



Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Department of Social Anthropology

The Cultural Significance of Irreechaa at Malkaa Ateetee

By: Tiruneh Rebuma

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Anthropology

Advisor: Taddesse Berisso (PHD)

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Acronyms

BTFEDO – Burayyu Town Finance and Economic Development Office

EC – Ethiopian Calendar

G.C – Gregorian calendar

MASL – Meter above Sea Level

OCC – Oromo Cultural Center

OCTB – Oromiya Culture and Tourism Bureau

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of our early Oromo mothers and fathers who created this big knowledge and used it, and those who sacrificed their soul to keep alive this indigenous culture and transferred it to the new generation.

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Note on the Translation System Used

1. Long sounds are represented with single double vowels: For example, /ee/ irreecha
2. Short sounds are represented with single vowels: For example, /a/ fala
3. Germination is represented with double consonants: For example, Irreecha
4. Alveolar implosive sounds are represented with 'dh' : for example, Haaddha
5. Palatal, voiceless, ejective sounds are represented with 'd', For example dhadhaa

Glossary of Oromo Terms

These are terms that appear frequently in the study. Though the equivalent word(s) in English give an idea of what each word means, they are all culture and context specific.

Aadaa: culture

Aadde: Mrs

Annaan: milk

Arfaasaa: spring season

Araaraa: reconciliation

Ateetee: Oromo women's dispute resolution process; women's political and religious organization; female deity

Ateetee Falaa: *ateetee* prayers

Ayyaana: spirit, spiritual essence

Ayyaantuu: spiritual person

Aayyoo: mother

Bokkuu : scepter made up of olive branches

Buqurii: unfermented drink

Callee: beads and necklaces worn for ceremonies and prayers

Dhugaa: truth, justice; absolute form of knowledge

Dhadhaa: butter

Eebba : blessing

Faaruu: (praise) song

Farsoo: local/traditional bear

Gadaa: Oromo indigenous generation-based socio-political organization

Gaachana: shield

Haadha: mother; leader (e.g. Haadha Saddeetta)

Haroo: lake

Hayyuu: Expert or intellectual person

Hororoo: cultural stick held by Gadaa members

Jaarsaa: elder men; elder men who assist and judge in dispute resolution processes

Kabaja: respect

Malkaa: river

Maaram; saint Merry

Marga: blessed grass used in *ateetee* ceremonies and *irreechaa* ritual

Safuu: Oromoo moral and ethical codes not to be broken

Siiqqee: women's spiritual stick given to a woman on her wedding day; a women's spiritual and
Political institution (*siiqqee* institution)

Tulluu: Mountain

Ulfoo: honor

Uumaa: creator, creation

Uumama: nature

Utubaa: pillar of the cottage

Waaddeessa: stick given to a man on his wedding day

Waaqa: God, higher being

Waaqeffannaa: Oromo indigenous religion; worshipers of *Waaqa*

Waaqeffataa: adherents of *Waaqeffannaa*

Abstract

The main aim of this thesis is to study the socio-cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual among the Oromo and to make a particular investigation on *Malkaa Ateetee* ritual ceremony. The study was undertaken by descriptively analyzing socio-cultural values among the Oromo of Finfinnee Surrounding Oromia special zone of Burayyuu Town and Surrounding.

The study identified that there are gaps in the level of understanding the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual among the Oromo society and other ethnic groups.

A qualitative methodological approach is employed in eliciting information from different sources. In eliciting the necessary data, the study basically relied on primary sources comprising of officials and functionaries of the local administrations, community elders, women, youths, and participants in focus group discussions. With regard to collecting the primary data, interview: semi-structured interview, observation and focus group discussion were used.

The secondary data was reinforced by conducting detailed review and analysis of literatures that also helped in formulating the theoretical frame work. According to the analyses and findings of this study, the *irreechaa* ritual is celebrated colorfully every year at the beginning of *birraa* (spring), new season after the dark and rainy summer season at *Malkaa Ateetee*, Buraayyuu in which most Oromo participate.

The study reveals that, purposely *Ateetee* and *Irreechaa* have interconnected and relationship in the Oromo of the study area. It has promoted and enhanced understanding and unity among the Oromo. It has helped to build their common values and shared visions, and consolidated peace (*Nageenya Oromo*), tolerance and resilience as cultural contribution of the ritual and also there is a shortage of space where the festival takes place at the study area. Thus, a researcher provides a possible recommendation for the gaps and applies some anthropological theories to show the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The Oromos are an East Africa's largest nation. They have their own administration system; called Gada system. Gada system is one big institution of the Oromo; it is an indigenous democratic socio-political system of governance used among them. It was developed from knowledge gained through community experience over generations. The system regulates political, economic, social and religious activities of the Oromo community. The Gada system is composed of various institutions like ateetee, siiqqee, irreechaa, guddifachaa (adoption), jaarsummaa (arbitration), moggaasa (naturalization), harmahoosisu (breast feeding), and other elements of Oromo governance (Alemayehu Haile 2014).

These cultural elements also strengthen a sense of belonging to each other or relating to others and provide assurance that contributed over all well being. Customs, symbolic interaction in society, ritual activities that embraces cultural behavior, cultural values, myths, culture, norms and worldviews of Oromo society reflects its identity as in all other societies or nations in different region of the globe. Oromo cultural elements teach how they react to the environment, and to the nature. The Oromo people convey their identity by poems, traditional songs, proverbs, riddle and others that are easy to remember, while they demonstrate through drama, dance, rituals and others. Especially cultural rituals in Oromo society give visible expression to the deep cultural norms ordering the way Oromo people think, feel, and evaluate their own worldviews.(Hiebert 2008;82 cited in Fekadu 2015). Based on this fact, *the thesis mainly focused on the comprehensive accomplishment of Irreechaa ritual.*

Irreechaa is one of the ancient ceremonial events taking place twice a year ever since the existence of Oromo as a nation. The *irreechaa* festivity celebrated in *birraa* (in September and October) is the cultural expression of *Galata* (thankfulness) to *Waaqaa* (equivalent to the English word God) providing life necessities of human being and other living things. This is because the Oromo believes *Waaqaa* is the sole creator of everything and the source of all life. *Waaqaa* is also regarded as pure, omnipresent, infinite, incomprehensible and intolerant to injustice, crime, sin and all false hoods. It can do and undo anything (Alamayehu Diro 2014:1).

Irreechaa consists one of the several religious and cultural practices defining the hallmark of the entire Oromo life. During *Irreecha* festivity, the Oromo pray to *Waaqaa* for peace and stability to prevail; prosperity and abundance to exist; law and social order to be maintained; and the environment to be protected. The Oromo, also pray to the supreme *Waaqaa* for deliverance in times of difficulties and challenges (Asebe 2010, Alamayehu, 2014).

Irreechaa, the cultural and religious practice of the Oromo, was systematically outlawed for more than a century following the fall of the Oromo nation under the tyrant and brutal rules of Minilk II (1889 to 1913) and the subsequent Regimes. Despite several odds and difficult circumstances, *Irreecha* has begun to revive in the last two decades. The festivity has been showing impressive development from year to year in terms of the number of people attending the occasion and cultural shows being demonstrated.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The main objective of this research is to study the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual among the Oromo of Finfinnee surroundings and special zone particularly Malka *ateetee* ritual. The study has also provided the literal definition of terms, describe the cultural significance of *irreechaa*, explain the relationship between *ateetee* and *irreechaa*, mentioned some symbols and symbolic representation of very respective socio-cultural and symbolic material of the Oromo people by reviewing different relative literature in the study.

Throughout the long history of the Oromo existence, they have developed their own culture, identity, spiritual and ritual performances. The Oromo are not fetishists. They believe in *Waaqa Tokkichaa* a unique pristine universal Creator and Master. They see His manifestations in the great forces of nature, without mistaking them for Him. However, comprehensive understanding of the Oromo culture, politics and other living social heritages can be attained through close examination of the Gada system. By the same token, one can fully understand and analyze *irreechaa* ceremony from the viewpoint of its relations to the Gada system (OCTB, 2006)

Different researchers have defined and explained *irreechaa* ritual in different ways or with different assumptions. For instance, Galabu (2006) explains *Irreechaa* as a yield ritual which is celebrated annually; whereas Admasu (1998) notes that *irreechaa* ritual simply is an annual

holiday, or a periodic event, consecrated for thanksgiving. Admasu states, *Ireechaa* refers to the habit of daily prayers and blessings. For centuries, the Oromos have practiced this custom of thanking Waaqaa for His generosity, blessings and mercy (cited in Bayisa, 2011)

Ireechaa is also a ceremony which is conducted at the river base or at the top of the mountain. The two types of *irreechaa* is conducted during the eve of autumn and spring. So *irreechaa* ceremony was attached to Oromo calendar and this time is the duration of great event for the Oromo and this is one of the spiritual ceremonies at sacred centers and led by *Abbaa Malkaa irreechaa* as thanksgiving and prayers to *Waaqa*. Ritual places for *irreechaa* could be mountain or a river or large water bodies (Alemayehu H. 2009: 67).

The *Irreechaa* is performed in the month of September, among the contemporary Oromo, every year, on Sunday following the *Meskel* (the true cross) festivity at a sacred land of *hora harsadi* (Bishoftu), and other in March on the mountainside. It is also performed in other areas like Malkaa Ateetee (at Gafarsa River, near Burayu town), *Ireechaa Tulluu Injirroo* (at Tulluu injorroo, near Gutin Town East Wollega) and other places throughout Oromia and other country where the Oromo lives. Specifically, my focus is on the *irreecha Birraa* (spring) of the Malkaa *Ateete*.

Merga (2010 cited in Bayisa, 2011) said that *irreechaa* is one of the major traditional Oromo festivities observed annually with colorful and great splendor at the end of the rainy season in September.

There are also additional rituals among the Oromo regarding women: *Ateetee* and *Siiqqee* institutions. Wondimu and Boni (2015: 197) define the *Ateetee* ceremony as simply a ceremony of fertility cult. Even though, it is a women holiday in general, it is a blessing, praying and a merciful day for the Oromo society which is lead by women. According to them, *siiqqee* is a respectful stick, a ceremonial marriage stick given to a girl, which magnifies the equality of female and male. *Ateetee* is mostly a women's ritual ceremony, because according the Oromo world view, God is nearest to respond to women's praying. So that women are allowed for praying in different circumstance. Therefore, *ateete* ceremony existed at different time in a year.

So the *ateetee* is celebrated as a thanksgiving ritual of the Oromo as the society comes out from summer (*ganna*) dark to autumn (*birraa*) bright as *irreecha Birraa*.

Ateetee has both a manifest and latent functions. Its manifest role is thanksgiving, whereas its latent role is political. As a political tool, it was used as a means to condemn men's brutal act and abuse of women (Getu, 2015:6). This indicates that the *ateetee* ceremony has some partial reflexivity of thanksgiving aspect as *Irreechaa*. According to the story I heard from some of Oromo scholars, and individuals from the study area, *irreechaa* ritual has connections with *ateetee* ceremony. *Irreechaa* is a final accomplishment of *ateete* ceremony of the Oromo women. And there was no research has been conducted on the comprehensive accomplishment of *Irreechaa*. Therefore, taking this in mind, this study attempts to discuss the relationship of both *ateete* ceremony and *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *ateetee*, which magnifies the cultural significance of the Oromo of the study area.

Additionally, some researchers have conducted research, analyze and describe the *irreechaa* ritual and its significance, values among the Oromo in general and the study area in particular. But, no research has been conducted on the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *ateetee*.

The study has also explored the symbolic meaning of *irreechaa* that holds the cultural significance among the Tuulamaa Oromo. It also has indigenous symbols; these symbolic meaning would interpret in this study. Moreover, the researcher has attempted to frame the concept of the ritual which comes up with the participation of women in *irreechaa* ritual, discussed symbolic meaning in the theories of Social Anthropology. Thus, I will address the mentioned gaps in the study and apply some anthropological theories, such as structural functionalism and symbolic anthropology for the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual.

1.3. The Research Questions

- What is the relationship between *ateetee* and *irreechaa* ritual among the Oromo in general and in the community of this particular area?
- What is *Irreechaa* ritual, is it religious ritual or an indigenous non religious ceremony?
- What is the role of women in the *Irreechaa* of Malka Ateete?

- What is the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *ateetee* in the community of the study area?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The study has both general and specific objectives:

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate and analyze *irreechaa* ritual and its cultural values among the Oromo people in general and Oromo of Finfinnee Surrounding Oromia Special Zone in particular.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives of the study

Based on this general objective of the study, the specific objectives are:

- To investigate the relationship between *ateete* and *irreechaa* among the Oromo society in general and the Oromo of Burayyuu Town and it's rounding in particular.
- To explore whether *irreechaa* is a religious ritual or an indigenous non-religious ceremony.
- To reveal symbolic meaning of *irreechaa* at Buraayyuu town and surrounding
- To understand the role of women in *irreechaa* ritual of the Malka *ateete*
- To mention the socio-cultural importance of *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *ateetee*

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study is aimed to know and understand *irreechaa* ritual and its cultural significance among the Oromo society. There is an uncertain issue on *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *Ateetee* with *ateetee* ceremony, specifically why *Malka ateetee*? Thus, this research tries to inquire the relationship between *irreechaa* ritual and *ateete* ceremony.

This study of the *irreechaa* ritual, its cultural significance among the Oromo people in general and the Oromo of Burayu and its surroundings in particular, is believed to be important from the following perspectives.

- The study would serve as helpful input for the researchers interested to carry out in-depth studies on similar topics.
- It gives information to any concerned body who is interested in the relationship between *irreechaa* ritual and *ateetee* ceremony.

- It may contribute to understand the role of women in *irreechaa* ritual of the Malkaa *ateetee* ritual.
- It may contribute also to know the characteristics of the *irreechaa* ritual and *ateetee* ceremony with its symbolic meaning.
- It may help to conserve *irreechaa* ritual and pass it to the next generation.

1.6. Scope of the Study

Geographically, the study was delimited to cover the *Tulama* Oromo group living in the Oromia special zone of Buraayyuu town and surrounding. It is difficult to conduct the research among the whole Oromo because of time and budget constraint. Consequently, this thesis is limited to the *irreechaa* ritual performed colorfully at Buraayyuu, Malkaa *ateetee*. The reason that the researcher purposely selects this site is because of the fact that after a few years there are so many people who are interested to participate in this ritual colorfully and that the area is appropriate, to collect the necessary data.

1.7. Research Methodology

1.7.1. The Research Design

With the purpose of giving qualitative explanatory insights to the issues under study, to meet the suggested objectives and answer the above listed research questions; the researcher employs a qualitative approach. The reason why researcher chose to use qualitative approach is that “qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior and experiences through such methods as interviews, FGD, observation; help to get an in-depth opinion from informants” (Dawson, Catherin, 2007:16).

Malkaa *ateetee* is found in Buraayyuu town and surrounded by rural Kebeles. Then to get informants of the ritual, the rural administration and culture and tourism office of the area were selected based on the residence of the key informants, who are mostly considered as knowledgeable among the local community about original culture.

Additionally, other key informants were included from the Buraayyuu town and others from the high experts of Oromo Cultural Center (OCC), to incorporate the idea of much matured persons for the sake of extra data.

1.7.2. Sampling Techniques

Qualitative research do not simply use the sample as representatives of the population under study; rather it works with a small sample of people, cases, or phenomenon nested in a particular context (Bryman and Alan, 2004:323). As a result, to address the objective of the study, the researcher has used purposive sample techniques. Dawson (2007:49) pointed out that qualitative researchers do not worry to generalize their work to the whole research population. They need how what is happening within a smaller group of people, which they believe, may provide insights into the behavior of the wider research population. Accordingly, following Hancock's and Bob's (2006:39), argument, the researcher identified the key participants in condition whose knowledge may provide important insights regarding research questions. Thus, the researcher has consulted Workers of the Buraayyu Town Administration Culture and Tourism Office and Abba Gadas to name those individuals they believe as most knowledgeable of the culture of Oromo including *irreechaa* ritual.

Thus, to meet the objectives, the total informants selected for this thesis were twenty eight (28). Among these, nine (9) of them were served as key informant selected through purposive sampling method; they include elderly men and women, and followers of the Oromo indigenous religion in the study area. Other informants were participated in FGD and informal conversation. The researcher also considered the educational background and age of informants. To get the data about the unique role of women in Irreechaa of Malkaa *ateetee*, contacting the women who know the practice and engaged in it is mandatory.

1.8. Methods of Data Collection

The research was conducted by using qualitative research methods. Primary and secondary source of data was applied to collect the necessary data for the thesis. The primary data was collected during field work through observation, in depth interviews, focus group discussion, and informal conversations.

1.8.1. Interview

As a means of collecting information from various research communities, interviews can range from the highly structured to semi-structured and unstructured (Crang, Mike and Cook, Iran, 2007:60). In this research, the researcher employed, semi structured and unstructured interviews. In the semi-structured one, the researcher prepared predetermined interview questions and asked

respondents in a specific order. In the unstructured one, He sets some broad parameter for a discussion with respondents.

The researcher has conducted twenty eight (28) interviews with respondents, including the purposely-selected key informants who have direct relationships with the issues under the study. He has selected nine key informants from three Abba Gadaas and religious person, seven Women, twelve experts and six elders from local residence to obtain the required information to meet objectives. The research has included other nineteen informants who offered the researcher some general background information; for example, on what *irreechaa* is its importance and women's role in *irreechaa* in Burayu town and surroundings. There were also informants who provide details of any specific cases; for instance, on the relationship between *ateete* and *irreechaa*, of these informants are workers of Oromo Cultural Center and the selected elders. Generally, in this research, the researcher has interviewed twenty eight informants, from which nine were key informants. Regarding the gender composition of respondents, five key informants were male, whereas four key informants were female.

To address the objective and to meet the emic perspective of the informants, the research questionnaire was administered in *Afaan* Oromo to make communication easier and then was translated into English.

1.8.2. Observation

Throughout different anthropological works, observation has been viewed as an essential method to grasp first-hand information from natural settings. It is used in ethnographic fieldwork to get rich information and the foregoing conditions as it is in actual natural setting (Bernard, Russell, 2006:344). It draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events (Denscombe and Martyn, 2003:192). Accordingly, I was involved in the society for three months, observed frequently the place where *irreechaa* ritual was performed to collect the data on the cultural significance of the *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *ateetee* and surrounding, and has taken photographs of the river and the area.

I have observed the meeting of Abbaa Gadaas of the area, which belongs to the Tuulamaa Oromoo Gadaa offices, have observed the whole activities and roles of women regarding *irreechaa* ritual and I also conducted, participated in the Oromo *Waaqeffanaa* religious

association, Have been attending and performed the *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *Ateetee* of Buraayyuu town and surrounding when I was doing my field work.

During my fieldwork I emphasized on taking notes and pictures of activities and some of my key informants. This method has also helped me to produce further questions to clients for group discussion, in depth interview and informal conversation.

1.8.3. Focus Group Discussion

Morgan coined that “the hallmark of Focus Group Discussion is the explicit use of a group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction of a group (Morgan 1988:12 cited in Punch 2004:177). According to him Focus Group Discussion helps the researcher to get rich data. The purpose of this method is to learn about the purpose, role of *irreechaa* ritual and its relation to *ateetee* ceremony of the collective perception and practice of the community under the study.

Focus Group Discussion participants who possess a certain characteristics in common or homogenous in a manner which mean that peoples in a focus group discussion are identical or the same. Homogeneity depends on what you are studying. For some studies, it is inappropriate to mix men and women, or older and younger people in a group (Russell 1994). So, to gain different views of informant I used mixed collective of informants.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher has conducted three FGD. These are 1) one FGD with local community, 2) one FGD with groups composed of elders and others religious leaders of Muslim, Protestant and Orthodox institutions, 3) one FGD with Abbaa Gada’s and experts from Burayyuu town Culture and Tourism Office and Oromo Cultural Center. All focus group discussions included both male and female with different ages and status. Then the researcher has made cross- check and compared with the data that researcher obtained by other tools. Each group consisted of 5-7 members of different ages, sex, and educational background and religion. Semi- Structured types of questions regarding cultural significances of *irreechaa* ritual in the community of the study area were prepared, to guide the discussion. Flexibility was also employed to guide the perception of the member of the group discussion to make them focus on the objective of the discussion.

