in the day to day communication and the modern literary works of Tigrigna. As far as the features of oral literature are concerned in Ashenda folksongs volatility and repetition are found to be dominant literary characteristics.

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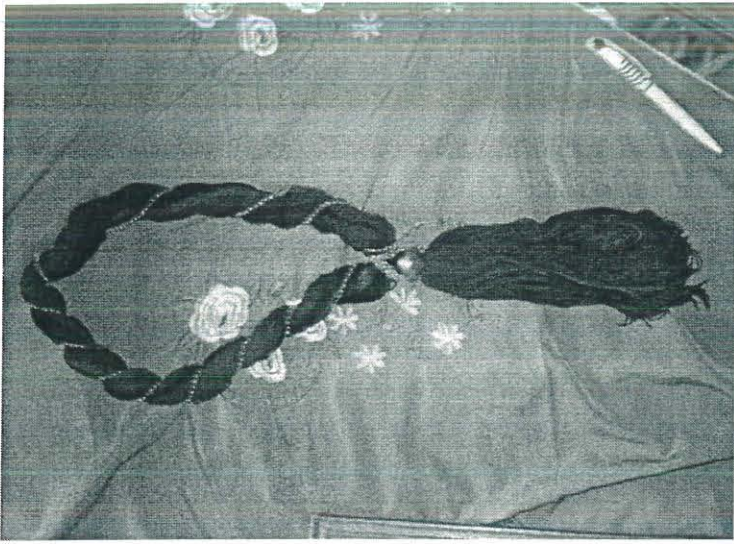
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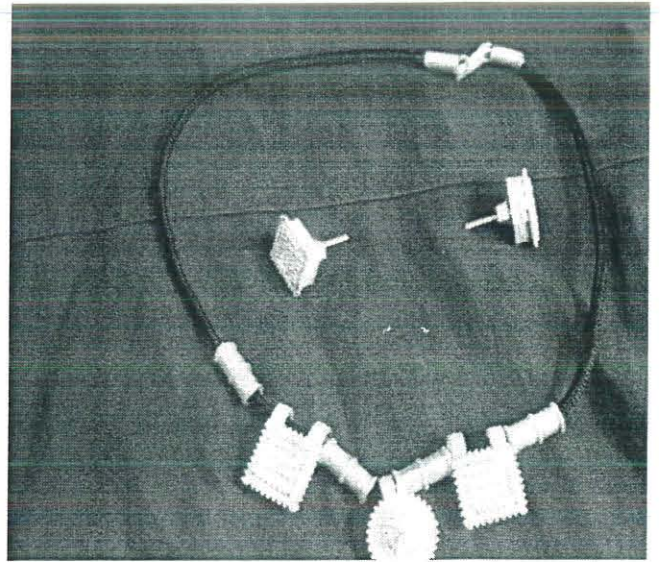
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# Appendix



Picture No 1: Traditional Necklace "Dirry"



Picture No 2: "Biri Kitab"



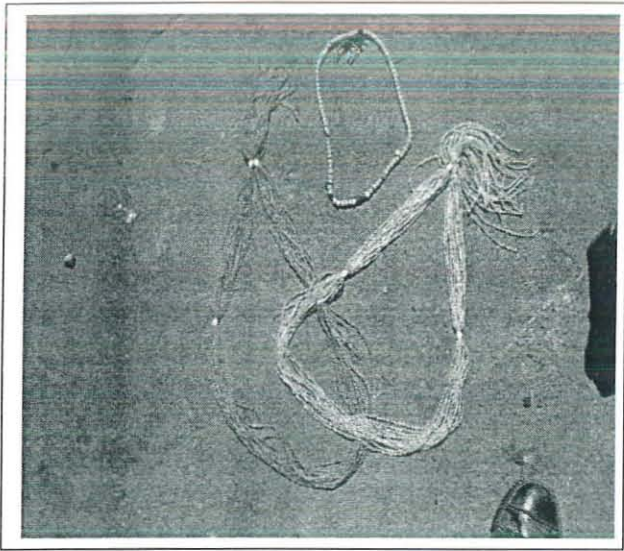
Picture No 3A : Ashenda Traditional dress