1.8.4. In depth Interview

The motive behind the method of in depth interview is to help the researcher to get and grasp fast information about the study community and the issues covered under the study. It is undertaken in two forms. The first in depth interview was undertaken with key informant from the study areas that are regarded to have knowledge of the community under the study. During the in depth interviews with key informants, data about the *irreechaa* ritual, *ateetee* and religious process, interrelation, the roles and importance of *irreechaa* among the community were gathered. The other categories of key informant are professional experts from of OCC and officials of Buraayyuu town Culture and Tourism office by considering the variety of age, sex, and educational background.

Regarding the questions for in depth interviews, the researcher has emphasized on what the purpose of *irreechaa* ritual, *ateetee* ceremony and in relation to *irreechaa* and the symbolic meaning of objects used during *irreechaa* ritual by prepared semi-structured question which allowed to flexibility in directing the issues.

1.8.5. Informal Conversation

Informal conversation has been applied to get relevant information. The researcher used this tool systematically in which the informants might not consider it as data gathering activity. It took place while informants participate in some other activity, may be walking, then the conversation start and directing to the issues of my topic of study. It was also undertaken in different social interaction like coffee ceremony, entertaining set, some simple job might be some of the occasions in which informal conversation has been used as a means of data collection. And other techniques to approach the informant using *Afaan Oromoo* as a media of communication was very appropriate to freely get information that I didn't get during a formal interview such as the meaning and purpose of *irreechaa* ritual.

1.8.6. Documents Analysis

Data which were collected through the above mentioned tools were tape recorded, transcribed and translated into English. Documents that are relevant to *irreechaa* ritual were reviewed and analyzed. These documents were drawn from the library of Oromo Cultural Centre. Historians would use document analysis as one source of primary data, which was written in the testimony

of eyewitnesses. In this research, I have reviewed original documents that related to the Oromo indigenous and *irreechaa* ritual and *ateetee* ceremony of the women.

To this end, Secondary data from different books, published and unpublished dissertations and thesis, bulletins, journals, articles published in Addis Ababa University, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, Oromo Cultural Centre and other relevant materials were reviewed in line with the study's objectives. Data from these secondary sources have supplemented fieldwork information and enabled the researcher to recognize the gaps in the study. This method then also helped me to cross check the data obtained through several data gathering methods.

1.8.7. Data Collection Procedure

As soon as the Department of Social Anthropology approved the topic of my proposal, literatures related to the topic were reviewed from different books, journals, unpublished document from the library and internet website and statistical report at level of Buraayyuu town. Then, research questions and objectives of the study were identified. Detail interview guide was prepared and data were collected mainly focusing on the cultural significance of the expansion of the *Irreechaa* ritual among the Oromo of the study area. The data collection instruments were prepared in English and translated into the peoples' language, *Afaan Oromo*. Since I realized that it is necessary, I asked the Department of Social Anthropology to write a support letter that helps the participants to understand who I am and what the purpose of the study is. The Interviews of the study were conducted by going to where the respondents are. Whether offices or homes. After asking the willingness of these respondents, I made an appointment based on a personal visit. Thus, the interview sessions were arranged based on the convenience of the respondent.

1.9. Method of Data Analysis

According to (Bryman, Alan and Burgess, G. Robert, 2002:2), the dynamic process focuses on the links between the problem, research design, strategy, research techniques and theories as making sense of information is a continuous process with the researchers' investigative progress. Therefore, I used a multi directional interaction between the conceptual and empirical data. My data which were collected through guiding questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively at the end of fieldwork. All data collected through observation, in depth interview, informal conversation, and FGDs were triangulated and describe with the support of secondary data.

1.10. Ethical Consideration

Prior to participation in the study, it is important for all participants to understand why the research is conducted and what their participation would involve. Selected participants are given an explanation about the aims of the study, eligibility to participate in the study, possible benefits of participating in the study, and concerns with regard to data keeping and confidentiality issues. All of them were informed that participating in the study is voluntary and secrecy of their responses was being maintained based on their personal interest.

1.11. Organization of the Research

This thesis was organized into five chapters: the first chapter includes the introduction section which contains; - background of the study, a statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, research methodology and significance and scope, and ethical considerations.

Chapter two contains literature review and theoretical framework which presents an important literature review related to issues of the study. Chapter three presents the historical background of the Oromo in general and Buraayyu town and surrounding in particular. It described briefly general profile of the Oromo people, including Gada system, kinship system and religious/ and also describes family trees of the Tuulamaa Oromo moiety and the demography, climate, and topography of the Burayu town and the surrounding area. The fourth chapter presents the concepts and meaning of *irreechaa* ritual in relation to *ateetee* ceremony and Gada institution. The symbolic meanings of *ateetee* and *irreechaa* ritual were discussed by giving emphasis specifically to *ateetee* ceremony with its symbolic representation. In this chapter, I have also presented the challenge facing the *Irreechaa* ritual; women's participation, and its continuity as a result of different reasons. The final chapter of this thesis has presented the conclusion of the study that reflects the idea of the researcher on the study subject.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the literature related to the research concepts and the theoretical frameworks of the study. The first part of this chapter explains the concept and meaning, characteristic and functions of ritual in general, whereas the second part deals with the theoretical frameworks, concept and definitions of symbol and symbolic interpretations. The last part of this chapter deals with the general characteristics of a symbol, *Irreechaa* and a cultural representation of women in Oromo society.

2.1. Concepts, Characteristics, and Functions of Ritual.

2.1.1. Concept of Ritual

Different scholars have discussed ritual in various approaches; cultural, religion and rebellion. For the sake of this study let me see the meaning and concept of ritual, by focusing on its cultural and religious variety.

Anthropologist Roy Rappaport (1999) defined ritual as the performance of formal, invariably sequenced, and traditionally transmitted actions and utterances, such as what occurs at weddings or initiation rites. He further argued that ritual played a critical role in making us human. Human society required trust, and ritual was necessary to create that trust because, unlike language, ritual was indexical. This meant that it was a reliable indicator of one's state of mind, Roy Rappaport (1999: 24) in Matt 1. Rossano (2012:1).

Similarly, Jack David Eller (2007) discusses the meaning and concept of ritual as follows. All human activity, whether verbal or bodily, is a behavior, so myth and prayer and chanting and singing are as “behavioral” as any physical action. In fact, they *are* physical actions, usually performed in social settings for an audience with a part of the human body (the mouth or voice), usually as part of a concert with other gestures, actions, and objects.

Malinowski reminded us that religion “is a mode of action as well as a system of belief” (1948), and viewing it as an action and specifically social action sheds a different light on the religion.

When we think of religious behavior, we think of ritual, that's fascinating, colorful, and symbolic activity that expresses religious beliefs and directs toward religious beings or forces. Ritual is usually and multimedia. It is often a protracted performance of multiple "scenes" which may take hours or days to complete Malinowski (1948:24).

Thomas Barfield (1997: 410) defines ritual as: "prescribed, formal acts that take place in the context of religious worship" as well as "any activity with a high degree of formality and a no utilitarian purpose. This usage includes not only clearly religious activities, but also such events as festivals, parades, initiations, games, and greetings.

According to him, in its broadest sense, ritual may prefer not to any particular kind of event, but to the expressive aspect of all human activity. To the extent that it conveys messages about the social and cultural status of individuals, any human action has a ritual dimension. In this sense, even such mundane acts as planting fields and processing foods share a ritual aspect with sacrifice and the mass".

Ritual is both religious and secular aspects, Kertzer (1988:8). According to him, ritual is a spiritual activity and the whole complex action of human.

In another way ritual is a purpose cyclic action of certain events. Catherine Bell, also shows us a summary and analysis of theories of ritual, points out that these theories tend to offer "formality, fixity, and repetition" as central aspects (1992: 91-2). Further, she notes that anthropological treatments of ritual have often, if not, ordinarily, separated it from the more "cognitive" or "conceptual" area of religion. Ritual is then described as a particularly thoughtless action reutilized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic and therefore the purely formal, secondary, and mere physical expression of logically prior ideas. (Bell 1992: 19)

She concurs with Edward Shills that "beliefs could exist without rituals; rituals, however, could not exist without beliefs" (Bell 1992: 19). Bell also mentions that analysis of ritual has taken two different approaches in relation to other aspects of behavior, particularly nonreligious behavior Bell (1992: 70). In the latter case, religious ritual would be a simple subset of ritual in general, which might further be a subset of social behavior in general.

As Jack Goody has also argued, "'reutilization,' regularization, repetition, lies at the basis of social life itself", (1977: 28). Indeed, from this perspective, there is some merit to it all of culture is "ritualistic" in the sense that it makes patterned, fixed, communicative habits out of behavior.

Durkheim, in Kertzer (1988:8), shows ritual is related to religious practices. For him, the world we live in divided into two classes: the sacred or holy and profane. Rites, as he states, are the “rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comfort himself in the presence of the sacred objects”.

In another aspect, Fiedrich (1966:192) also defines the term ritual as “sets of repetitive and culturally specific ceremony relating to supernatural or to some similar body of authoritative or abstract persons and ideas”. His definition of the term, more and less, is in a religious framework. Kassam (1958), like Fiedrich, defines rituals as “Pattern of action, often highly symbolic, such as a form of worship, sacrifices, and avoidance”, his definition of ritual also expresses its religious nature.

The term ritual identifies the social action in a society Kottak (2000). According to him, “Rituals are social acts, by which, inevitably, some participants are more committed than others.” For him, “just by taking part in a joint public act, the performers signal that they accept a common social and moral order, one that transcends their status as individuals” (2000:311). He also explains that through the public participation in the ritual performance, the practitioner accepts a common social and moral order that is more essential for the existence of each society and results in the existence of social status in the society.

Another author who tries to define the term ritual was Victor Turner. He wrote that a ritual “is segmented into ‘phases’ or ‘stages’ and into subunits such as ‘episodes,’ ‘actions,’ and ‘gestures.’ To each of these units and subunits corresponds a specific arrangement of symbols, of symbolic activities and objects”, (1981: 3).

Anthropological definitions of ritual vary, including the following: Victor Turner: “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings or powers.

The smallest unit of ritual is symbolic” (1967:19) Stanley Tambiah: “a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized in varying degree by formality (conventionality), stereotypes (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition)” (1979: 119). He employs the term when referring to “is prescribing formal behavior for occasion not given over the technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical (or non empirical) being or power” in Morris

(1987:238). For him, Ndembu rituals are organized into two main parts: the life- crises rituals and rituals of affiliation. The life- crisis rituals are “associated specifically with death and puberty” where as “rituals of affiliation” are associated with various misfortunes, primarily thought to result from the action of mukishi spirits”. In these “life-crisis rituals” there are two important initiation ceremonies; the boy’s circumcision rite and girls’ puberty ritual.

Moreover, Clifford Geertz's programmatic article "Religion as a Cultural System," he established a new framework in the study of ritual and led to a paradigm shift in religious studies by attempting to take the anthropological approach in the study of ritual to be primarily to the study of religious texts and discourse. Geertz introduced his approach by defining religion as a system of symbols and identifying ritual with religion. According to him, the sense of the 'really real', which is the essence of religion, originates in ritual because "the world as lived and the world as imagined, are fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms" Clifford Geertz cited in Jens Kreinath (2005 :101). Clifford Geertz employs the term when referring to “religion as a cultural system” that is showing us the whole religious aspect of rituals are the packed of cultural system.

2.1.2. Characteristics of Ritual

Characteristic of the ritual is that it transmits a message about the society and it is repeatedly practiced. Kottak (2000) notes that “rituals convey information about the participants and their traditions and since they are repeated year after year, generation after generation, rituals translate enduring messages, values, and sentiments into action” (Kottak 2000:311). According to him, ritual is characterized by its repetitive nature, which is very confirmed by every individual with this repetitive nature of the ritual practice and its standardization on the bases of the society’s culture.

D Kertzer says, related to its characteristics, that “ it follows highly structured, standardized sequences and its often enacted at certain places and times that are themselves endowed with special symbolic meaning. It is repetitive and therefore, often redundant, but these very factors serve as an important means of channeling emotion, guiding cognition, and organizing social groups” (Kertezr 1988:9 cited in Negesa, 2011).

Another characteristic of the ritual, “it helps give meaning to our world in part by linking the past to the present, the present to the future” (Kertzer 1988:9-10). According to him, this supports the human being to handle up to human problems: the first one is “building confidence

in our sense of self by providing us with a sense of continuity and giving us confidence that the world in which we live today is the same world we lived in before and the same world we will have to cope with in the future”, Where the other is the existence of “certain physiological and even physiological bases of ritual” (Kertzer 1988:10). That shows, “the power of ritual stems not just from its social environment, but also from its physiological underpinnings”.

For Kertzer (1988), ritual “is presented to individuals by the society, rather than generated from the individual’s psychic activity”. But it did not conclude as it is an inherently conservative force. The ritual is inherently conservative force. Rituals are characterized by its flexibility in any society at any time. It changed “through the individual activity” and creativity. On this Kertzer (1988:11), says that “rituals do change in form”, in symbolic meaning, and in social effect; new rituals arise and old rituals fade away”. He said, in short, that “people are not just slaves of rituals, or slaves of symbols, they are also molder and creators of ritual. It is because people create and alter rituals that they are such powerful tools of political action.

Another characteristic of the ritual, as stated by Roy A. Rappaport (1999), is that

“Ritual the occult efficacy of ritual rests in whole or in part upon words (both in folk and analytic theory) then the distinction between ritual as communication and ritual as efficacious action breaks down. This is not to claim that all rituals, even those for which efficacy is claimed, are deemed by those performing them to possess occult efficacy, but simply to take an efficacious ritual to be a sub-class of a larger class, ritual, itself one of many modes of communication” Roy A. Rappaport (1999:50). According to him, “ritual as communication” in performing of ritual a group of society or class may communicate in physiological and psychic activities. Leach (1966) stated, or perhaps overstated, this or a similar point when he asserted that the distinction between communication behavior and behavior potent in terms of cultural conventions (rather than instrumental or physical terms) is trivial.

Van Gennep, also add characteristics of ritual as, “work on rites of passage”, for instance, it has been fairly common to characterize ritual in terms of its dealings with human identity. Van Gennep’s notions were further developed in classical work by Victor Turner (1969), who described ritual in terms of “*liminal states*” and “*communitas*,” as an anti-structure to the usual structure of society (also Emile Durkheim’s (1985 [1912]) notion “effervescence”). Turner’s liminal states are very much like what I call identity shift below and that ritual can lead to an

intense experience of community (*communitas*) is commonplace in ritual studies in Jan Koster (1978:3).

2.1.3. Types of rituals.

Different types of rituals are performed by various groups. Some public groups practice one or different categories of ritual. However, there is no general consensus among the researchers on the types of rituals. Different anthropologists categorize ritual differently depending on their own argument and its validation. For instance, according to Matt Rossano (2012:13) “The ritualized turn taking interactions of infants and their caregivers seem far removed from adult community rituals such as weddings, award banquets, and presidential inaugurations. But ritualized infant-caregiver interactions are also emotionally engaging teaching events. Emotionally engaging teaching events incorporating ritualized actions continue throughout childhood and adolescence. They can be found in instances where an adult or coach demonstrates behavioral skills to a child using motionless. Even more important, they are present in the rituals and routines associated with family life”. He shows as clearly a Family Rituals.

Other anthropologist categorizes the rite of passage and rites of intensification, W. Haviland et al (2007) define the term “rites of passage” as ritual that mark important stages in an individual life cycle” (William, Haviland et al. 2007:501), and the rites of intensification as “ritual that take place during a crisis in the life of the group serve to bind individual together”. For them, the typical examples for these rites of intensification are funeral ceremonies. They also note that “regions where the seasons differ enough those human activities must change accordingly; they will take the form of annual ceremonies which is common among the horticultural and agricultural people, with their planting and harvest ceremonies.

Another type of ritual is the magical ritual. W. Haviland and his colleagues’ state that among the most fascinating of ritual practices is the application of the belief the supernatural powers can be compelled to act in certain ways for good or evil purposes by resource to certain specified formulas. Many societies have magical rituals to ensure good crops, the replenishment of the game, the fertility of domestic animals, and the avoidance or healing of illness in humans (W. Haviland et al 2007:503).

2.1.4. Functions and use of Ritual in Social Group.

Many anthropologists have described the functions and uses of ritual differently depending on different aspects.

“Group membership has been essential to solving important human adaptive problems. Living in groups decreased predation risk (Shultz, Noe, McGraw, & Dunbar, 2004), allowed for coordinated caretaking of offspring (Hawkes, 2014), and facilitated technological innovation (Reader & Laland, 2002). Group living had such adaptive value that many have hypothesized that it contributed to the evolution of larger-than-average primate brains (Dunbar & Shultz, 2007), species-specific cultural complexity (Boyd, Richerson, & Henrich, 2011), and a variety of psychological adaptation for social interaction (Kurzban & Neuberg, 2005). Individual fitness benefitted from psychological mechanisms that increased social cohesion and facilitated coordinated problem solving (Dunbar & Shultz, 2007). For example, the capacity to understand the intentions of others, to track social relationships, and to form coalitional alliances all aid in cooperation with in-group members.

The capacity to engage in cooperation is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for participation in goal directed coalitional alliances (Cosmides & Tooby, 2013). Despite the benefits of forming and maintaining coalitions, forming large groups involves challenges such as Coordinating group members for joint action, ensuring commitment of individuals to group goals, preventing free riding, and circumventing the defection of members to rival coalitions. These additional adaptive problems required the evolution of psychological mechanisms to solve those (Chudek & Henrich, 2011). They propose that rituals solve adaptive problems associated with group living by identifying group members, demonstrating commitment to in-group values, facilitating cooperation with social coalitions, and increasing social group (cited in Cristine H Legare 2017: 43).

Additionally, Victor Turner in Morris (1987), states the concept of rituals in his study of the Ndembu people of Zambia, in terms of its function as it serves in conflict resolution and maintaining the social order and equilibrium of the community. For instance, as he put, ritual, “The function of maintaining the widest social unit, the Ndembu people, dissolves mainly upon the ritual system” (Morris 1987:237). He also interprets the social function of ritual in terms of

an analysis of conflict resolution, the ritual being a mechanism of redness (pp 240). For him a ritual was invoked under the pretext of curing a patient, but in reality to settle a conflict.

V. Turner notes that, the ritual has the role of integrating the society politically and also “restores the equilibrium and solidarity of the group” (1968:272). Haviland et al. (2007:501) also add on the function of rituals in creating social solidarity that “ritual serves to the relive social tensions and reinforce a group’s collective bonds. This shows that ritual also used to decrease the social problem and used to organize under the same social groups.

In another aspect, “ritual practices are a major means for propagating the political myth. The symbols the heart of ritual observances are part of the issues of myth that helps structure an understanding of the political world and the politics attitudes to the various political actors that populate it”(D. Kertzer 1988: 13).

Lewellen (2003) also state that, ritual has important political functions that “the reenactment of legitimizing myths unites the entire community in a sacred bond that transcends private interests and day to day conflicts, while rein fusing the society with the mythical power of the world of the ancestors” (Lewellen 2003:67).

In summary, D. Kertzer (1988) clarifies the political importance of ritual in many features. He explains that ritual helps to build political organization, is employed to create political legitimacy, helps to create political solidarity in the absence of political consensus and cast people’s understanding of the political universe. He also explains how political competitors struggle for power through this ritual.

Therefore, to give human beings a sense of safety and loyalty to group rituals are very important. Humans can perform rituals to show their value and beliefs, and many times to reinforce harmony within a group.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

A Theory is a statement or statements of how and why specific facts are related (Macionis, 1997:15). Scupin and DeCorse (1995) also define a theory as a set of interconnected hypotheses that offer general explanations for natural or social phenomena. Russell (2006:78) asserts that one cannot design research until he/she chooses research questions which depend crucially on

theory. The theoretical frameworks adopted for this study are functionalism and symbolic anthropology (Symbolism) that were discussed below.