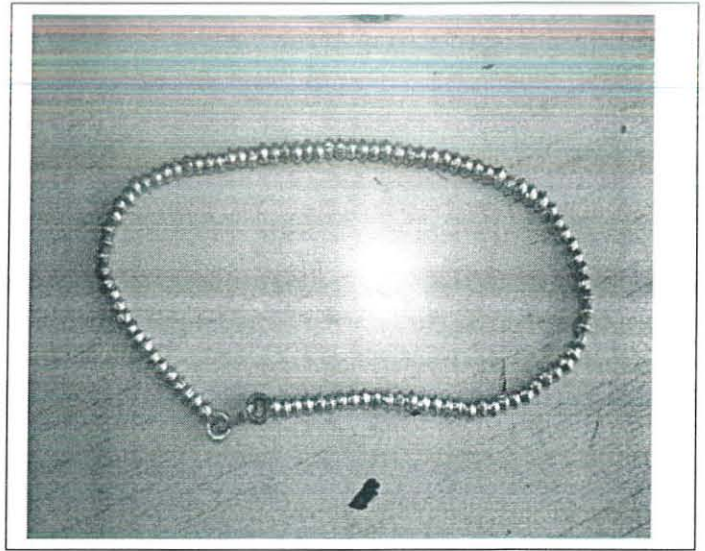
Picture No 3 B: earrings "Kutisha"



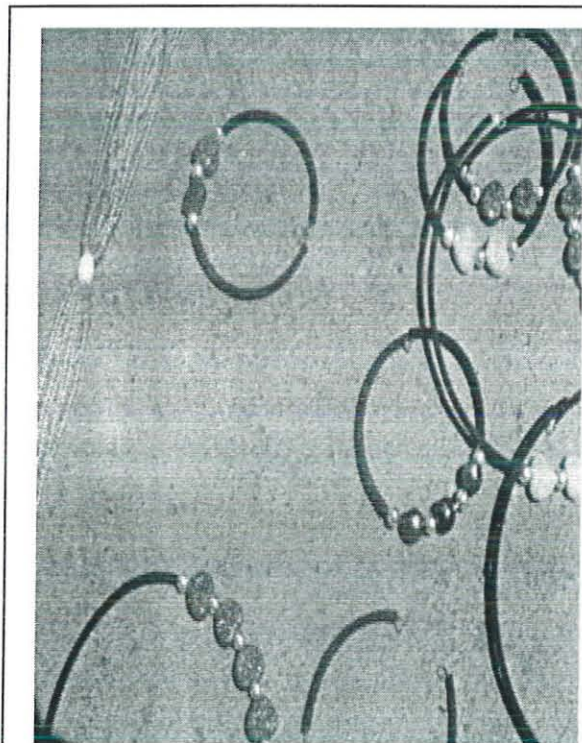
Picture No 3 C: Kelbe



Picture No 4: "Sindid"



Picture No 5: "Albo"