Structural functionalism, or simply functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote social solidarity. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms. This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole. In the most basic terms, it simply emphasizes "the effort to impute, as strictly as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system" Durkheim in Moore (2009).

Émile Durkheim was concerned with the question of how certain societies maintain internal stability and survive over time. He proposed that such societies tend to be segmented, with equivalent parts held together by shared values, common symbols or, as his nephew Marcel Mauss held, systems of exchanges. Durkheim used the term 'mechanical solidarity' to refer to these types of "social bonds based on common sentiment & shared moral values, which are strong among members of pre-industrial societies".

In modern, complex societies, members perform very different tasks, resulting in a strong interdependence. Based on the metaphor above of an organism in which many parts function together to sustain the whole, Durkheim argued that complex societies are held together by Organic solidarity i.e. , "social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, which are strong among member's societies" Moore (2009:49-53).

Additionally, Malinowski also argued that there were seven universal biological and psychological needs. These individual needs were converted to cultural behavior through the use of symbols, which also served to mold individual behavior to group standards. The task of the

psychological functionalist was to describe these symbols and demonstrate how social institutions operated to fill psychological needs.

Malinowski believed in the importance of individuals within a culture. Here he speaks of the Kula as many individual transactions taking place simultaneously. Radcliffe-Brown, on the other hand, believed that the study of culture as individual human behavior was impossible. Malinowski, on the other hand, believed that culture existed to serve human needs and that; ultimately, these needs were individual physiological and psychological requirements R. Jon Mcgee (2008:173).

Symbolic anthropology is the study of symbols as instigators and receptacles of social contradiction and social action (Beers 2005:39). It is a theoretical orientation study culture through the interpretation of the meaning of symbols, values, and beliefs of society. This theory focuses on the symbolic rather than the material aspects of culture. It suggests that many cultural symbols cannot be readily reduced to the material conditions and adaptive mechanism of society, as proposed by cultural materialist, rather than viewing values, beliefs and world views as a reflection of only environmental, technological, or economic conditions, it argues that cultural symbols may be completely autonomous from material factors (Scupin and Descorse 2005:312). Geertz in his study of symbols in their social and cultural context argued that "culture is not a model inside people's heads but rather is embodied in public symbols and actions". Actions are also guided by interpretation or meanings are constructed. Failure to take into account the larger context of the cultures being studied such as how they were formed and what historical context was there for those symbols to be created. He emphasizes on the thick description of symbolic study (Geertz 1973).

According to Des Chene (1996:1274), Symbolic interpretive is the way people understand their surroundings, as well as the actions and utterances of the other members of their society. Symbolic anthropology imply symbols and the processes, such as myth and ritual, by which humans assign meanings to these symbols to address fundamental questions about human social life (Spencer 1996:535 Des Chane 1996).

Lewellen mentions that, the anthropologist is much more interested in the latent functions of which individuals are unaware and these can only be determined by looking at the whole system;

it may be relatively related with the “thick description” Clifford Geertz and interpretive or symbolic anthropology (Lewellen 2003:82).

Therefore, the structural functionalism perspective is adopted and used in order to perceive the direct and involved cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual of the Oromo of the study area.

In this research, the approaches that to reconcile in the issues of *irreechaa* ritual is structural functionalism and symbolic and/or symbolic interpretation. The behind argument is to assess the ritual in its different functions for different groups of people and its relations with the ritual in Oromo society, by coming across with the values of ritual for personal and in community.

In case of the symbolic meaning of activities in *irreechaa* ritual, it would be explained by informants undertaking and interpreted by the researcher accordingly. It is also helps me to see different objects that used on *irreechaa* ritual by the participants what it represent in Oromo culture.

Generally, the reason that I want these related theory discussed above were reflected in the cultural significance of *Irreechaa* ritual of the Oromo in general and Finfinnee Surrounding Oromia Special Zone (*Malkaa ateetee*) by its’ symbolic representation of objects used on the ritual, women role and also the actions undertaken during the celebration of *irreechaa* ritual,

2.3. Symbols and Symbolic interpretation.

In this research, the one critical concept that needs to be discussed is symbol. Human beings live in a world of objects of symbolically designated things, ideas, people, activities, and purposes. The symbolic interactionists define object as: - an object is anything to which attention can be paid and toward which action can be directed. Human beings live in a world of objects that they constantly create and recreate by symbolically designating and acting toward them. And their orientation to the objects that constitute the environment at any given time is purposive and goal oriented. Human beings fashion a world of things and stimuli into a world of objects because they act with purpose toward it. Symbolic interactionist’s definition of objects has numerous important implications (John Heweitt 2002). Many anthropologists define the term symbol differently.

The scholar who mentions symbol is V. Turner (1975). He advocates the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of a symbol as "a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought." Of course, for anthropologists, "general consent" is limited to the culture in which the symbol under attention is located, and the qualities of "analogy" and "association" are similarly culture bound. One culture's analogy is another culture's puzzle. Nevertheless, given the cultural context, a symbol's modes of signification are by no means "arbitrary and conventional," though they may constitute accepted and specific meanings V. Turner (1975:151).

According to J.D. Eller (2007) Symbols, in the very simplest construction, are things, objects, images, sounds, actions, gestures, utterances, and almost any other medium that "mean" something, that "have a meaning." The "meaning" is that which the symbol "stands for," the phenomenon of which it is a representation or a place-holder. Moreover, the relationship between the symbol and its meaning is arguably arbitrary and conventional that is, there is no necessary connection between the particular meaning and the particular symbol. It is only cultural habit that unites the two (J.D. Eller 2007:55).

Geertz also gives his own definition of a symbol, as "any object, act, events, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception – the conception is the symbol's meaning" (1973:91) "He also picks up philosopher Gilbert Ryle's suggestion that mind and meaning are fundamentally "public" and to an extent "objective" and echoes it in his subsequent statement that symbols "are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs" (Geertz 1973: 91 cited in Eller 2007:58). With symbols playing such a powerful role, it is no wonder that Geertz views religion as exactly a system of symbols, as his definition shows. Even more, culture itself is a system of symbols, of which religion is one component or cluster, though a particularly important one" (cited in Eller 2007:58). According to him symbols are also a system culture.

For Geertz symbols are "vehicles of 'culture'" (Ortner 1983:129), meaning that symbols should not be studied in and of themselves, but for what they can reveal about culture. Geertz's main interest was the way in which symbols shape the ways that social actors see, feel, and think about

the world (Ortner 1983:129). Throughout his writings, Geertz characterized culture as a social phenomenon and a shared system of inter subjective symbols and meanings (Parker 1985).

Victor Turner is another influential promoter of the symbolic perspective in anthropology. In his aptly named *The Forest of Symbols*, he explores the ritual symbolism of the Ndembu. For him, ritual and symbolism are intimately linked; in fact, he posits that the symbol “is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context” (Turner 1967: 19). Symbols are construed incredibly widely, to include “objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and spatial units” (Turner 1967: 19).

He discussed “the types and uses, he arrives at three properties of symbols condensation, unification of disparate significata, and polarization of meaning. By condensation he means that one symbol can and frequently does carry multiple meanings or representations simultaneously. These multiple or disparate meanings or significata “are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought” (Turner 1967: 28). A central example for the Ndembu is the milk tree, which he asserts stands at once for “women’s breasts, motherhood, a novice at *Nkang’a* [an initiation ritual], the principle of matrilineage, learning, and the unity and persistence of Ndembu society” (Turner 1967:28). Finally, symbols bring together two “poles” of experience, the natural physiological and the moral/social. Thus, a symbol integrates the physical qualities and associations of the symbolic object (e.g., the red and therefore “bloody” quality of the *mukula* tree) and the emotional and even visceral reactions it inspires with the ideas, norms, and values of the group that uses it”(J.D.Eller 2007:59).

In conclusion, then, both Geertz and Turner describe and implement what we might call “the symbolic project.” If culture generally and religion specifically is a system or pattern of symbols, then the task of anthropology is to interpret or translator decode these symbols. As Geertz puts it, anthropology becomes an essentially “semiotic” exercise, looking for the “meanings” within which people act. The real-life social action is never lost or ignored; we cannot study symbols in abstract isolation from social life (*abide*).

Lastly, it is also important to discuss symbolic interpretation in logic that symbols always need interpretation thin and thick descriptions towards a theory of culture of Geertz (1973). J.D.Eller

(2007) explains that we have to accomplish during our field work as symbolic interpretation, whereas true or practical behavior does not: we do not ask the meaning of planting seeds in the ground, but we do ask the meaning of performing a ritual over the field. That is what the researcher going to accomplish in my study the symbolic meaning of *Irreechaa* ritual of the Oromo.

2.4. Features of Symbols

Symbols have general characters. According to Judy S. DeLoache (2004:1) symbols are intentional Human 'intention' is at the heart of symbolization, both in the philosophical sense of being about something and in the everyday, psychological sense of being intended by someone, of being done for a purpose. A person's intention that one entity represents another is both necessary and sufficient to establish a symbolic relation. Nothing is inherently a symbol; only as a result of someone using it with the goal of denoting or referring does it take on a symbolic role. He also explain that that characteristic as "Symbols are general and intentional" The very indefinite term 'something' is quite deliberately used twice in the above definition to emphasize that virtually anything can be used to represent virtually anything else.

Human 'intention' is at the heart of symbolization, both in the philosophical sense of being about something and in the everyday, psychological sense of being intended by someone, of being done for a purpose. A person's intention that one entity represents another is both necessary and sufficient to establish a symbolic relation. Nothing is inherently a symbol; only as a result of someone using it with the goal of denoting or referring does it take on a symbolic role. (2004:2) and he mentioned also state that symbols are dual representation.

Another is Pierre Bourdieu (1989), symbol as "power" and "capital" Symbolic power, whose form par excellence is the power to make groups (groups that are already established and have to be consecrated or groups that have yet to be constituted such as the Marxian proletariat), rests on two conditions. As any form of performative discourse, symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital, Pierre Bourdieu (1989:23).

Symbols are needs reinforcement. According to Chapple et al (1947:472), "a symbol does not operate in a vacuum, but is subject to its place in the interaction". They also noted that "a symbol

produces its result not merely by itself, but because it is reinforced by the repetitive actions of persons”. For instance, a dog loses its capacity to salivate at the sound of a bell if the conditioned response is not reinforced by receiving meat at regular intervals.

Symbols are also characterized by changing their meaning. They do not remain constant, but also change in time and place as well as in condition. “The symbol itself may change its technical reference, while the type of action or interaction to which it refers remains the same” (*abide*).

Symbols are also characterized by its linguistic in nature Kottak (2005). It uses words to represent objects and ideas (William and Haviland et al. 2007:283). In addition to its verbal nature, there are also non verbal symbols such as flags, which stand for different country Kottak (2005:44).

In general, Symbols are characterized by their duality or universality. The culture unique to human being is represented by symbols and it is found everywhere the human being is living (*abide*).

2.5. The Oromo Gada System

Since the study is related to *Irreechaa* ritual of malkaa ateetee and the study is concerned to the Oromo indigenous knowledge, it is very important to discuss the value of Gada in Oromo daily life. In Oromo daily life, everything which accomplished by the society has its own rules and values. The same is true for Tuulamaa Oromo in particular. Therefore, the Oromo people, like the other peoples and nationalities of the country, have immense tangible and intangible heritages which have been created over centuries in the interactions of the people with natural and social environments and which stand as the manifestations of the identity of the people.

The Oromo share common language, history and descent, and once shared common political, religious and legal institutions. What makes the people even more special is that these cultural and natural resources are managed within an ancient traditional governance system, the Gada system, which is rich in democratic principles and with its roots spread throughout the Oromia area.

The Gadaa system is the constitution of the Oromo society through which the society administered, defended their territory, maintained and developed their economy. Even though the tradition was reduced to social aspect following the incorporation of the society into the

Ethiopian state, the system influenced every aspect of Oromo society, from politics to religion until recently (OCTB 2017).

Different scholars were also note the Oromo Gada system as follow. During their long history of egalitarian culture, the Oromo developed a uniquely democratic socio-political structure known as Gadaa (Cerulli, 1922; Huntingford, 1955; Asmarom, 1973; Melbaa, 1991), and an extraordinarily accurate time-reckoning system, the Ayyaanaa calendar (Gemechu, 1993). Asmarom Legesse (1973: 279) states: The Gada System is keyed to a remarkably sophisticated system of time reckoning. The system is based on accurate astronomic observations associated with a complete day-month nomenclature.

The Gadaa system guided the Oromo religious, social political and economic life for many centuries. Asmarom, who studied the Gadaa system in detail, argues that it is a system of classes that succeed one another every eight years in assuming military, economic, political and ritual responsibilities (Asmarom, 1973).

2.5.1. The Irreechaa Ritual in Literature

The Irreecha ritual is conducted at different places; by and large, it usually takes place at two major areas.

Irreecha Tulluu: - It is the ritual ceremony conducted on the top of the mountain. It is performed at the beginning of the spring season usually in the month of March. The last three months were sunny, when both men and cattle suffer from drought (shortage of water and grasses). So it is the time when the Oromo living in the vicinity are gathered to pray to their Waaqa/creator/ to give them rain. This particular solitary place is characterized by moisture conducive for praying. This ritual ceremonial practice is said to have closely related to the worship practiced by the ancient settlers of the Nile Valley (OCTB 2016).

Irreecha Malkaa (Irreecha along the river bank): This *Irreechaa* practice takes place immediately after the end of rainy season. It is celebrated in mid September (*Fulbaana*) when the darkness of rainy season with its foggy days passes and leaves place for bright season (*Birraa*). Such ritual ceremony is accomplished not only along the bank of river, but also around the lakes

and its vicinities. This *irreechaa* holiday is sometimes known as *Ayyaana Birraa* (the *Birraa* holiday). It is the time when relatives, families and clans cut apart by rivers and flood are able to meet (Asebe 2008).

The Abbaa Malkaas and the Abbaa Gadaas have vital participating communities carrying bunch of lovely grasses and flowers in their hands praise, bless and pray to *Waaqa*. Soaking that bunches of flowers and grasses after thanksgiving song is over, they lay there it over. Then after the melody *Maareyoo! Maareyoo...* Literally meaning, coming round yearly! Song by participant women decorated by *Caaccuu* (beads) cultural suits and *Siiqqee* (Cultural stick) men holding *Harooressa* (male stick) in their hands sing “*Irrechoo yaa irrecha malkaa roobaafi nagaa...*” after this praying, all of them return to their villages accompanying Abbaa Malkaa and their clan leaders. *Irreechaa* place is a symbol of peace and harmony where all men come to their God for thanking him and pray for their lasting good life (abide).

Different scholars have different opinions about the purpose of *irreechaa* ritual. For instance Asebe Regasa writes that “The *Irreechaa* has become evident since recently that the Oromo across religious, political and geographical boundaries have converged together in celebrating an annual ritual/festival called *Irreechaa*. Historically, *irreechaa* has been understood and practiced within the context Oromo religion, *Waaqeffannaa* a belief in one supernatural power called God (*Waaqa*)”.

However, as he discusses, *irreechaa* has undergone some transformations in accommodating non-religious aspects of Oromo culture and thus has played significant role in buildings, restoring Oromo culture and Oromo nationality. In the contemporary context where the ritual brings Oromo across different walks of life, *Irreechaa* should be understood more as an arena where Oromo identity is articulated, reconstructed, built and practiced, rather than as a religious-oriented or a mere thanksgiving celebration. Before delving into some historical trajectories that shaped *irreechaa* to be the way it is practiced today, He has briefly clarified on some conceptual understandings of the ritual itself as *irreechaa* is celebrated as “a sign of reciprocating *Waaqaa* in the form of providing praise for what they got in the past, and is also a forum of prayer for the future. In such rituals, the Oromo gather in places with symbolic meanings such as hilltops, river side and shades of big sacred trees”(Asebe 2008).

According to Admasu Shukri (1998), the *irreechaa* ritual refers to the habit of daily prayers and blessings and also thanking *Waaqaa* for his generosity. I agree also with *Irreechaa* as thanksgiving ritual nature.

For most scholars, *Irreechaa* ritual is a form of thanksgiving for new light that brings new growth and new hopes". But for Admasu (1998), *irreechaa* is simply an annual holy day, a periodic event for thanksgiving.

Another issue is raised by M.Assageud (1998:84), *irreechaa* ritual as "ancient religion" and *hora harsadi* as "centre of this religious ground".

But, today, there is a debate whether the *irreechaa* ritual is a religious ritual or not. Also the *irreechaa* ritual is highly magnified the culture and the solidarity of the Oromo people and women's role in Oromo world view, especially on whole ceremony. These issues are more stressed in the study. This thesis collected necessary data and filled the missed point by other researchers.

2.6. A Cultural Representation of Women in the Oromo Society.

To accomplish the objectives of the thesis, it is very important to discuss a cultural representation of women in the Oromo society. Different scholars argued different on this issue in general.

For example, Jackson (1993: 660), one feature of a gender ideology is that "men and women are relational, socially constructed, culturally specific and negotiated categories." A large body of literature reveals that this situation is a real fact of life, cutting across all cultural and socio-economic structures of every nation (Ferraro, 1995; Harris, 1995). Despite the passage of time, there are still strong cultural supports that perpetuate gender ideology. Among other things, gender ideology is chiefly perpetuated in symbols and rituals, patterns of verbal expressions and gender-based role assignments (Baron & Byrne, 1997; Holmes, 1995; Kramer, 1991; Sapiro, 1994; Schaefer & Lamm, 1995; Sen & Grown, 1987). Even though gender ideology is a real fact of life, the way it is constructed varies from one culture to the other (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1995).

So, when come to the Oromo women particularly; Hussein (2004) also states the cultural representation of women in Oromo society. "A gendered culture of a society is part and parcel of the society's complex socio-economic structure. Then, it is only when one sees it within this

broader perspective that one may build a clear understanding of gender construction (Giroux, 1997). Within the Oromo cultural practices, there are laws or legalities and various other manifestations of gender stereotypes that directly or indirectly reinforce gendered culture. In areas where the Gada System is active or a powerful

Socio-political institution, as in Boran and Guji (Hassen, 1990; Hinant, 1978; Asafa, 1996), there have been forces of law governing gender and other relationships between members of the society” J.W Hussein(2004:107).

He discussed the gender based relationship between men and women in the Oromo society by taking as an example the customary law among the Boran Oromo that is observed to govern and control the modesty of women in the society. One of the twelve cardinal laws of the Boran Oromo is the Law of Feminine Modesty that checks the indecently dressed woman.

Regarding the position of the Oromo women in the egalitarian Gada System both oral traditions and historical records show a glimpse of women’s better socio-political position although there were obvious spatial divisions of labor. Taking the case of Boran Oromo, Asmarom (1973: 19-20) stated the following gender relationship between men and women: He substantiated the existence of these cultural representations of Oromo women and roles between sexes. According to him, there is a different activity which is performed only by women like *ateetee* ceremony and other different rituals. Also, there are activities in which only men are engaged; like warfare. Asmarom (1973) also asserts that the Boran women participate in meeting indirectly air their feelings and criticize the decisions if it is problematic and unacceptable among the women through work songs that have some commentary on some infelicitous expression heard in men’s meetings or direct criticism of some unjust decision the men contemplating (1973:21). He state, men are also merited to make decision concerning ritual and all economic activities associated the performance of rite by consultation with women which is also true among the Oromo community of the study area. I observed myself that regarding the *irreechaa* ritual women have important contributions in the ceremony in the study area.

Another role of woman is cultural and political participation. For instance Hussein (2004), explain that “The Oromo woman status was influenced, when the Oromo land exploited by Emperor Menelik’s Empire during late 19th century, and the expansion of Islam and Christianity disintegrated the overall socio-political structure of the Oromo (Baxter, 1978; Hassen, 1990,

1996; Jalata, 1996). The pressure that followed religious conversion and territorial unification dilapidated the Gada System, the hallmark of the Oromo democracy” (Bernardi, 1985; Hassen, 1990; Hinnant, 1978; Asafa, 1996; Asmarom, 1973; Lewis, 1965). Unfortunately, the ruining of the Gada System created a widespread socio-political imbalance, one of which could be the wearing a way of socio-political leverage granted women in the Gada System. The other reminder of gender relationship between men and women in the Oromo society is the patriarchal view of *Waaqa*, and the matriarchal view of women’s divinities such as *ateete* and *maarame*. Hussein (2004:110). For him, *ateete* and *Maarame* are the matriarchal view of women that magnifies in cultural and religion engagement of women in the Oromo.

Additionally, his work shows as, *Ateete* ritual knowingly or unknowingly undermined its socio-political role in the Oromo society by considering *ateete* as a simple neighborhood meeting of women, designed to discipline anti-social neighbors (Baxter, 1979). Captain Harris, one of the 19th century British travelers, defined *ateete* as goddess of fecundity appeased annually (see in Ahmed, 2002). As I very well know its practice in Oromia now, the timing of the festival is not fixed as such. Whenever natural disasters fall, women gather and perform the ritual. Without any fixed timing the Oromo women used to practice *ateete* as a way of strengthening their solidarity and as a tool to counter atrocities staged against them by men.

The *ateete* ritual shows that in the traditional Oromo society, men are functionally dependent on women in many ways (Asmarom, 1973). It is a vivid indication of the place women had in the religious and cultural philosophy of the people. Although there is limited empirical evidence showing the closeness of women to nature (McCormack, 1980; Jackson, 1993), the Oromo people believe in the existence of woman/nature link (Asmarom, 1973). The *ateete* practice by women is one part of a belief system that women are intermediary figures between *Waaqaa* that represents nature and the physical world or human.

The myth has it that *Waaqaa* listens to women’s desire and instantly responds to it. This is a part of the belief system that women are closer to nature in their nurturing and life-sustaining activities (Hussein 2004:111).

Chapter Three

The Historical and Socio-Cultural Background of the Oromo in the Study Area

This chapter discusses the historical, social and cultural background of the Oromo in general and that of the study area in particular. The first part gives brief survey of the Oromo people, their history, demography, indigenous administration system, kinship and religion. The second part of the chapter describes the historical and genealogical development of the Tuulamaa Oromo moiety, whereas the third part deals with and introduces the study sites climatic condition, population characteristics, topography and different rituals performed in the area.

3.1. An Overview of the Oromo People

The term 'Oromo' is derived from the eponym *Horo*. In Oromo, a Cushitic language belonging to the Afro-Asiatic family, the phoneme *Ihl* is not always articulated before the vowels /a/. /i/ /o/.and*lu*/,this not being a phonologically relevant trait. Thus the name (H) Oromo could be pronounced both with and without the initial *Ih*/.The link between these two names is made clear in the ritual of adoption, when the verbal form of the word is used to describe the process of becoming a full member of the Oromo community (Gemechu 1994:22).

The Oromo people are one of the well known peoples of the earth (Martial de Salviac 1901:5). Mohammed (1990) notes that; The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the Horn of Africa (Mohammed, 1990: xi). They occupy a land that extends from northeastern Ethiopia to east central Kenya and from the Sudan in the west and Somalia in the east (Lewis, 1984: 590 cited in Getu, 2015). There is no agreement among scholars about the population of the Oromo, but a consensus seems to reveal that within the present day Ethiopia alone, the Oromo account either the majority or a good half of the total population (Lewis, 1984a: 571). The Oromo, according to (1994) are divided into five major groups: the Tuulamaa and the Machaa, the Sabboo and the Goonaa, the Rayyaa and the Aseboo, the Siikkoo and the Mandoo and the Ituu and the Humbannaa (Gemechu 1994:23).

The Oromia Region is one of the nine regional states administrated under the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. It covers the largest portion of the land (367,000km²) which is located 2⁰ N and 12⁰N latitude and 34⁰E and 44⁰E longitude(Gada Melba1988:23 in Bayisa, 2011) with a total population of the region 26,993,933 (CSA: 2007). The Oromo people are living in different region of Ethiopia outside Oromia region together with other ethnic groups and they also live in

other North East African Countries like Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi (Dirribi, 2009).

Oromia is the region that is naturally endowed with fertile and rich land resources that are especially suitable for agriculture and it is the home to an exotic fauna and flora. The region is ecologically and agriculturally the richest region in Ethiopia (Gada Melba 1988:1). The Oromia regional state is divided into 20 administrative Zones. Each zone is subdivided into a number of small administrative units called Aanaa (district) whereas each district is further subdivided into smallest administrative units called *Ganda*, mean the smallest administrative unit being the rural peasant association.

Different scholars denied the Ethiopian origin of the Oromo people and presented the Oromo nation as outsiders, as the name Ethiopia didn't represent Oromo. For example, Jeanne (1956:171 cited in Bayisa 2011) notes that they are "...of certain origin although many theorist were exist of its origin." But, new findings are coming up with new results related to the origin of the Oromo by the Culture and Tourism Bureau state of the Oromia.

Previously, different scholars concluded that the Oromo people originated from the southern part of Ethiopia. But, currently these idea and conclusion were falsified by recent scholars; as to them, the Oromo originated from the north and moved southwards. According to Alemayehu Haile et.al (2006:17), the Oromo people were living in northeastern parts of Africa from the early period, and it could be said that the movement has taken place from the early period, and it could be said that the movement has taken place from north to south. On this, they note that "the Oromo population as a members of the Cushitic family had started to live in northeast part of Africa from 3,500 B.C. to 2000 B.C with its own culture and language (Alemayehu Haile 2006:17).

Gada Melba (1988) also notes that formerly, as the Cushitic people in general and Oromo in the particular originated in the north and then moved southwards that "the land of Kush, Nubia, or the ancient Ethiopia in middle and lower Nile is the home of the Cushitic speakers. It was most probably from that the subsequently dispersed and become differentiated into separate linguistic and cultural groups" (Gada Melba 1988:4).

3.1.1. The Tuulamaa Gada system

The Gada system is an indigenous egalitarian democratic system practiced among the Oromo nation of East Africa for the last six hundred years (Zelalem Tesfaye 2015).

The Gada is a time-honored age and generation-set system practiced among the Oromo people who regarded the system as their common heritage and as one of their major identity makers. Gada is crucial organizing structure among the Oromo people and its social, political, ritual and legal aspects provides the framework for order and meaning of life. Gada organizes society via councils (*yaa'aa*), laws and injunctions, outlining rights and duties of its members. The Oromo recognized the Gada System as part of their cultural heritage and as a contemporary system of governance that functions in concert with the modern state system. The system has long been practiced by the Borena, Guji, Karayu, Tuulamaa, Arsi, Ittu, Humbana, Afran Qallo, Akichu, Macha, and Gabra clans of the Oromo Nation (OCTB, 2017).

Additionally, different scholars tried to give definition of the Gada system at different times. Among this, the prominent one is Asmarom Legese, a scholar who studied the Boran Oromo Gada System. He defines the Gada system as “a system of Gada classes (*Luba*) or segments of genealogical generations that succeed each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities”(Asmarom Legese 1973:50). According to him, “it is an institution that represents an extreme development of a type of social structure known to anthropologist as age-sets”.

Gada Melba (1988), also defines the Gada system as “the systems that organizes the male Oromo people in to groups or sets that give them different responsibilities and social status in the society every eight years”, It guides the over all aspects of the society like “religious, political, social, economic, philosophical, artistic historical aspects and provides a method of time reckoning (Gada Melba 1988:10-11) and a calendar system of the Oromo society. It is the law of the society, a system by which Oromo administer, defend their territory and rights; maintain and guard the economy and through which all their aspirations are fulfilled”(Gada Melba 1988:11).

(Assefa Jalata 2012) also states the Gada System as “as the Totality of the Oromo Civilization”. The critical and comprehensive understanding of the classical Oromo civilization requires studying the historical, cultural, political, philosophical, religious, linguistic, and geographical foundations of Oromo society. This is a monumental task that cannot be adequately achieved at this historical moment. Currently our knowledge of the social and cultural history of Oromia (the Oromo nation) is very limited and fragmented. For generations, the Oromo have mainly transmitted their history and culture through oral discourse (Assefa Jalata 2012: 130).

The Gada system functions on the bases of age set and generation sets. According to Asmarom Legesse (1973:51), the Gada classes or age sets are the group of people who share the same status and who perform their rites of passage together whereas the Gada grades are the stages of development through which the groups pass. The former refer to the collectivity, whereas the latter refers to a conceptual scheme that defines the kind of activities, rights, and duties the groups assume successively throughout their activities careers. To complete one Gada generation it takes forty years there are five segments or Gada classes within it (Asmarom Legesse 2000:30).

The Gadaa system has the principles of checks and balances (through periodic succession of every eight years), and division of power (among executive, legislative, and judicial branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots (Assefa Jalata 2012:132).

Other principles of the system have included balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties (Bayisa, 1971, 1993). There have been five *miseensas* (parties) in *gadaa*; these parties have different names in different parts of Oromia as the result of Oromo expansion and the establishment of different autonomous administrative systems (Lepisa, 1975; Ibssa 1992 cited in Assefa Jalata 2012: 132).

In general, the Gada system is the system of self government and system of political, religious, social, economic and ritual activities of the Oromo people through which different age sets and age grades share the responsibility among the community and practice in different field of

actions like war and political leadership. They also celebrate different indigenous ritual ceremonies in general.

3.1.2. Kinship System

According to the Oromo culture, kinship relations play a central role in the society. Susan Omura (1994) state that, “The father is the head of the household but the true leader of the family is the mother. The day-to-day life of the family is dependent on the mother. The family may live in close proximity with other family members and relatives (Susan Omura 1994:7). According to Bluckhurst (1978:246), the Oromo descent system largely follows the patrilineal descent system and patrilocal residence after marriage, especially among the Shawa Oromo. On this, Blackhurst (1978:247 cited in Negesa, 2011:36) also notes that “at marriage or shortly thereafter, a son built his own house an indication that a fledgling independent domestic unit has been brought in to being”.

Regarding the Oromo genealogy, in earlier times, different scholars agreed that the Oromo people descended from the two major groups: Booran and Baarentu (Gada Melba 1988:8, Alemayehu 2009:20, Assefa 2010). According to the view, Booran was the senior and Baarentuu is the junior.

According to the Oromo oral tradition, these Boran and Barentu moieties descended from the same family stock called Oromo (Baxter 1983: 129-149). Despite the fact that the Oromo claim that they descended from the same family stock, Oromo, they do not limit their kinships to biological ancestry. The Oromo kinship system has been based on a biological and social descent. The Oromo recognize social ancestry and avoid the distinction between the biological and social descent since they know that the formation of Oromo people hood was based on the biological and social kinship.

The Oromo have had a long history of cultural contacts with non-Oromo through war, marriage, economic relationship, and group adoption (Baxter, 1994: 174; Braukamper, 1989: 428). However, when there were wars and conflicts between the Oromo and their neighbors on economic and cultural resources, such as land, water, territory, trade route, and religious and political issues, the former imposed specific cultural policies to structurally and culturally change the conquered people in order to Oromize them and consolidate Oromo society. Oromo laws strictly forbade the distinction between the social and biological descents (Gemechu 1993: 27).

P. T. W. Baxter (1994: 174) explains that “the adoption of adults, and often all their dependents used to be a common practice, which thereby incorporated them and their descendants into the family, and hence into the lineage, clan. These practices, though almost certainly widespread and frequent, took place despite the firm ideological contention that descent and inheritance were both rigidly patrilineal. Oromo social theory, like most others, was often very flexible in practice.”(Assefa 2012: 137-138).

Through the process of group or individual adoption known as *moggaasa* or *guudifacha*, non-Oromo were adopted to Oromo *gossa* (confederation of clans), and were structurally and culturally Oromized; these assimilated Oromo trace their descent to Oromo moieties and to the original Oromo (Braukamper, 1980: 25,cited in Assefa 2012).

Although the Oromo had a biologically and socially constructed complex kinship system, as we will see below, the formation and expression of Oromo people hood are mainly culturally shaped (Baxter 1994: 248). A better understanding of Oromo people hood and cultural identity requires the identification and exploration of the main characteristics and essence of Oromo social organizations and politico-religious institutions. Let us have some understanding of the Oromo kinship system on macro and micro-levels since it has been the basic social structure for defining common interests in resource management and utilization and in the process of establishing political and religious leadership and in forming leagues or confederations among Oromo society.

Wherever the Oromo were divided into sub-moieties and clans, there is “clear distinction between clans and lineages. The clan (*qomoo*) is first of all a social group, consisting of several descent groups who not all need be Oromo. The heart of every clan is compounded of a cluster of lineages tracing their descent to the ancestor who gave his name to the clan” (Bartels, 1990: 205).

There were five sets of sub-moieties that extended from the Booran and Barentu moieties: the Sabboo and the Gonaa, the Machaa and Tuulama, and the Raya and Assaboo, the Sikkoo and the Mandoo, and the Ittuu and Humbaana (Gemechu, 1993: 24-37). The first three sets belong to Borana, and the second two sets are branches of Barentu. The descendants of these moieties occupy specific areas in Oromia today: The Raya and Assabo branches occupy northern Oromia (i.e., include some part of Tigray, the whole of Wallo and some part of northern Shawa). The regions of Machaa and Tuulamaa include most of the present regions of Shawa, Wallaga,

Ilubabor, and the Gibe region. The branches of Sabbo and Goona occupy some part of the present Sidamo, part of Gammu-Gofa, and Boran, Gabra, and Guji lands, and some part of Kenya. The descendants of Sikko and Mando occupy the Arsi and Bale lands, and some part of the Rift Valley. Finally, the branches of Itu and Humbaana live in most of Haragee and some part of Wallo in the north. Nevertheless, there have not been demarcated boundaries among these parts of Oromia (Asseffa Jalata 2012:139).

According to Gada Melba (1988:8), marriage among the Oromo occurs only according to clan-exogamy, as a result of the existence of a high degree of homogeneity within the community. It is a system that seeks mate selection outside of the lineage, clan, sub-clan and etc.

3.1.3 Oromo Religion

Oromo society like any society has been conscious of its cultural identity, its relation to nature, and the existence of a powerful force that regulates the connection between nature and society.

The Oromo knowledge of society and the world can be classified into two: a) cultural and customary knowledge known as *beekumsa aadaa*, and b) knowledge of laws known as *beekumsa seera*. The knowledge of laws is further subdivided into *seera Waaqa* (the laws of God), and *seera nama* (the laws of human beings). The laws of God are immutable, and the laws of human beings can be changed thorough consensus and democratic means. Oromo customary knowledge is a public and common knowledge that guides and regulates the activities of members of society; some elements of this customary knowledge can develop into rules or laws depending on the interest of society (Gemechu, 1993: 20-23).

Assefa Jalata also notes that, “*Waaqa*, Oromo religious and philosophical world views consider the organization of spiritual, physical and human worlds as interconnected phenomena, and *Waaqa*, the creator, regulates their existence and functions in balanced ways explaining how Oromos believe that *Waaqa* directs the world from above and controls everything from within”(Assefa 2010).

The Indigenous Oromo religion belief centers around one God, *Waaqa*, who is responsible for everything that happens to human beings. As Oromos adopted Islam or Christianity, they maintained the concept of *Waaqa* and incorporated their beliefs into the new religions. Gada Melba also notes about the religions that are accepted by the Oromo people, namely [indigenous] Oromo religion, Islam and Christianity. He also remarks that before the introduction of

Christianity and Islam, the Oromo people practiced their own religion; which was given the name *Waaqeffanna* (Gada Malba 1988:19).

Waaqeffannaa is a type of religion with belief in one *Waaqaa*. The word “*Waaqeffannaa*” is derived from the Afaan Oromoo, called *Waaqaa*, which literally means the creator and master, God, in which given to that indigenous Oromo religion, currently the followers of this religion are called “*Waaqeffattoota*”.

The society under the study has stated the fact that they recognize their religion. As they believe in *Waaqaa*, the Supreme Being and the sky as the residence. In relation to this, the black identity of *Waaqaa* in Oromo belief, Alemayehu (2006) notes, “Black identity is considered as a symbol of holiness and divinity, Oromo worshipped in one God and believed that this God has black color similar to that of the Cushites and the Oromo nation. As the Cushite and an African the Oromo nation recognizes the supremacy of the black over all things. That is why there is always a mention of the black in all Oromo blessing and rituals” (Alemayehu 2006:26).

Kassam (2007) notes, that the Oromo use three concepts to explain the organization and interconnection of human, spiritual and physical worlds. These three concepts are *ayyaana* (spirit), *uuma* (nature), and *safuu* (moral and ethical order). The Oromo believe that through *ayyaana*, *Waaqaa* (God) creates and regulates human and physical worlds in balanced ways. This *ayyaana* also maintains the connection between the creator and the created. Oromo society has organizing principles for its known and unknown universe like any society; and *ayyaana* is a major organizing principle of Oromo cosmology through which the concepts of time and creation are ordered (Kassam, 2007 cited in Assefa 2012:142).

Ayyaana as a system of classification and an organizing principle of Oromo cosmology establishes the connection between *Waaqaa* (the Creator/God) and the created (nature and society) by differentiating and at the same time uniting the created things and the Creator (Kassam, 2007). The Oromo believe that *Waaqaa*, the Supreme Being, created *ayyaana* and uses it to organize scattered things into order. As (1993: 95) explains, “*ayyaana* is the mechanism by which the creator propels itself into becoming its own opposite, and dwells in that which it creates. This is then transposed to explain the basic principles that embed themselves in the diverse Oromo institutions, since there is no distinction between the laws of thought, the laws of nature, history and society.” The concept *uuma* includes everything created by *Waaqaa* including

ayyaana. *Safuu* is an ethical and moral “code that Oromos use to differentiate bad from good and wrong from right.

Safuu constitutes the ethical basis upon which all human action should be founded; it is that which directs one on the right path; it shows the way in which life can be best lived” (Gemechu, 1993: 255). Kuwe (1997) also notes that, in times when *safuu* is lost and *seera Waaqaa* (law of God) is violated, Oromo women use their *siqqee* for a rather political purpose (Kuwe Kumsa 1997: 122).

Therefore, in Oromo culture, *Safuu* means giving prior respect to the creator. The concept *Safuu* is not merely manifested in religion, but there is also *safuu* towards each creature.

Another important concept in Oromo indigenous religion is *qaalluu*. According to Gada Melba (1988), the *qaalluu* institution is one of the most important in the Oromo culture and society and is believed to have existed since mythical times.

Different scholars state the following; The *qaalluu* institution has been committed to social justice, the laws of God, and the rule of law, and fair deliberation; the *qaalluu* “residence was considered politically neutral ground, suitable for debating controversial issues and for adjudicating highly charged disputes, although he himself might not take a prominent role in proceedings” (Kelly, 1992: 166). The *qaalluu* institution has played an important role in protecting original Oromo culture, religion, world view, and identity. When those Oromos who were influenced by this institution kept their Oromo names, most Oromos who were converted to Islam or Christianity willingly or by force abandoned their Oromo names and adopted Muslim or Christian names depending on their borrowed religion. The *qaalluu* can be credited with having played an indirect role in the preservation of the Oromo identity and the Oromo political system. The criteria to be a *qaalluu* included seniority in lineages, respectability in the community, expertise in ritual practices, moral qualification, and respect for cultural taboos, sound social status, and other leadership qualities (Knutsson, 1967: 66-67). The leader of all *qaalluus* was known as *Abbaa Muudaa* (father of the anointment) who was considered to be the prophet and spiritual leader of Oromo society. Oromo pilgrims traveled to the residence of *Abbaa Muudaa* to receive his blessing and anointment to be ritual experts in their respective regions (Knutsson, 1967: 148 cited in Assefa Jalata 2012:143).

Abbaa Muudaa served as the spiritual center and symbol of Oromo unity and assisted all Oromo branches to keep in touch with one another for several centuries; “as the Jews believe in Moses

and the Muslims in Muhammad, the Oromo believe in their *Abbaa Muuda* (Hassen, 1991: 79). *Abbaa Muuda* like other *qaalluu* leaders encouraged harmonious and democratic relations in Oromo society. According to the *qaallu* mythology, *Abbaa Muuda*, the original Oromo religious leader was descended from heaven (Knutsson, 1967; Gololcha, 1988).