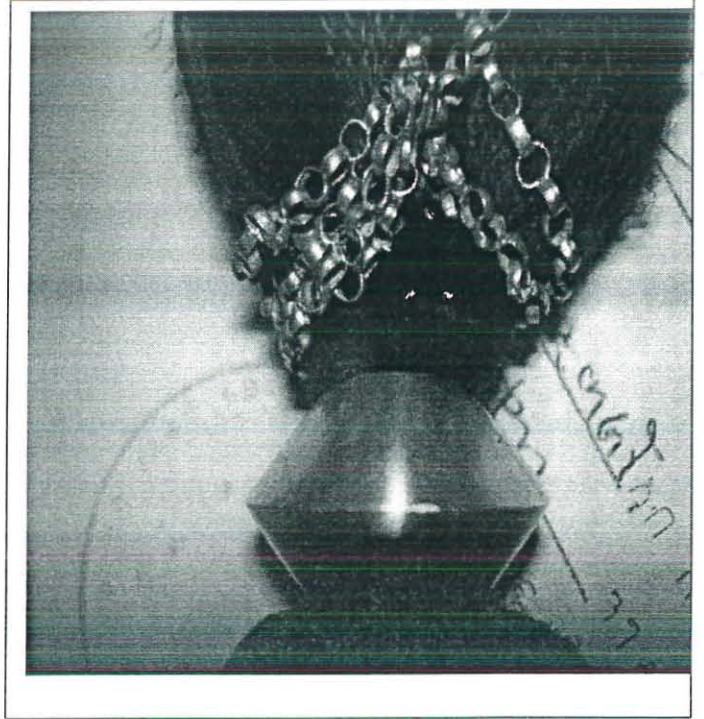
Picture No 6: Necklaces and bracelets



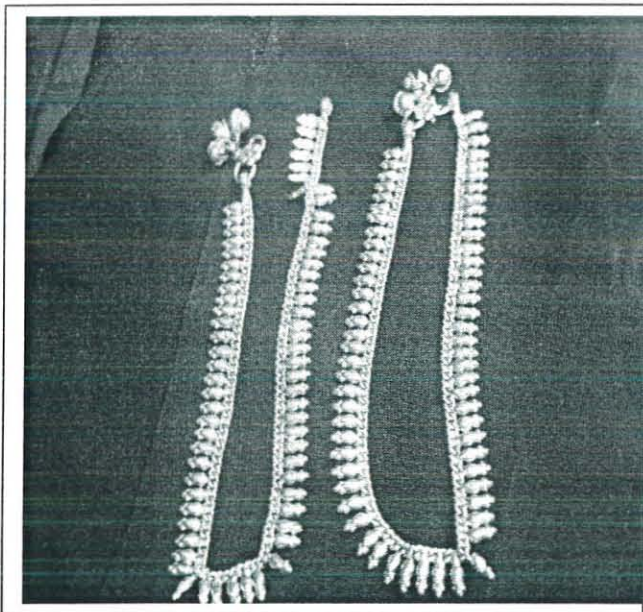
Picture No 7: The youngest Ashenda girl being carried by the oldest member of the group



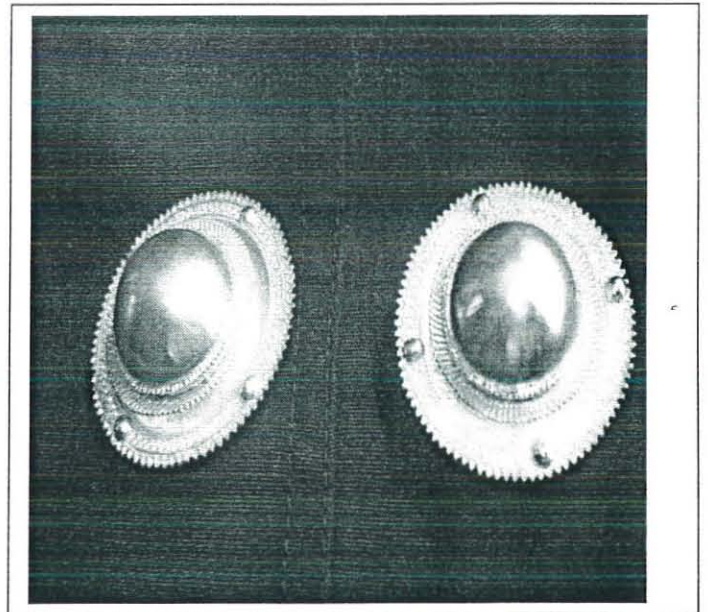
Picture No 8: Ashenda Girl



Picture No 9: "Dirry"



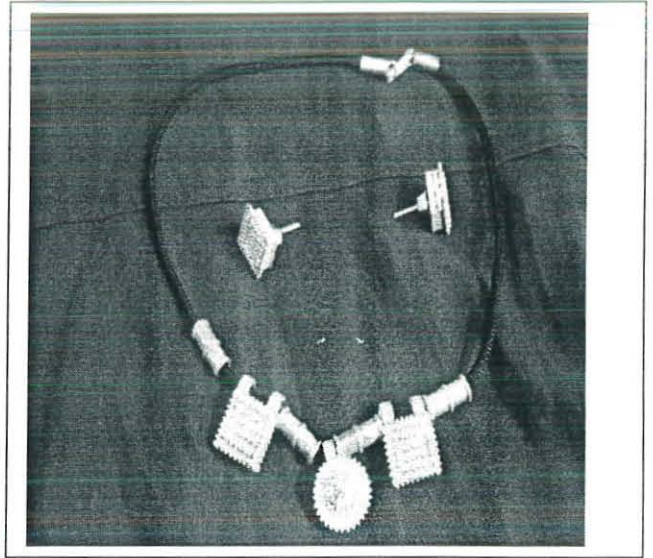
Picture No 10: "Albo"