Oromo representatives traveled to the highlands of the mid-south Oromia to honor *Abbaa Muudaa* and to receive his blessing and anointment that qualified them as pilgrims known as *jiilaa* to be ritual experts in their respective areas (Knutsson, 1967: 148). When Oromo representatives went to him from far and near places to receive his blessings, *Abbaa Muudaa* commanded them “not to cut their hair and to be righteous, not to recognize any leader who tries to get absolute power, and not to fight among themselves” (abide).

According to my informant Adem Beriso, the ritual house of *Qaalluu* is called *Galma*. Each *Ayyaana* has its own *Galma* and its own special ceremonies.

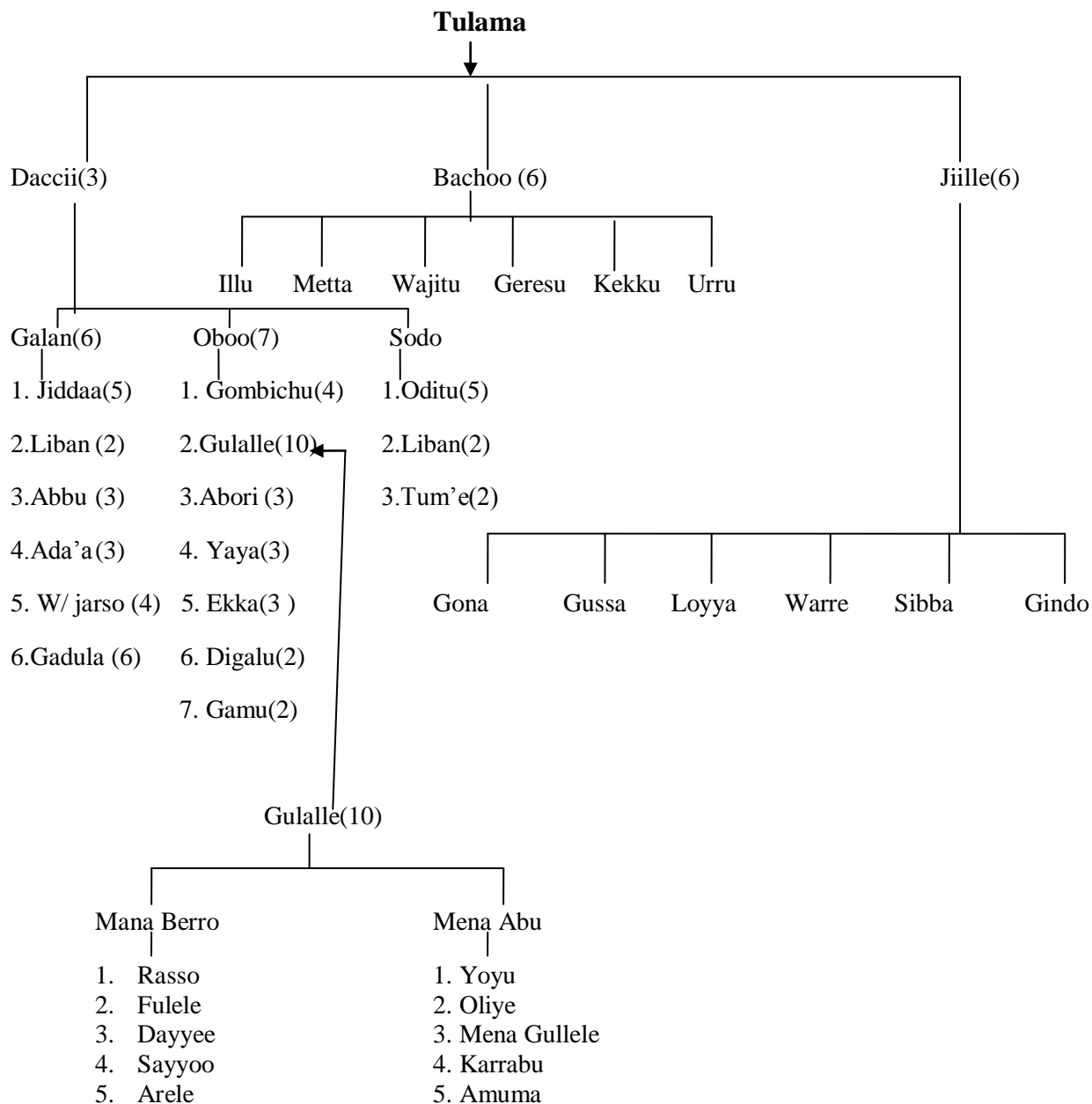
3.2. Genealogy and Settlement of the Tuulamaa Oromo

The peoples live around Buraayyuu town are largely Tuulamaa Oromoo. According to Alemayehu Diro (2004:49 and cited in Negesa 2011) Raayyaa had two sons. *Tuulamaa* and *Machaa*. The genealogical development of the Tuulamaa Oromo of the study area is discussed as follows.

Among the major Oromo clans Tuulamaa inhabited the ancient territory of the Cushitic peoples in what is today central Ethiopia, Shawa. According to elders and Alemayehu Haile (2009:18), Tuulamaa is the elder son and he has settled on the holdings of his father; whereas the younger son, Machaa, occupied a new land. Alemayehu notes that also Tuulama and Machaa settled in far off areas from each other due to the conflict between their mothers (co-wives of Raayyaa) known as Sire and Akitu respectively. So, the Machaa moved to a place comfortable for his family known as Odaa Bisil which currently a place located in Wallaggaa and the center for Gada assembly of Machaa Moiety.

The Tuulamaa moiety is divided into three sub-moieties: *Dachi*, *Jiillee* and *Bachoo*. Each sub moiety is further subdivided into smaller units known as Gaza (clan), *balbala* (line of descent through lineage), *warra* (sub lineage) and *mana* (family) (Temesgen Chibsa 2009:37 cited in Negesa 2011:37).

Figure 1: Genealogy of the Tulama Oromo



Source: Alemayehu Haile 2009:22

Note: The number found in the bracket after each name shows the number of sons each had.

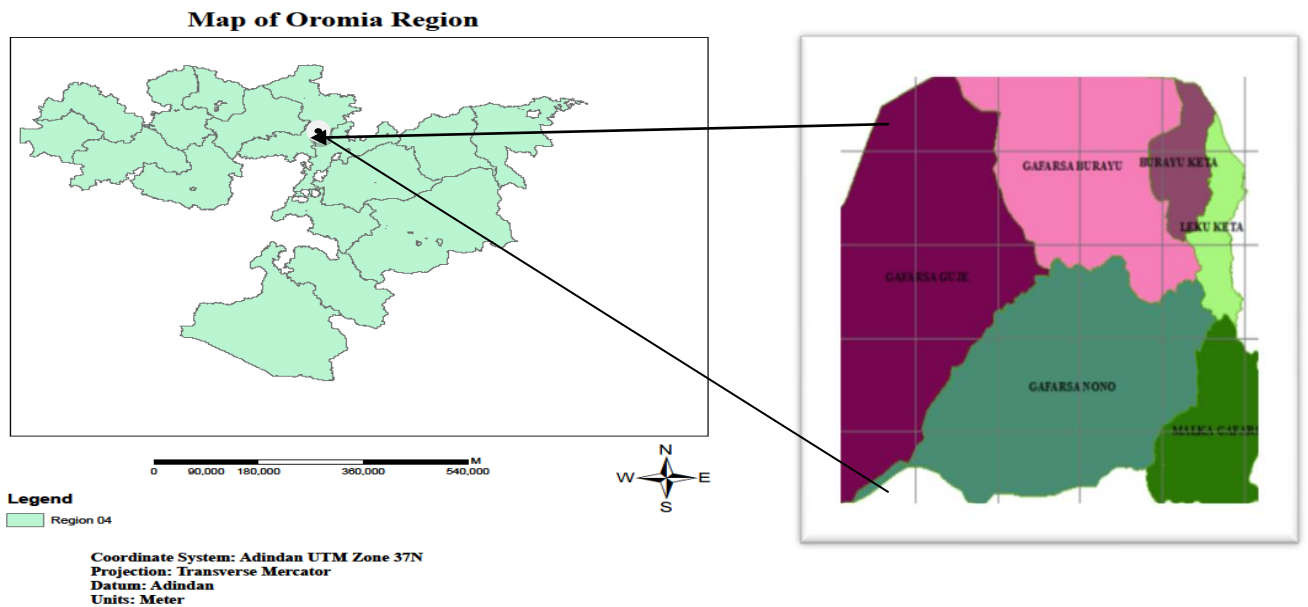
Oboo among the Daccii the largest *gosa* followed by Galan. Daccii is divided into three clans: Galaan, Sooddoo, Oboo. The oboo is the clan that is residing mainly around Buraayyu town and rural of Walmara district. The Obo clans also hold the “Chaffe Aannanii” (the place where indigenous laws and proclamations are made by the Gada general assembly), whereas a place where all Tuulamaa Oromo handover the power transferring the general assembly in Gada system is “*Caffee Tuma*”.

3.3. Burayyuu Town

Burayyuu Town is located in the western fringe of Addis Ababa, along the Addis Ababa-Ambo road at about 15km from the center of Addis Ababa (Piazza) and nearly 27 km east of Holotaa Town, the capital of Welmera District.

According to the Burayyuu town Finance and Economic Development Office (BFEDO) report, administratively, Burayyuu town was under special Zone of Oromia surrounding Finfinnee City Administration. Presently, (1998) the Town has been granted 1st step town status. The town is located between 9⁰02’ to 9⁰02’30” N Latitudes and 38⁰03’30” to 38⁰ 41’30”E longitudes. It is bounded by the Addis Ababa City in the east, Sulultaa District in the Walmeraa District in the west and Sabbataa Hawaas District in the South and North West. Addis Ababa and Finfinnee fire Wood Development projects in the north, Gafarsaa Water Reservoir (Dam) in the West, and Gafarsaa in the south and North West (BFEDO, 2018).

Map 1: Map Showing the Burayyuu Town



A Map by Lami Gamachu Sep, 2018 (an export at Oromia Urban Land Management Bureau)

3.4. Physical Setting of the Town

3.4.1. Area and Shape

According to Burayyuu Town Finance and Economic Development Office), the existing built up area (developed as urban) is estimated to be nearly 8900 ha. while the area under the administration of the town, including the adjacent peasant associations. Whereas the existing shape of the town is somewhat linear, this is, elongated along the Addis Ababa-Ambo road. Linear development is inconvenient and incurs high for provision of urban infrastructure. However, presently there are some expansions towards southern and northern directions (BFEDO, 2018).

3.4.2. Topography and Drainage

As the town is situated at the southwest foot of Entoto Ridge, most of the existing built up areas of the Town lies on rugged terrain (land profile with steep slopes, deep streams or river valleys with steep gradients, deep river/stream banks, gullies and ridges) with limited flat lands.

On the other hand, most of the proposed expansion areas are characterized by gentle slopes and undulated plains (northwest) with limited steep slopes and deep gorges (South) along Burayyuu and Akaki Rivers,

Altitude of the town in the north ranges from 2600 meters above sea level (M.A.S.L.) in the south at Akaki River Bailey to 2450 M.A.S.L in the north at Entoto Ridge (measured from base map 1:5000)

Regarding drainage, the Town is found in the Awash River drainage basin, and it is particularly drained by Akaki River. There are many other perennial rivers and/or streams in the Akaki River Catchments. Buraayyuu, Leku and Segoo are the major ones. The discharge of these streams is relatively very small during dry seasons where as the volume of these rivers/streams drastically increase during summer season (June-September) and inundates the low gradient areas close to their banks. Therefore, adequate buffer zone should be reserved along the river bank.

A data on climatic condition of Buraayyuu Town is not available, But according to Obbo Magersa Dadhi, the key informant of the study, the climatic condition of Addis Ababa where the nearest meteorological station is given as follows:

The (BFEDO, 2018) reports, the mean annual temperature, the mean annual maximum and the mean annual minimum temperatures of the Town is reckoned to be about 14⁰c, 22⁰c and 6⁰c, respectively, which is the characteristic of a warm temperate climate. And the mean annual rainfall is about 1188 mm. The highest rainfall concentration (70%-80%) occurs from June to September. The mean monthly relative humidity for the nearest meteorological station varies from 79% in August to 49% in December. Such humidity is very comfortable (BFEDO, 2018).

3.4.3. Demography of the Town.

The population count made by population and housing census conducted in 1999 E.C has been considered here to see the trend of the population size of the town. The 1999 population census puts the population size of the town at 63,889. Based on the 1999 census, projected population of the town in the year 2004 is 78,333. whereas population counted in year 2003 E.C by Buraayyuu town municipality the population size of the town is around 114,426

Table 1. Distribution of the Population of Burayyuu Town by broad age group and sex in 1

| Age& Sex | 0-4 | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60+ |
|----------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Male | 5583 | 5154 | 4696 | 5474 | 5332 | 4932 | 3898 | 3302 | 2238 | 1755 | 1032 | 736 | 1455 |
| Female | 5364 | 5228 | 5332 | 6874 | 6408 | 5995 | 3347 | 2895 | 1486 | 1134 | 921 | 516 | 1556 |

Source: Population census of 1999 based. According to this Table, Burayyuu town had about 34 percent of its population under year age, 3 percent above 60 year of age and 64percent in the intermediate age group.

A significant population of the Town was within the age group between 0-14 implying a higher young dependence ratio. The young dependency ratio for the town was estimated to be 34 percent meaning that 100 persons in the working age group (15-64) had to support on the average 3 person whose age is between (0-14)

As to the sex composition, a glance at the above Table reveals the number of females in Burayyuu Town to be slightly greater than that of males.

According to the table, the number of females and males in 1999 was 73500(male) and 76500, (Female) respectively giving an average over all sex ratio close to 100

Migration is one of the components of population dynamics which can affect population size of an area when its volume is significant. The report produced by CSA present only in ward movements of population while it is necessary to have both in ward and out ward movements as it is the balance of these two movements that would show us the influence of migration size (BFEDO, 2018).

Regarding religion distribution of Buraayyuu town, there is no report by CSA, which described in the profile of the town. Thus, according to my informant, Aadde Abarraash; Christian Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim, Catholic and *Waaqeffannaa* are the very well known religion at the area.

4. The Ritual Ceremonies in the Study Area.

The other thing that should be discussed is the ritual ceremonies performing in the study area. There are different rituals celebrated by the community at different time and places. Among these are the following.

***Ateete* ceremony:** According to my informants, "*Ateete* is a deity or divinity which women worship in the belief that it makes them fecund, happy, wealthy and prosperous, etc." (Abarraash A. and Oromo-English Dictionary 1989).

Ayyaana irreechaa (Irreechaa ritual): is celebrated at the end of September and the beginning of October at different riversides and in the spring at mountain sides.

Ayyaana Qaammee (Qame ritual): is celebrated during summer season, around mid August, according to the Oromo calendar *Dhahaa*. According to the key informant Obbo Magarsaa Daadhii this ritual is not celebrated equally among all Tuulama Oromoo at the present time except few clans like Jiddaa. The other clans were celebrating it with other Ethiopian ethnic groups in September 11 on the New Year ceremony according to the Ethiopian calendar. Abbaa Caffee Obbo Caalaa Soori and Aadde Abarrash Tola told me that, this ritual is held for the purpose of mate selection. They call it in *Afaan Oromoo* "*aduu wal argaafi itti wal ilaallatan*". Which literally means, a day of meeting each other and choosing love mate.

Ayyaana Ammasqalaa (Meskel Ritual): is held on 27, but not only for the reason of "the finding of the true cross" like in Orthodox Christians, but also to celebrate Meskel for the beginning bright season. The informants told me that, the Meskel ritual day for the finding of the True Cross, and the new bright season is celebrated by Tuulamaa Oromo Overlap and today they celebrate on the same day together for both purposes. Abbaa Caffee Obbo Caalaa Soorii and Obbo Magarsaa Daadhii told me that; the Meskel ritual is also known as Maskala Birraa and celebrated from the early period among the Oromo people and now it overlapping with the Meskel celebration of the Christian Orthodox. A few Tuulama Oromoo who are the followers of Orthodox Christian are celebrating both rituals.

Ayyaana Bixxillee (Betile Ritual): is one of the indigenous rituals celebrated on November twenty second, by cooking local bread called '*Bexxillee*' and people stay outside their home

during the night of this ritual ceremony. Now days, this indigenous ritual is not celebrated by the local community because of the influences of different religious organization and new religion movements.

Ayyaana Jaarraa: is a type of indigenous ritual celebrated by the community once within eight years for the purpose of the handover of the Gada power to the next age grades and succeeding Gada Class. It is performed at Odaa Nabe of Tuulamaa Oromoo.

Finally, the local communities celebrated the Christian religion rituals because most of them are converted to the Christian religion: especially the Epiphany, Christ mass and Easter; and also there are the local communities who celebrate Islamic religious ceremony, like Mowled and Eid al Feter (Obbo Magarsaa Daadhi, Abbaa caffee Caalaa soorii, and Aadde Abarraash Tolaa).

Chapter Four: Finding

This chapter explains and discusses the concept and meaning of *irreechaa* ritual from different perspectives, the purposes of the *Irreechaa* ritual as well as categories of the ritual. The chapter also introduces the *irreechaa* ritual in relation to different social aspects of the Oromo people, such as the relationship between the *irreechaa* ritual and Gada system. Furthermore, the chapter introduces the role of women in *irreechaa* ritual, symbolic meaning of the *irreechaa* ritual with special focus on the research objectives that describe the cultural significance of the *irreechaa* ritual for Oromo people with a focus on the study area. Finally the challenges that are facing this ritual would also be discussed.

4.1 The Concept of *Irreechaa* ritual and in Relation to *Ateetee* Ceremony

Irreechaa is defined as “the rite of praying and/or thanks giving” for what *Waaqa tokkichaa* (Supreme God) gives people and does for them. The Oromo gives thanks to *Waaqaa* (informant Magarsaa). (Obbo Alamayyoo, my informant and researcher at OCC) told me that,

“Irreechi marga jiidhaa corqaa qulqulluu, kan namaa fi bineeldotaan hin tuttuqamnee fi hin dheedamne, habaaboo waliin qabatanii kan ittiin waaqa galateeffatanidha”

This means,

*“The word *Irreechaa* refers to thanksgiving by holding untouched and fresh green grasses, which are not accessed by human being and grazed by animals, by mixing with recently yellow flower called “keelloo”. The term *Irreechaa* ritual also refers to a broad array of concepts which includes; gift that anyone applies to *Waaqaa*”*

Therefore, according to these informants, *irreechaa* is giving thanks to God (*Waaqaa*) by holding in their hands untouched and fresh green grass. This untouched and green grass shows, the respect given to God.

Regarding the *irreechaa* ritual, (among my informants Magarsaa D. and Aadde Aberraash A.) said that, “when we are talking about *irreechaa*, the main issue that we don’t miss is *Ateete* ceremony”. *Irreechaa* ritual and *ateete* ceremony are the two interrelated institutions among the Oromo people. They are interconnected and inseparable in case of its purpose in the Oromo world view. So, before I am going to discuss the concept of *irreechaa* ritual, it is better to discuss and see the concept of *ateete*.

The word *ateete* refers to a sacred ritual ceremony set for *Ayyoo* (mother), *Maaram* (*Saint Mery*) and *Waaqa* as thanksgiving by women who have children and a lamentation of the barren/infertile women. According to my informant Tsige, it is the name of the ritual in which *Maaram* is invoked.

According to Adde (Mrs) Loomii G. (informant), *Ateete* and *Maaram* are different concepts that have many functions in Oromo religion. The materials used during ' their ceremonies are different. For instance, the cloth they dress. But both *ateete* and *maaram* are believed the good spirit of her husband, which performed as to be females.

The purpose of the *ateete* ritual is to help cattle fertility, and to help oxen plough well. There are *ateete* cattle in Oromo culture. When a heifer drops a calf, her butter will be stored and used during *ateete* ceremony. Yogurt (*silga*) is also required to be kept for two weeks before the *ateete* ritual. That is to show, a priority they have to God.

Ateete ritual can be performed in June, September and January or in any other month. Most of the time, the *ateete* ritual is performed on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (Informant: Magarsaa D., Abarraash A. and Alamayyoo H.). But, women can begin to celebrate the *ateete* ritual on Friday and splash butter on Saturday. Or they can begin on Wednesday, Thursday and splash butter on Thursday and Friday, respectively.

Traditionally, it is believed that Monday is the day of the ghost. Wednesday is believed to harden heart towards the people. But the proper date for *ateete* ritual is determined by *hayyuu* (time rocking experts). The *ateete* ceremonies are usually performed every two or three times a year (Informants: Caalaa S. and Diribi D.).

According to informants, Alamayyoo H., Caalaa D. and Loomii G, there are three types of *ateete*. The first one is *ateete Guulaa*; it is *ateete* that is performed when the husband has gone through all the rituals of the Gadaa. In such *ateete*, *Oromo* women are required to

participate in *ateetee* ceremony. Accordingly, wife of *Guulaa* (an individual who have gone through all the rituals of the *Gadaa* and who has completed his ruling period behind Him) as a ritual efficient, *kalaalee* will be elected and spill the melted butter over the women who perform *ateetee* ceremony. When the son of *kalaalee* (*literarily it means guard*) has gone through all the rituals of the *Gadaa*, the *Kalaalee* would be called *cifiree*, (team of guards) ;(Inf: Obbo Caalaa S.). The women should not perform *ateetee* ritual with plaited hair. Their hair should be made *daabee* (it should attain down to neck, the front and 'the sides). “*Baala qobboon daabee ishee haguggatti*” Literarly, it is to means he should cover her hair with leaves of *qobboo* (*ricinus communis*). Her husband is expected to carry *Caaccuu* (necklace of beads) because; He passed through the value and norms of Gada system.

The next types of *ateetee* are *ateetee haraa* and *ateetee humbii* that are performed at the end /the begining of harvest in autumn and winter, for peace, fertility and prosperity. These types of *ateetee* were performed twice a year, followed by the *irreechaa* ritual (informants).

During these *ateetee* ceremonies, on the third day, five women perform a fertility ritual by splash their chest, and neck with melted pure butter. Women are expected to eat porridge. Porridge will be served with *laaloo* (tray made of straw). On the fifth day, subsequent to the *ateetee* ceremony the husband will take his cattle to the place where the cattle will drink *huraa* (mineral water). On mid-day, the husband will return cattle to his premises. When the cattle return home, the wife will milk cows and pour the milk on the back of cows. This is believed to help cows' breed well.

During *ateetee* ceremony, an old healthy cow which was subjected as *ateetee* cow should be sacrificed for the cattle to breed well, for a bull to serve a cow, for a fertility to be successful and for a land to bear a good harvest. It is *safuu* (immoral) to sacrifice (i.e, a cow with broken horns, blind eye, bend tail and other defects).

If a person does not have a cow, he can slaughter coffee (coffee fruits stewed in butter) (Informant Gamachu). The slaughtering of coffee has been symbolic; it means it's perceived as He slaughter the cow to fulfill the role (*qooda guutuufi*). This implies that, the women believe that as *Waaqaa* (God) didn't hear their prayers and so that God deserve a pure and full thing from them.

Informant Gamachu told me that, "the Cherry-like coffee seeds are bitten open and stewed in melted butter. The butter enters the fruits and reaches the beans inside. These beans, which, because of their shape, account for the coffee fruits 'use as a symbol of the woman: their shape is reminded of the female organ much as cowry-shells are". When the husband sacrifices a cow, the *ateetee* spirit will be on to his spouse. That is a value of praising God. The people anoint sticks with butter and support it against their body. The husband will make libations by curdling the fresh milk. He is also expected to set up two green poles in front of the house. It implies to show the ceremony would help to obtain a prosperous life. The neighbor peoples eat meat, drink yogurt, (*buqurii*) unfermented liquid, and traditional beer (*farsoo*). The milk will be served with *guchuma* (large gourd). The gathered people then praise the cattle in their song. The women start their chant during the night as the following:

Faaruu ateetee

Song of ateetee English translation

Oo...hayyee hayyee.....oo..Haye haye
yaa sooreettiiyou rich madam
dhala sooreessaa.....the descendent of rich
giiftee rambaa gootee elmattee..... a madam sufficiently milked the cows
ee,hayyee hayyee.....ee..haye
ee, hayyee hayyee.....ee..haye
yaa sooreettiyou rich madam
dhala sooreessaa.....the descendent of rich
ee hayyee hayyee.....ee..haye haye
eenfaa gootee elmattee.....a madam sufficiently milked the cow
ee hayyee hayyee.....ee..haye haye
sooretti qallaathe slim daughter of a brave
sooreyyii hin baatte okolee.....the rich held milk pot
ohoo hayyee hayyee.....oho haye hayee
ilililiiililili(ululating)
yaa sooreettii.....hey rich madam
dhala sooreessaa.....the son of rich
ohoo hayye hayyee oho haye haye
ohoo baqsanke dhimiibaadha Oho.Your splashed butter is filtered

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <i>ohoo hayyee hayyee</i> | oho haye haye |
| <i>yaa tikseen gurba diimaadhaa</i> | ..whose herdsman is red |
| <i>ohoo hayyee hayyee</i> | oho haye haye |
| <i>sooreessi qallaa</i> | the slim daughter of a brave |
| <i>soreessi simte okolee</i> | the rich has accepted the milk pot |
| <i>ee hayye hayyee</i> | he haye haye |
| <i>oho haye haye</i> | oho haye haye |
| <i>ohoo hayyee hayyee</i> | oho haye haye |
| <i>yaa soorettii</i> | hey rich madam |
| <i>dhala sooreessaa</i> | the descendent of rich |
| <i>ohoo hayyee hayyee</i> | oho haye haye |
| <i>bobbaa ganamaa faachoon fixeensa</i> | the morning excrement is dew |
| <i>gara galgalaa koomeen awaara</i> | during the night heel is dust |
| <i>yaa gurraa gaarrotee maatlu wallaala</i> | who don't know the cows ear |
| <i>ililili!</i> | <i>ililili!(ululating)</i> |

What the above song indicates is that, the Oromo women, reflecting their feeling by songs and praise to God for what He has done for them, like health and prosperity. It is believed that if a person fails to perform *ateetee* ritual, cattle cannot breed well, the calf cannot grow, the teat of animals will be closed, and a person can be visually impaired and crippled. The Oromo say "*Ateetee ijaaf ijoof gabbaru*" Literally *mean ateetee* ceremony is performed for the sake of the eyes and destiny.

In addition, we can understand from the rituals that, the Oromo women celebrated the *ateetee* for good success (*milkii gaariif*), peace, prosperity, and fertility. If they do not perform the *ateetee* infertility, social and environmental disturbance might happen. Environmental disasters and drought that challenge the normal life of the society are to be prevented by *ateetee* ceremony and *irreechaa* thanksgiving ritual.

The *ateetee* ritual has symbolic meanings. The anointment of sticks with butter, the planting of green poles, the shedding of old cow's blood, the splashing of the chest and the neck with butter are the symbols of rejoicing that can ultimately be resulted from fertility, procreation, and

continuation' of life on earth. They symbolize that the survival of most Oromo depend on the survival and rebirth of herds and kids. Therefore, this fact is by Adde Abarraash A. who said that, “*Haati yookin dubartiin ateetee dhaabatte guyyaa sadii yookin guyyaa shaniif ulmaa baatee xumura irrattii irreeffatee goolabatti*” This means, mothers who celebrated ateetee would take the *ulmaa* (post ritual leave period) for three or five days and finalize her prayer by participating in thanksgiving ritual and performed thanksgiving ritual (*irreechaa*). The preferred sacred place of thanksgiving performance is commonly under pillar of the cottage (*utubaa*), under selected tree, hill, or on the side of river.

The *ateetee* mothers perform the *irreechaa* ritual with all neighboring communities. As one informant, Magarsaa D. told me, during this day, the cultural dressing and materials used on this occasion are different from that of the actual *ateetee* ritual performances. Women decorate themselves with *caaccuu* and *callee* (ornaments) and then go to the sacred *irreechaa* ritual center by reciting the sacred antique song verses as follows.

Ateetee yaa ateeteewoo
Irreechi kun kan keetiyoo
Ateetee yaa ateeteewoo
Gadaan kun kan keetiwoo
Waaqni kadhaakee dhaga'ee
Ateetee yaa ateeteewoo
Irreechi kun kan keetiyoo
Ateetee yaa kan irreechaa
Dagaagneerra Irreeffachaa
Elelelelle (ululating), (informant, Abarraash A.)

The above song that women's recite during the ceremony is translated as:

Oh, my *ateetee*, this *Ireecha* belongs to you (Yours)

Oh, *ateetee* this *Gada* (years) is yours

Waaqaa has heard yours prayers

Ateetee of *irreechaa*

We are grown performing *Irreechaa*.

As we have seen in the above song, the *ateetee* mother's song is said that "my *ateetee*, this *irreechaa* belongs to you". This indicates the interconnection of *ateetee* and *irreechaa* ritual. Both imply thanksgiving and praying to God

Obbo Chala D. and Alemayehu H. told me that, Women have a responsibility to contribute to the ceremony by performing *ateetee* as the culture of the Oromo indigenous religion. According to informants: *Irreechaa* ritual starts to be performed following *ateetee* ceremony. The *irreechaa* ritual often starts with an *ateetee* ceremony in its history. The myth I heard from Obbo Alemayew Haile explained underscored this point. Obbo Alemayehu indicated that, long time ago the *irreechaa* ritual started at the river bank of *Abbayyaa* (*Blue Nile Vicinity*) by the Oromo women. At that time, environmental disaster and disease have challenged the society. So, people began the ritual of praying to *Waaqa* to save people from offensive starvation and destruction.

This is also confirmed by Obbo Cherinat W. whom I come to know when I was working for East Wollega Zone Culture and Tourism Office in 2014. Obbo Cherinat (researcher) said "*Dubartoonni Oromoo dur erga Ateetee dhaabbatanii booda Laga guddicha Abbayyatti ba'uun irreeffachuun Waaqa isaanii araara kadhatu ture*" which is literally means "after performing *ateetee*, the Oromo women pray to God to solve the problem by getting forgiveness from him at the side of river *Abbayya* (*Blue Nile River*)". These stories show clearly the interrelation of *ateetee* and *irreechaa* ritual ceremony. The above seen '*faaruu*' (song) has also indicated the relationship between *ateetee* ceremony and *irreechaa* ritual of the study area.

Therefore, from the common sense also, the Oromo society has shared common language, history and shared common political, religious and legal institutions. They have known for their hospitality, tolerance and wisdom. Oromo culture is based on its authenticity and integrity that is engrained in the lifestyle, landscapes, nature, history and heritage and in its unique hospitality towards each other and their neighbours (informant Obbo Dirribii D).

Throughout their long history the Oromo's have developed their own culture, identity, religious cult and ritual performances. Practicing monotheism (belief in one God), the Oromo people, do not tolerate that one expresses the slightest doubt regarding the accepted belief of their faith in

the unity of God. They believe in *Waaqa tokkichaa* (one Supreme God). They see His manifestations in the great forces of nature, without mistaking them for him that they admire through this creature. The way the Oromo pray, worship, chants and saying connects with His fundamental beliefs that based on thanksgiving day and ritualizing (see, Dirribii Damisse 2009).

Obbo Caalaa S. explains *irreechaa* thanksgiving culture and prayer would be accomplished in different places and time governed by its own system. It is portrayed by its own ritual practices. In this aspect of *Waaqeffanna* culture, the *qaalluus* (the spiritual leaders) and the Abbaa Malkaas (lineal chiefs of the areas) are at the top hierarchies. In the *qaalluu* religio-ethics, the *qaalluus* give instructions and directives on the place and timing of the implementation of the ritual.

What the above discussion reveals is, therefore, that all types of *ateetee* ceremony are performed, for the purpose of success, peace, wealth and continuity of fertility by praying and thanksgiving to *Waaqaa* (God). *Ateetee* ceremony and *irreechaa* ritual are interconnected with their purpose of performing. Both are accomplished for thanksgiving, praying and praising. It is also worth noting that the time when the two rituals are celebrated by Oromo people in general and the Oromo of Finfinnee surrounding Oromia Special Zone Burayyu Town in particular is the same.



Picture 1: Women and Men Lined up for the Blessings at the Stream, (photo by Leila Qashu April 15, 2011).

4.2. Purpose of the Irreechaa Ritual.

According to my informants participated in the FGD: - there are some controversial facts regarding the purpose of the *irreechaa* ritual. The evidence raised by informants on the purpose of *irreechaa* ritual was divided into three: the first argument said, “*Irreechi aadaa Oromootaati kanaaf kabajna, amantii miti*”. i.e “*Irreechaa* is celebrated only for cultural purposes and it is non-religious ritual. This is to say that the ceremony is indigenous cultural function. On the other hand, the second argument suggests that it is celebrated for religious purposes, it is purely religious ritual and the third group takes side of that *irreechaa* ritual is mixed, both cultural and religious rituals.

To start with the first argument, according to informants Galanaa D., Daniel D. and Caalaa D., the *irreechaa* ritual is celebrated only for cultural purposes. This is justified by the fact that most participants of *irreechaa* ritual are the followers of different religions such as Islamic, Protestants and Orthodox Christians. If it would be a religious ritual, why the followers of the other religions are supposed to participate? In fact, drawing on this kind of argument, one can argue that in Oromo identity there are common cultural beliefs of Oromo people that are free from religion and which are expected as unifying tool and factors. Most individuals attracted by its cultural pattern and reflection, and then participate in the celebration of *irreechaa* ritual.

According to most informants, all things done in the *irreechaa* ritual at Malka *ateetee* is cultural, rather than a religious activity. As a result, they argue against it’s religiousity, if it is a praying place, why the people are washing in the water, and why they didn’t put off their shoes from their feet during entering into the area like Orthodox Christian and Islamic and/ or why they do not worship there, if it is a religious place and religious ritual, each participant should have to worship to show respect and give necessary religious value to the place. Therefore, for the same informants, it is totally free from religion and it is a secular ritual celebration. According to this argument, though people are the followers of different religions, most of the Oromo people attend the *irreechaa* ritual because it is their culture.

It is also observed that, not all but, mostly there are slogans indicating *irreechaa* ritual is for cultural purposes. I have seen different quotes that describe the cultural pattern of the *irreechaa*

ritual. It says “*Irreechi Aadaa Kooti*”. *Irreechi Mallattoo Eenyummaa Oromooti. Irreechi Irree Oromooti*”. This literally means “Irreechaa is my culture, Irreechaa is a symbol of Oromo identity, and *irreechaa* is the unity arms of the Oromos people. All Oromo people participate/ can be a participant of the *irreechaa* ritual despite their religious background to demonstrate their culture of identity through very colorful cultural dressings, different cultural ornaments and cultural songs to the world.

The other group is those who assert the purpose of ritual as it is celebrated only for religious purpose, i.e., Peoples come to Malka *ateetee* for praying to *Waaqaa*. Obbo Magarsa D. and Adde Loomii G. said “*Irreecha kadhaa Waaqaa fi Galata isaaf dhiyeessuf irreeffanna*” mean that we perform *irreechaa* for praying and thanksgiving to God. On *irreechaa* ritual most of the participants held green grass and yellow flower and go to the river to give thanks to God.

Obbo Gammachuu Ida’e also said:

“Waaqa ganna gurraacha sana keessaa nu baasee ifa birraa nu argisiisee; asheeta midhaanii nu argisiise galateeffachuu fi Oomisha keenya akka nuuf barakachiisuuf galateeffannee, kadhanna kanaafis irreeffanna”

Literally mean that:

“Oromo people perform Irreecha to thank Waaqaa for He helped them pass from the dark rainy season to brightest season of seeing, to pray to Waaqaa to make their harvest safe and good”.

On the other hand, according to Oromo religious mythology, during the *irreechaa* ritual there are plenty of cultural demonstrations. Each activity done in the ritual is the explanation of Oromo culture, rather than their religion. At the *irreechaa* ritual, formerly, the *Abbaa Gadaa* teaches the people how to live with each other in peace, how the generation should respect elders, and about the indigenous laws of Oromo. Cultural songs are also sung on this day, and horse riding ritual with youngsters is performed in a more colorful way at this celebration for dual purpose: one for entertainment and the other is training for defending their territory in case war happens in the future. The cultural ornaments like *caaccuu*, *siinqee*, *kallachaa*, *callee*, *kal’ee*, milk pot and others come out on this day. These are ‘pure’ cultural aspects of *irreechaa*.

Thus, this evidence shows that, even if the *irreechaa* ritual is a religious ceremony, each object held on, and the interpretation of the activities done in the ceremony reflects more of culture than the religious aspects. This argument is justified depending on the activities which are done on *Malka ateetee*.

The other main ritual activity is the process of thanksgiving and praying to *Waaqa tokkicha* (supreme God). The *Abbaa Muudaa* is praying to the God and blessing. Just, praying is a practice of communication with God. Therefore, the process of thanksgiving and praying to *Waaqaa* (God) or creator makes *Irreechaa* practice a process of religious ritual. That is why they define or interpret it as a religious ceremony. This shows religious pattern of the ritual.

The last group is those who argue that, *irreechaa* ritual mixed purpose ritual. According to Obbo Caalaa Soorii, *Abbaa Caffee of the Tuulamaa Oromo* and Obbo Alamayehu Haile; different activities take place in the ritual. The objects, cultural dresses, different songs and horse riding demonstrated by youths during *Irreechaa* ritual is the cultural patterns. Whereas, the praying, blessing, thanksgiving to *Waaqaa* (God) the religious aspects of the ritual.

In anthropology, there is no boundary between religion and culture; religion is a part and parcel of culture i.e. religion is the subset of culture. Different scholars reported that culture is a universal set (Geertz 1993). Therefore, in the Oromo Culture in general, and the *irreechaa* ritual in particular, the combination of culture and religion is impossible to show their boundary.

Most of my key informant underscores that the religious nature of the *irreechaa* ritual includes many of cultural practices and it is more than religious element. Specially, my key informant Magarsaa D. and Galaana Dh. told me that, people of different religious followers are attending *irreechaa* ritual, because they are attracted by colorful cultural aspects of the *irreechaa* ritual and they love boldly illustrated of their identity. So, still different religious followers (Muslim, Protestant and Orthodox Christians) are attending the *irreechaa* ritual that needs to invite the researchers to detail investigation. Why these religious followers are attending the *irreechaa* ritual. I have asked them, and they told me that they perform *irreechaa* ritual because they were

attracted by its common Oromo identity like colorful cultural dressings and objects used during *irreechaa*.

Therefore, based on my informants respond and from my etic view, *Irreechaa* ritual of the *Malkaa ateetee* is performed in both of cultural and religious aspects, and has plurality purpose.

4.3. Types of the Oromo Irreechaa Ritual.

Depending on the level of the celebration of Irreechaa ritual; there are two types of *irreechaa* ritual. These are: the *irreechaa* ritual celebrated at the household level; this type of *irreechaa* celebration is performed at the family level by the family members. For instance, the fixed sculpture found in the compound of Oromo Cultural Center shows a family who come up with *irreecha* ritual. The second one is *irreechaa* ritual celebrated at the communal level. This type of *irreechaa* celebration is performed at a communal or national level. This study has focused on the *irreecha* ritual which is commonly celebrated among the Oromo people, especially *irreecha* by the side of the river.

The *irreechaa* ritual is conducted at different places: largely, it takes place in two major areas: *Irreecha Malkaa* (at a side of a river) and *Irreecha Tulluu* (on a mountain). According to Obbo Alamayehu H. and Magarsa D., these two types of *irreechaa* are the formal and most common sites of ritual among the Oromo people everywhere. Additionally, there are also other informal *irreechaa* rituals like *irreecha boroo* (the *irreechaa* ritual celebrated in home and at gateway) and *irreecha qaalluu* (the *irreechaa* ritual at celebrated at the *galma qaalluu* or temple of *qaalluu*). The following, section discusses these common sites of *irreechaa* rituals.