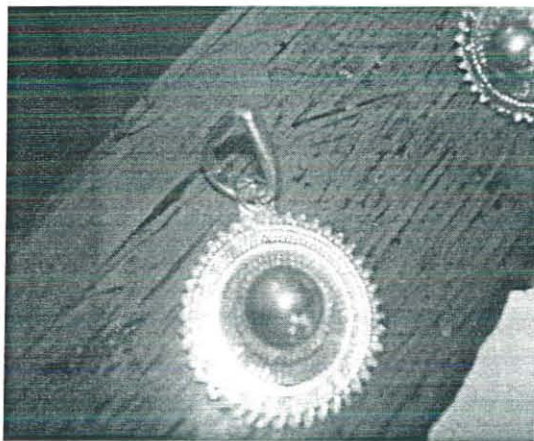
Picture No 11: "Pic No 3 - B earring"



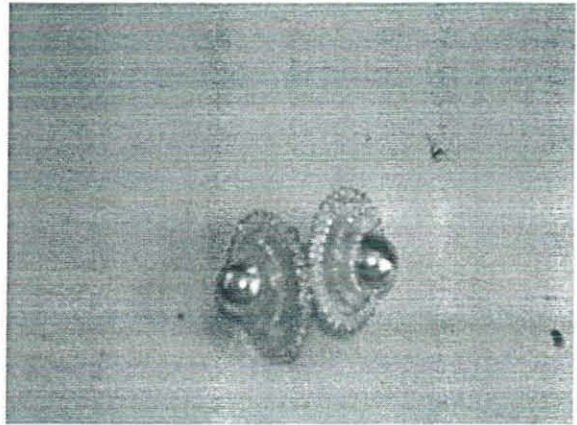
Picture No 12: Traditional Raya dress "Bufe"



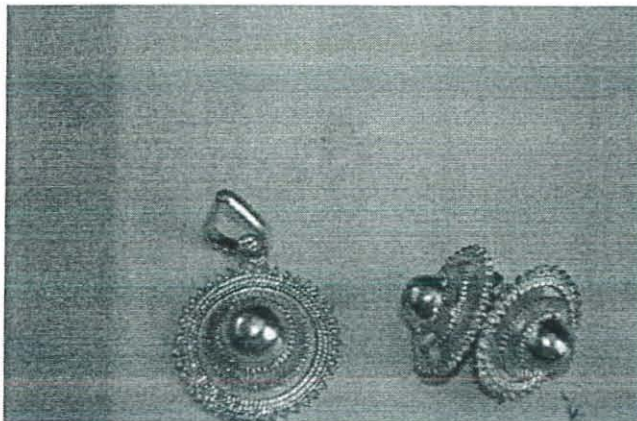
Picture No 13A: Traditional Earring



Picture No 13B: Traditional Earring



Picture No 13C: Traditional Earring



Picture No 13D: Traditional Earring



Map No 1 *The Tigray Region of Ethiopia*


## Appendix

### List of Informants

1. Likelikawnti Yared Kasa interviewed from March 1-13/2009 Mekelle
2. W/Ro Bahru Mehamed interviewed from March 13-15 Abbiy Addi
3. Berhane Adisalem interviewed on April 18,2009 Hawzien
4. W/Ro Alganesh Tadese interviewed from March 26-30 Akum
5. Ato Kidane Shambel interviewed from March 23-26 Adigrat
6. Abreha Tadese interviewed from March 1-15 Mekele
7. Mihira Hailu interviewed from March 1-13 Mekelle.
8. Abeba Gessessow interviewed from March 18-22 Samre
9. W/Ro Twress G.Wahid interviewed from March 13-15
10. W/Ro Genet Mitiku interviewed from March 13-15 Hagere Selam
11. W/Ro Tiblets Abrha interviewed from March 26-30 Aksum
12. W/Ro Meaza Debretsiion interviewed from March 26-30 Shire.

## Declaration

The under signed, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Tifunabo Guelarise  
Signature:   
Date of Submission: 29/06/09