4.3.1. Irreecha Malkaa:-

Irreecha Malkaa is an *irreechaa* that is performed along the river bank as a ritualizing and thanks giving in September or at the beginning of *birraa* season. It is celebrated for all things that *Waaqaa* has done for people like bringing rain, peace, health, fertility, abundance and for the beautiful weather they obtained.

Among the *irreechaa* Malkaa that is being practiced throughout Oromia, *Malkaa ateetee* is a center of ritual that brings Oromo people together from all corners of surrounding areas of Oromia.

The *irreechaa* of Malkaa *ateetee* hosts the mass Oromo community gathering who are from all over the world, but including hundred thousands of others community members. This day is known as the Oromo's Thanksgiving Day to their God (*Waaqa tokkichaa*) for his goodness over the past year. *Irreechaa* Birraa marks the beginning of a new astral calendar. It also marks a seasonal change from winter to spring and also at the end time of starvation, disunity, chaos (Murmur), and the auspicious occasion to wish plentiful harvests in the upcoming year (inf. Alemayehu H.).

Recently it has become evident that the Oromo across religious, political and geographical boundaries have converged together in celebrating an annual ritual/festival called *irreechaa*. Historically, *Irreechaa* has been understood and practiced within the circumstance of the Oromo religion. *Waaqeffannaa*, a belief system indicates that Oromo believes in one supernatural power called *Waaqa* (God). However, as far as the celebration was braced; *Irreechaa* has undergone some revolutions in accommodating non-religious aspect in the context of Oromo culture. Yet it has played significant role in building the Oromo identity and a sense of unity. In the contemporary context, where the ritual brings Oromos across different walks of life, *irreechaa* should be understood more as an arena where the Oromo identity is articulated, renovated and experienced, through the thanksgiving celebration (Inf. Dirribii).

4.3.2. Irreecha Tulluu

Irreecha Tulluu refers to the *irreechaa* ritual that is being performed at the top of the mountains during dry season (Bona) as per the Oromo's natural theology/creed in order to have abundant rain throughout the rainy season. This is also another place where the Oromo community holds prayer sessions and offer thanks to the supreme God (*Waaqa Tokkichaa*). The community climbs up the mountain and thanks *Waaqaa* who has created the mountain. This type of *irreechaa* is mostly focused on praying to God for having enough rainy seasons for the productivity of the farm. It is performed at the begging of the winter season. While defining the implication of *irreecha Tulluu*, Oromo relates the concept with the next mythological narrative.

It is theoral literature told me by informant Obbo Gammachuu;

“Afoolalli Oromoo, waaqni Horoo kan uume Tulluu irratti, sana booda namichi dheebotee bishaan dhuguuf gara malkaa deeme, achumatti roobni roobee bakakkaan gaafa bu’u namichi bifa naasuutiin bakka lamatti qoodame, dhiiraa fi dubartii ta’un wal fuudhani, kanumaan dhalli namaa baay’atee wal horee” jedhama. Kanaaf Oromoon Tulluu fi Malkaa bakka qulqullaa’a uumaan itti raajii hojjete jedhee dhugeeffata Irreechas irratti gaggeeffata”

This Oral literature is literally mean:-

“The reason that the Oromo community preferred irreecha ritual in these two places, i.e riverside and mountain is; God has created different marvelous things in these areas. In Oromo world view, river side was the origin of human being (Horo), and then divided into male and female for the first time. Therefore, they believe God has made fertility of human beings at riverside. Thus, these areas are very sacred to them and are also the residence of the spiritual being. It is, therefore, expected that if they pray to God in these places, he accepts their praying and give immediate response to them. Thus, because of this origin of Oromo views, they selected these two places for irreechaa”

This idea is also supported by what Obbo Diribii Demise (2009) noted; the Oromo people give respect for these two sacred places. Because, Oromo believe that the river side is the first sacred place where the first human being is existed and becomes male and female.

In general, the Oromo practiced *irreechaa* ritual as a thanksgiving celebration twice a year (in autumn and spring) to praise *Waaqa* (God) for peace, health, fertility and abundance they were given in relation to the people, livestock, harvest and the entire Oromo land. *Irreechaa* is celebrated as a sign of reciprocating *Waaqa* in the form of providing praise for what they got in the past. However, it is also a forum of prayer for the future. In such rituals, the Oromo meet in places with symbolic meanings, such as hilltops, riverside and shades of big sacred trees. Obbo Caalaa Soorii note that Oromo people never worship any of these physical landscapes, though some outsiders and detractors of the Oromo culture and religion represent it as such. Rather, these physical landscapes are chosen for their representations in the Oromo worldview. For example, green symbolizes fertility, peace, abundance and rain. As a result Oromo often says

“*Uumamaan Uumaa kadhanna!*” which means we hold prayer to *Waaqaa* through holding his creation/creatures that reflect the greatest admiration for their God (*Waaqaa*) who created such things that are beyond human thinking(Informant Obbo Baqala D).

4.4. The Ritual Paraphernalia of the Irreechaa Malkaa Ateetee

In the *Irreechaa malkaa ateetee* code of practices, there are essential ritual artifacts/objects that are usually brought to the ritual centers with the pilgrimages. These ritual objects or paraphernalia include the sacred ritual dress, sacred flowers and grasses, sacred ritual sticks and headdresses.

During the *irreechaa* ritual Abbaa Gadaa and Abba Malkaa hold those sacred ritual objects in accordance with their position. Accordingly, Abbaa Gadaa holds the sacred whip (*Alangee/lichoo*) and sacred scepter (*Bokkuu*) on their hand and ties the sacred headgear on their head (*Qallacha*). The pilgrim women also hold sacred ritual stick of women (*siiqqee*) and sacred milking vessel (*Okolee* or *Ciicoo*) and tie sacred head and neck dresses/ornament (*callee* and *Caaccuu*). Other pilgrims equip and harness their horses with sacred horse paraphernalia and hold sacred shield (*Gaachana* or *wantee*) and sacred spear (*Eeboo*). The youth (*Gaammee*) holds a sacred ritual stick of song (*ulee*) and wear sacred ritual dresses.

In this regard, the *irreechaa* ritual of *malkaa ateetee* is one of the best meeting places for Oromo youths. So that, youths are wearing beautiful clothes and decorate themselves more than any other days on this *Irreechaa* ceremony for the purpose of mate selection. Girls also wear their most attractive clothes and decorate themselves; it is the best opportunity for them to choose their future mate.

Obbo Caalaa S. further told me that, the sacred place of *irreechaa* ritual is very respectful, because, it is praying and thanksgiving place; a place of *Waaqaa*. Due to this, each participant respects each other and respect women at the place. Therefore, it should be respected as it is one of the Oromo norms and values.

4.5. Selecting the Sacred Place;Where the Irreechaa Ritual is Supposed to be Celebrated

There are different places where the *Irreechaa* ritual is celebrated. Obbo Alemayehu Haile told me that, this ritual is performed at a place which is selected by Abbaa Muudaa and decided by the women and all society of Oromo. According to Oromo culture, river crossing points, lakes, large trees and different mountain sides, pillar of the cottage are the place where the ritual is undertaken. Among the places, most of the time *Hora* (lake) and river (*Malkaa*) are the preferred place to celebrate *Irreechaa* ritual. These have greatest respect among the Oromo community.

According to Caalaa D. (informant), these Lakes and rivers are perceived as “*bakka ulfoo*” which literally means sacred and respectful lakes and rivers. That is why that the Oromos celebrate their ritual at *Malkaa Ateetee*. Informant Galanaa D. also told me that, there are a lot of *Malkaa* (river) where the *Irreechaa* ritual is celebrated. For instance, *Hora Finfinnee*, *Har sade* (Bishoftu), *Malkaa Dosha* (Asella), *Awash Malkaa*(Around Adama), *Malkaa Awash*(Awash river side), *Malkaa Sor*(*Ilubabor Zone*), *Malkaa Hadiyyaa* (Nekemte),*Malkaa Jawwee* (West Shawa Zone, Jaldu Woreda) and it is also colorfully celebrated at *Malkaa Ateete* (Burayyu) and around the world that we see in YouTube and face books among the Oromo Diaspora. This information shows that *irreecha* ritual is not celebrated at only one place.

4.5.1. The Irreechaa of Malkaa Ateetee

As the place is different, the day they celebrate the *irreechaa* ritual is also different from one place to another. For example, the *irreechaa* ritual which is celebrated at *Malkaa ateetee* is performed on the next Sunday of the celebration of *irreechaa* of *Hora Harsadee*. The celebration day of *irreechaa* ritual is decided by Abbaa Gadaa, Abbaa Muudaa and other local women and elders within the range of the end of September to the mid of October months immediately after the *irreechaa* ritual celebrated at *hora har sadi*.The *irreechaa* ritual of the *hora har sade* is considered as the opening ritual for other *irreechaa* ritual performed throughout the Oromia Region. The *Malkaa ateetee Irreechaa* is uniquely known by the women’s ritual, and it is named

as a sacred ceremony of the Oromo women, that makes different from other irreechaa ritual of Oromo people.

The other thing which is important to describe is the relationship between Malkaa Ateetee and the *irreechaa* ritual celebration. According to the mythology of Oromo living around Malkaa *ateetee* and its surrounding; Malkaa *ateete* is a meeting place for woman of the area for praying and thanksgiving. For instance, Addee Abarraash (informant) told me that; the Gafarsa river (*Malkaa*) pass through their village; and it is also believed to be the marvelous work of *Waaqaa* (God). Different animals and other livestock drink from the river. The existence of the river allowed community settlement that lives in the area. So that, women are performing their *ateetee* ceremony; they use the river as thanksgiving and blessings. Obbo Galaanaa also told me that; Malkaa *ateetee* is a sacred place for Oromo women's of the area and they came together after they concluded their praying and praising of *ateetee* ceremony for the purpose of *irreechaa*. Other social classes join them and perform the Irreechaa ritual. That is why it is named as '*Irreecha Malkaa Ateetee*' which means *Malkaa* is a river, and *ateete* is thanksgiving and blessings made for the fertility of Oromo women.

According to the mythology of the community of the study area that was narrated by Abbaa Malkaa Obbo Gammachuu Ida'ee of Malka *ateete*, the establishment of this *irreechaa* center has some historical correlation. And he narrated about it as the following:

“Bara durii dubartii maseena ykn dhabduu tokkotu naannoo Laga Gafarsaa jirraatti, Mucaa tokko guddifachaadhaan fudhattee osuma guddifachaa jirtuu dhukkubsatee jalaa du'e. Baay'ee gadditee. Ateetee dhaabbattee Waaqa kadhatte, Gara Malkaa Gafarsaa deemtees irreeffatte. Dubartiin dhabduun kun waggaa isaatti ilma deesse. Sana booda deemtee Malkaadhuma kanatti irreeffatte. Waaqatu kadhannaa ishee dhaga'e. Achumaan, hawaasni naannoo Laga Gafarsaa jiraatu Malkaa ateetee jechuun moggaasani. Sanumaan Irreechi Malkaa ateetee bara baraan kabajamuu itti fufe” jedhu.

The above quotation translates into English as follows:

“The ritual celebration of this Malkaa ateetee Irreechaa has started by a barren woman. Once upon a time, one infertile woman who has lived around the Gafarsaa River was raising son by Guddifachaa (adoption). Her adopted son died and she became sad, so much that she has gone to the Gafarsaa River and prayed to Waaqaa (God). A year later,

surprisingly, she became pregnant and delivered her own child and gone to the river again for irreeffannaa (thanksgiving) to God. After that, the community starts celebrating the irreechaa ritual annually. Thus, that was the reason why the ritual was named as Irreechaa of Malkaa ateetee”

This oral tradition has a relation with what Obbo Cherinnat W. and Obbo Alemayehu H. pointed out during the interview. They said that, “during the early time the Oromo women prayed and gave thanks to *Waaqaa* at the river side of Abbay (the Blue Nile)”, That might be good indicators and support idea for the Malkaa *ateetee irreechaa* ritual. Then, according to the above myth, Malkaa *ateetee* becomes one of the sacred ritual places at which *irreechaa* ritual is performed in Finfinnee Surrounding Oromia Special Zone, Burayyu town.



Picture 2: Picture of the Partial view of Malkaa *Ateetee* with Surrounding Environment (photo by researcher, taken in September 2018).

4.6. Qaalluu and His Role among the Community.

According to the Oromo legend, in the ancient time, *Waaqaa* (God) was living with/ in the heart of the people on the earth. At that time people used to ask what they need from God. He gives

them. So whatever challenges face the people, they pray to God and got their prayers answered for them. They also obeyed and do what God ordered them to do. Then, later, when a human being starts doing bad things; like conflict, raping each other, *Waaqaa* became angry and decided to leave them behind. As they knew about this, they became confused. Abbaa Gada, pregnant woman, *qaalluu* and elders had communicated with each other and decided to follow *Waaqaa* and beg to return him back. As he is passionate he returned back to them. Then, they started to run after *waaqaa*. After some distance, *qaalluu* and the pregnant woman were left in a village to give birth. The Gada and an elder man continued their running and after some distance, the elder man was tired and sat under an *Odaa* (Sycamore) tree. At the end, Gada running alone to reach on *Waaqaa* and indeed reached him.

As he met *Waaqaa*, he asked him to wait and tell him that he was sent from the community. Then *Waaqaa* ordered the Gadaa leaders to tell the message to the three left behind. *Waaqaa* sent a message to *Qaalluu* by saying “please speak the truth in the village and guide and teach them, keep the culture and values of the people”. *Waaqaa* also sent a message to the pregnant woman saying “she has left her home for me, please tell to the village that they should slaughter for her a bull (*korma*) during her delivery, make her happy and don’t disturb her. “Please resettle the issue of the village conflict and dispute under the *Odaa* tree depending on the truth and speak for truth” This message was also the message sent to the elder man. Finally, the *Waaqaa* told to Abbaa Gada: lead the people, keep the culture, and keep the Gada period and cycle fixed handing in over the power as well as to give it at the appropriate time.

For *Tuulamaa* Oromo, according to mythology since the departure of *Waaqaa* from them, they started to be governed by Gada and resolve conflicts by local elders, asking advice from *qaalluu* and starting giving respect for woman. Then, *qaalluu* and Gada became interrelated and also appointed each other. Formerly, *qaalluu* was considered as perfect and right next to *Waaqaa*, because he is assumed to be righteous (also, see Aseffa Jalata 2010, pp 17).

Qalluu has a great role to play in the Gada system in giving advice to the Gada leaders and also in mobilizing the people for indigenous practice like *irreechaa* ritual. And as well as teaching the Oromo laws, customs and values, giving blessings to Gada members at *luba* stage and facilitate the proceeding the Gada members by elected Abbaa Muudaa from the *qaalluu* as religious leader and also to anoint the Gada leaders when they get indigenous political position.

The other role of *Qaalluu* in the celebration of the *Irreechaa* ritual is immense. It includes:- participating in *irreechaa* ritual by holding flower, green grass and other respected objects according to his Gada grade. In the Oromo indigenous religion, the *qaalluu* and Abbaa Malkaa are on a top of the hierarchies. In *irreechaa* ritual, the *qaalluu* gives instruction and directives of where about and time the implication of the ritual. This argument is disproved what Bayisa Negesa (2011) noted. He claimed that, the *qaalluu* hasn't role in the celebration of the *Irreechaa* ritual.

According to informant Obbo Dirribii D., a week after the *irreecha* Malkaa ritual, *qaalluu* is going to the closest water body found around their surrounding area, praying to *Waaqaa* and blessing entities as a leader of the religion, he performs the *Irreechaa* ritual there. It is considered as the opening ritual of other *irreechaa* ritual through the region.

According to my observation and the informant report; at Malka *ateetee irreechaa* ritual, the phrases recited on this occasion portray the monotheistic nature of Oromo *waaqeffanna* religion. When the elders bless by reciting the following phrases, the participant repeat a part of the blessing expression, by saying "let it be"

The blessings of Elders and Abbaa Gada's goes as follows:-

Ayyee Yaa Waaq (2x)

Sagaltamman gabraa

Saglan Booranaa

Ciicoo gurraattii

Bokkuu Gurraacha

Waaqa Odaa Nabee

Waaqni Gadaa Shananii

Waaqa jahan Galaan

Nagaan oollee nagaan nubilchi

Waaqa gurraacha garaa garbaa

Leemmuu garaa taliilaa

Waaqa hundaa olii

Biyyi biyya nagaa nuu godhi.....godhi waaq

Xinnaa keenya nu guddisi.....guddisi waaq

Guddaan Kenya nuu haa bulubulchi waaq

Biyyi kan abbaa biyyaa haa ta'u

Barri bara nagaa nuu ta'a

Gadaan Gadaa gabbinaa nuu ta'a

Biyyi biyya ayyaantuun bulu taana

Barri kan quufaa fi gabbinaa nuu haa ta'ugodhi waaq

Bakka hir'ate rabbi itti haa guutuguuti waaq

Barri quufaa gabbina.....gabbisi waaq

Gabbisi waaq!

English version

Elders blessings

Respond of participants

The nine Borana

Oh God the creator and God of nature

God of nine Garba

Black ciicoo (milk container)

Black scepter

God of Oda Nabee

God of the five Gada classes of Oromo

God of the six Galan clans

You keep us peacefully during day, keeping us in the nightKeep us

God, the black whose stomach is an ocean

Your stomach pure

The lord who is above all

You, keep our country peacefully Keep us
 Keep us from mistakeKeep us
 Our children shall be grown Be grown
 Give longevity to the adultsgive God
 Country is being for country fathers
 Let gada being the gada of the cab
 Let God fill the rest let it be
 The year (Gada) being year of surplus and prosperity let it be
 The God also says, what we have said.....Let said

The above reciting is expressing that, the relevant of *irreechaa* ritual among the Oromo people of thanksgiving and praying to God. It shows that, the Oromo prays to God, for fertility, prosperity and to keep nature in peaceful during the celebration of *irreechaa* ritual.

After blessing ritual, they approach the river and perform the *Irreeffannaa* ceremony. *Irreeffannaa*: literally mean, giving respect with the sacred objects used in the *irreechaa* ritual. It is performed by the leading prominent, Abbaa Gadaa (Gada leader) and Abbaa Malkaa (the blessing father, lineage leader of the area who is selected by Gada assembly and appointed to bless the ritual), the participants are carrying bunches of grasses and flowers in their hand and they praise, bless and pray to *Waaqaa* (informant Alemayehu H). Soaking the bunches of green grasses and flowers in their hands after thanksgiving song, blessing and *Irreeffannaa* rituals are over, they lay them over there and return to their home with joyful song according to their Gada classes.

4.7. The Gadaa System vis-à-vis Irreechaa of Malkaa Ateeteeaa

The Gada system is generation-set and a governance system practiced among the Oromo people who regarded the system as their common heritage. The system is seen as an Oromo people's identity maker. In the Gada system; all Oromo people are lead by Abbaa Gadaa. The system has long been practiced by all branches of the Oromo people. The Oromo branches have established the centers of their Gada at several places based on their territorial settlement throughout

Oromia. Gada is administering the country and mobilizing the people for different indigenous ritual, directive and leader (See, OCTB 2017: 1).

Gada is a system that (*Gumii*) assembly, power transfer ceremonies and transition rites took place at these cultural spaces under Odaa (sycamore tree) which is regarded as the symbol of the Gada System. Besides these main centers, there are also several rituals and ceremonial places within each clan's Gada system. These cultural spaces are legally and culturally protected.

Obbo Araarsoo Q. said, “*Nuuf sirni Gadaa Waan hunda keenya; sirna jiruufi jireenyaati, Sirna bulchiinsaati, sirna uumamaati*”. This literally means Gadaa System is our whole activities; it is a system of life, governance system and natural system. This shows that Gadaa is institution and holistic governance system of Oromo people that also includes by different elements and values of Gadaa like *Irreechaa* ritual.

The *Irreechaa* ritual is among rituals performed by the Oromo people, as one of the elements of Gada System. It is the Oromo's Thanksgiving Day. *Irreechaa* is celebrated in the presence of a large gathering of the Oromo people twice a year. *Irreechaa* comes in the wake of *Meskel*, which comes in together with new season. September proves a month where cultural and religious festivals are celebrated one after the other. Hence, *Irreechaa* is one of the jewels in the crown of September (informants Obbo Yiggazuu Q. and Abarrash A).

Informants also said, *Irreechaa* is directed by Abbaa Gadaa, facilitated by *Qaalluu* (Abbaa Muudaa) and opened by Abbaa Malkaa. The ritual is mostly celebrated on Sunday that comes following *Maskala* (the Oromo holy day in which they see to bright season). Recently, *Irreechaa* is registered as one of the intangible heritages of the Oromo people. It is an open air festival where millions gather to thank "*Waaqa tokkichaa* "or God. On the festival, community leaders and Abbaa Gada's praise God for the blessed transition from the rainy season, this is normally considered gloomy to the bright and colorful season (*ifa Birraa*) spring.

Throughout long history, Oromo people have developed their own culture, identity, religious cult and ritual performances. They see God's manifestations in the great forces of nature, without mistaking them for him. However, comprehensive understanding of the Oromo culture, politics and other living, social heritages can be attained through close examination of the Gada system.

By the same token, one can fully understand and analyze *Irreechaa* ceremony from the viewpoint of its relations to Gada system.

As one informant stated, during *Irreechaa* ritual Abbaa Gadaa and his members have held their object for different purpose of symbolization, and perform the ritual. Abbaa Gadaa gives direction for the society and blessed like Abbaa Muudaa and Abbaa Malkaa. Every activities undertaken in the ritual is subjected to the values of the Gada System. This implies the linkage that *Irreechaa* ritual has with Gada system.

Additionally, according to informant Gamachu I, Abbaa Malkaa of the malkaa *ateete*, argue *Irreechaa* is a ritual of praying to *Waaqaa* or the universal creator through cultural practices. According to Gamachu I, *irreechaa* ritual ceremony contains in itself religious, cultural and philosophical world view which admires the miraculous spiritual powers of *Waaqaa* and conjointly relates the living secret of generation. The ever greenness and productivity of plants, the regeneration of life and the replacement of the old by the new, death and resurrection of fruits are likened and related to the wisdom of *Waaqaa*. According to this belief, all are accomplished by the will of *Waaqaa* and indicated to the life after death religious philosophy. That is why the Oromos perform rituals of *irreechaa* around this green area of Malkaa *ateete*.

Nevertheless the Oromo *Waaqeffannaa* does not believe in deity, rather it is a belief in monotheistic power i.e. *Waaqa tokkichaa*. This thanksgiving culture and prayer would be accomplished in different places and time governed by its own system. It is portrayed by its own ritual practices. In this aspect of *Waaqeffannaa* culture, the *qaalluus* (the spiritual leaders) and the Abbaa Malkaas (lineal chiefs of the areas) are at the top hierarchies. In the *qaalluu* religio-ethics, the *qaalluus* give instructions and directives of the where about and the time of the implementation of the ritual. The same is true for the case of Malkaa *ateete*'s ritual that these two peoples give every direction how and how it shall be.

4.8. Women's Role in the Irreechaa Ritual at Malkaa Ateetee

According to Oromo Oral tradition and some recorded history; women have the role in general Oromo activities and also have equality with men on the *irreecha* ritual in particular. For instance, Jeylan W. Hussein (2004, p103 -115, Asmarom Legese 1993, p19) substantiated the

existence of these cultural representations of Oromo women and roles they have in ceremonies and rituals. Jeylan W. Hussein (2004) states that relation and contribution of women in religio-cultural as well as political economy of the Oromo people is significant. According to him, there are different activities which are performed only by women like *ateetee* ceremony songs and other different ritual activities. There are also activities in which only men are engaged; like warfare. Asmarom Legese (1973) also asserts that the [Oromo] women participate in meeting indirectly as well as express their feelings. They also criticize the decisions if it is problematic and unacceptable among the women. They do so, among other strategies through songs that have some commentary on some infelicitous expression on them so that it is heard in men's meetings. Their songs can also target at direct criticism of some unjust decision the men have made or are contemplating (Asmarom 1973, p21). However, According to him, men are also merited to make decision concerning ritual and all economic activities associated with the performance of rite by consultation with women which is also true among the Oromo community of the study area.

In malkaa *ateetee irreechaa* ritual, it often observed when the women participated equally with men by holding some basic and colorful cultural objects that are in ownership and considered as sacred, and they also similar hold; green grass and flowers like men. Women have also cultural objects only held by them; like *caaccuu*, *callee*, *ciicoo*, *Aannan*, *siiqqee*, *kallee* and others on the celebration of *Irreechaa* ritual. It makes them more impressive and more beautiful than men in making the celebration attractive and colorful.

Obbo Teshale H. told me that, women are also more hospitable to *Waaqaa* (God) towards praying to him by holding these sacred objects than that of men. So, the main role of women in *Irreechaa* ritual celebration of Malkaa *ateetee* is decorating and giving a beautiful note to the celebration by dressing cultural clothes, different symbolic objects and decorating jewelry. The women are also praying and give thanks to God, as they prioritized and allowed for communicating to God about their family and all nature. In *irreechaa* ritual a married man should participate in the ritual with his wife. He fulfills cultural dresses and other sacred objects for his wife and performs the ritual celebration and other occasions, unless he faces problems, will be excluded or face sanction. Obbo Teshale H. told me that, it is a must to celebrate any occasion as a couple.

According to informants Obbo Dirribi D. and Caalaa S., women are especially powerful toward their culture than men. For example, in *irreechaa* ritual, they are going in front of Abbaa Gadaa and Abbaa Malkaa. If they stopped on the road, including Abbaa Gadaa the whole people following them will stop and nobody will pass before them, because Oromo symbolize women with *siiqqee* as sacred and peace. It is believed as if someone passes over women, he would be insulted and don't get success in life. It is a norm of the Oromo community. Abbaa Gadaa is consulted by them before deciding the day and a place where Irreecha ritual is performed. When, women decided not to participate in that Irreechaa ritual celebration, Abbaa Gadaa is forced to transfer to another day or even obliged to cancel the celebration. The community of the study area believed without women, there is no *irreechaa* celebration and the ritual is not full and the thanksgiving to *Waaqa* and praying is invalid, not accepted. Because, the power of anointing melted butter on the tree is primarily given to women and followed by the husband. That mean women are expected to participate in their power of praying.

According to the participants of FGD, In Oromo indigenous culture, in any other occasion including *Irreecha* ritual, even while traveling on foot, women are those often take the first step to do so. When people cross the river, after check up for the safety, women had cross before all. This shows that at any situations Oromo women have respect. Such activities and roles of women falsify some arguments and assumptions that say that the Oromo culture doesn't respect gender equality.

In Oromo community, there are restricted and precisely prescribed gender role depending on physical strength, fitness and certain psychological makeup. So, Women have their own role and contribution as holding very respectfully, and sacred objects, like going in front of the people and other, where men have the unique role of blessing on the *irreechaa* ritual. Furthermore, regarding men the *hororoo* (stick) of Abbaa Gadaa is working parallel in any conflict resolution with the *siiqqee* (stick) of women.

Obbo Gammachuu I. the Abbaa Malkaa of the Malkaa *Ateetee* (lineal chiefs of the areas) told me that, among the Obo clan of the Tulamaa, husband and wife do not participate on the occasions; such as *Irreechaa* and Gadaa assembly separately. Even during the Gada assembly the couples go together to the place. But, the wives do not participate in the decision making of assembly. The law is made and declared only by men, who are a member of the Assembly (*caffee*), and

women give an advice to her husband during break, food and drinks times. This shows the key roles of Oromo women in Gadaa by which they show their irreplaceable contribution and particularly in *irreechaa* ritual of Malkaa *ateetee*.

In general, in Gada system, the gender equality is relatively assured, if the husband is in a high social position (like Abbaa Gadaa); the wife also gainpower, respected, and also honored equally with her husband. The wife of Abbaa Gada “*Haadha Jiilaa*” (mother of assembly), shows there is a politics which hold both sexes with different gender roles with the Oromo society as we see different laws on gender equality that developed by modern Ethiopian government.

4.9. The Symbolic Meaning of the Irreechaa Ritual.

On the occasion of *irreechaa* ritual; all activities that are performed have their own symbolic meaning which gives meaning to each action. The *irreechaa* ritual shows the cultural practice and the belief system of the Oromo people in *Waaqa tokkichaa* (supreme God) and it shows the activities performed in the Gada system. The activities have their own symbolic representation and also celebrating *Irreechaa* ritual has its own symbolic meaning among Oromo in general and the Oromo of the Malkaa *ateetee* area in particular with different significances. It creates belongings among the community and brings a sense of unity, it also symbolizes peacemaking ritual among the Oromo society. Peace and *irreechaa* have bilateral relation. If there is no peace, there is no *irreechaa* ritual. It is celebrated with a pure heart without dispute and disagreement. Because, the society believed as *Waaqaa* needs righteousness from all participants of the ritual.

Therefore, under this topic, my focus is discussing the cultural symbols and their symbolic representations of the objects that I didn't mention in previous sections. During the *irreechaa* ritual of the Oromo, there are a lot of cultural objects held by the participant, depending on an individual's status, age, sex and position. Among these cultural objects *kallacha*, *alangee* (a whip), *siqqee*, *callee*, *caaccuu*, *milk*, *butter*, *guchuma*, green grass, flowers are important. Here what I have mentioned in the literature part is correct, discussing that a symbol is a sign that has a complex series of associations, but there is no direct relationship between the sign and the object it signifies. Their relation is based on convention and is arbitrary. For instance, Bokkuu, which is held by Abbaa Bokkuu, symbolizes a rule of law, but there is no clear relationship

between the object (Bokkuu of Abbaa Bokkuu) with what it symbolizes (rule and regulation). The representation is socio-political association with the object.

Drawing on the informant's response during the interview session, some of the functions and symbolic meaning of the objects used during *irreecha* ritual are discussed as the following.

Siiqqee

Siiqqee is "decorated stick" carried by married women. To fully comprehend the meaning of *siiqqee*; we have to resort to its generic name *ulee* (stick) for it falls under this category of Oromo material culture. My informant Aadde Tsige W. says: *Siiqqee* as those sticks that are purposely cut as gift from her mother during her marriage and fashioned for married women, the purpose is to safeguard their rights, to bless and/or curse those who infringe on their rights. And *Siiqqee* is used by women when they go out for *ateete* or other rituals. It is also expected as the power of women. In other words, *siiqqee* has specific social, cultural and religious functions. The same informants say that, there are two types of *ulees* cut and fashioned to serve as the marriage sticks. These are *Siiqqee* and *Waddeessa*. Accordingly, *Siiqqee* is given to the bride and *Waddeessa* to the bridegroom on the wedding day. Most of my informants assert that both types of *ulee* are made up of the tree called *harooressaa*. This informant's response is also supports the Kuwe Kumsa(1997:121) notes that, the fact that *siiqqee* is cut and fashioned from *harooressaa*, then, defines its purpose to be used as a weapon to fight against any force that threatens the basic rights of a married woman for her life,. My informants of both sexes unanimously say that the rights of women symbolized in *Siiqqee* are given and handed down by the early Gada system. It is a weapon by which Oromo women fight for their rights and function side by side with Gada system. For instance, when her husband attempt to beat her, she would urgently hold her *siiqqee*, but not for fighting, just only to show him *siiqqee* power, then the husband never beat her. Unfortunately, if the husband has broken the value of *siiqqee* and beat her, she will loudly ululating and the neighbors hear the shouting and gathering at her home, then *iyya siiqqee* (cry of *siiqqee*) will exist. On this stage, the husband should search his solution. He will call his peer, Abbaa Gadas and elders to resolve the conflict. Abbaa Gadaa and elders will solve it. Finally, she orders him to slaughter a barren cow for the gathered people. It shows the penalty faced the husband and moral compensation of the wife. If he faced such like crime, he will be isolated from society and the society believed as he is a cursed man who ignored *Waaqaa*.

My informants, however, are divided into arguments upon the issues of who hands *siiqqee* to the girl on the wedding. Some say it is the father, and others say it is the mother and still others insist that both do it together. But according to Adde Abarraash A., (informant) the mother gives it to her daughter during the blessing ceremony. As she bless her daughter in her turn, the mother holds one end of the *Siiqqee* and the daughter the other symbolizing the tie between the mother and the daughter on one hand and the tie among all women on the other.

On the other hand, my female informants (Adde Abarraash Araddoo, Adde Loomii and Adde Tsige Waqtola) said that they will keep their *Siiqqee* at their *boro* (backyard in the sleeping room) and when their rights are infringed, taking their *Siiqqee*, they go out for *ateetee* rebellion. They take it with them to all *jiila* (ceremonial occasions) as the symbol of their honor and as an indication that they are married. They touch the property designated for them with the tip of their *Siiqqee* signifying that they owned it.

Furthermore, informants from both sexes insist that Oromo women use their *Siiqqee* to mobilize *jiga* (collective labor) during seasons of hard work. They also note that when women form their solidarity ritual, they dip the tip of *Siiqqee* in the blood of the animal slaughtered for sacrifice and touch each other's forehead as a sign of taking promise to support each other till they die. In religious ceremonies when they pray to *Waaqaa* and/or *Ateete*, the female deity, they hold their *Siiqqee*, as informants note.

Moreover, according to the same informants, during the *Gada* power transfers ceremonies, the newly elected officers will pass under two avertedly held, *Siiqqee* and get their blessings from the women. Women have raised their *siiqqee* both when they bless and curse. Because women are considered innocent and peace loving, my informants say, they use their *siiqqee* to perform *araara* (reconciliation). But it is only on the funeral and mourning that *siiqqee* is not used. And even when the owner of *Siiqqee* dies, the *siiqqee* will be broken and placed on the burial. This signifies the end of *siiqqee*'s function, the owner and her activities. However, the activities of *siiqqee* will continue by her daughter and other women.

Not most, but many of my informants told me that the Oromo women use *siiqqee* rather for their political purposes. For these who argue as such, *Siiqqee* is used as a weapon to fight against

violation of women's right, which is regarded as a loss of *wayyuu* (sacreds). It implies the right of women is protected by *siiqqee*.

Another important right symbolized by *siiqqee* is that married women have the right to get organized and form the *siiqqee* sisterhood of solidarity among themselves. According to most informants, women as a group are considered *halaga* (not a kin) and excluded from the *Gadaa* grades and they stick together and count on one another through the *siiqqee* which they all have in common.

Accordingly, women have the right of assembly for regular prayer as well for other important matters of individual and communities. If someone tries to stop women from going to these meetings, it is considered against *wayyu* (sacred) and this invites a *siiqqee* riot which is believed as immoral.

Caaccuu: - Obbo Dirribii D. told me that; *Caaccuu* is among respectful and sacred objects of the Oromo people that are used for blessing in different rituals. *Caaccuu* is an ornament that made from the skin of heifer (*gogaa goromsaa*) and sorted by nine quarries and used only for blessings by tying at forefront of Oromo women. By holding *siiqqee* and *caaccuu*, women pray to *Waaqaa* forgiveness, peace, health, rain and productivity. *Caaccuu* is symbolized by forgiveness.

Obbo Caalaa S. (Informant), also describes *Caaccuu* as; when mothers hold *siiqqee* and *caaccuu* and interfere in the war, it will discontinue. And *Caaccuu* is held by a woman whose son is Abbaa Gadaa. *Caaccuu* means a thin skin that tied and beautified by nine quarries, held by mothers. So, as *caaccuu* come up to a place of ritual ceremony and praying to God with it, we can say it is a respected object of mothers. *Caaccuu* is the sacred object of women and symbolizing fertility. For instance, I heard when people said, “*Abbaan Qalbii loon caaccesse, and haati Tolashii daa’ima caaccessite*”. That mean, the father of *Qalbi* has possessed many cows and Toleshi’s mother has give birth and get many children. This implies that *Caaccuu* symbolized prosperity and fertility.

Callee: -The Oromo women used *callee* as jewellery tied and/or hold on their hand and on their neck, used during ritual ceremony like *ateetee* and *irreechaa* for praying to God. So, *callee* is a

women's charm which they used to pray to *Waaqaa* with it so as God to give them child and cattles. (Informant, Dirribii D.).

Most of my informants have also said that; like *caaccuu*, *Callee* also symbolized with fertility. *Callee* is equated with seeing *Harbuu* tree gives seeds sequentially. Women asking for God saying "as you make *harbuu* (fruitful tree), let you bless us by cattles and child". Therefore, *callee* is the jewellery for ritual ceremony that all Oromo women use to obtain fertility making it as something represents fruitfulness.

Kallacha

Kallacha is a respectful and forecasting object of *ayyaantuu* (spiritual person) Oromoo which is tied on the forehead. *Kallacha* has two types: these are *kallacha kormaa* (buck) and *kallacha lafaa* (earth). *Kallacha kormaa* (buck) is used for critical issues and *kallacha lafaa* (earth) is used for respect and tied on head by Gadamojjii Gada grades. (Alamayehu. informant).

Obbo Dirribii and Obbo Gammachuu also told me that, "*kallachaa* is a respected object which believers would revere and prized. *Kallachaa* is comet steel which was believed to have dropped with tender during rainy time. The former Oromo scarified milk of black cows at a place where tender was dropped and took *kallachaa* and *bokkuu*". In addition to this: *kallachaa* shows the status. It is a symbol of hierarchy of the leaders. So; Oromo believe that a place where tender storm dropped is blessed. *Kallachaa*: like *caaccuu* symbolized forgiveness and peace. If one individual kills somebody and ignore forgiveness, the elders will hold *kallachaa* then begging him, and mediate them. And if drought happened, the community will pray to God by holding *kallacha* and go to riverside (*malkaa*) and mountain. Then they will get what they prayed to God fore. Thus, sometimes *kallachaa* also regarded as symbol of an institution of forgiveness.

In general, *kallachaa* and *caaccuu* have inter-related symbol. My informants told me that, *kallachaa* and *caaccuu* represent fertilities. *Kallacha* looks like male genital organ and it represents male sacred (*ulfoo*) symbol and *caaccuu* represent giving births of female, i.e the children of the female (*daa'ima caaccessuu*) which brings social fertility. *Kallachaa* is tied by members of Gada leader. It shows the power and desiring for the sustainability of social fertility.

***Bokkuu* (scepter)**

Bokkuu is a ritual stick of the Oromo people. According to my informant Caalaa D, *Bokkuu* symbolized peace, order, health and prosperity in society. In the administration system of Oromo society, it attributed to the holder of *bookkuu* (Abbaa *Bokkuu*).

According to mythology of the community of Malkaa *ateetee area*, the first *bokkuu* is dropped from sky (*samii*). *Bokkuu* is a sign of authority; it is respected and honored as *kallachaa*. Abbaa Gadaa holds *bokkuu* to enact the rule of law. *Bokkuu* would not go far from the house and doesn't cross the river. If it crosses the river, abbaa *Bokku* should search solution for that he has done wrong (*falachuu*). Thus, as the first *bokkuu* is regarded as it was divinely descended from the sky (heaven/the water above); it is considered as a sacred and respected object in Oromo community.

Hororoo; the respectful and long stick which is held by the Gada leader. It represents Gada ceremony, that Oromo called it *jiila* (celebration). It is only held and used by Abbaa Gadaa for purpose of *irreechaa* ritual and assembly.

Bokkuufi Siqqee; as we have seen above, *Bokkuu* symbolized the nomination, authority and power of male in the Gada governance system, especially nomination of *ayyaantichaa* (virtue), while *siqqee* signifies the women's nomination. So, *bokkuu* and *siqqee* are symbolized by nomination stick of God. Additionally, inherited by young boy from his father and *siqqee* is given from her mother. This also symbolized to the *ayyaanaa* (virtue). *Ayyaanaa* is the creative force of *Waaqa tokkichaa* through which He (*Waaqaa*) manifests and accomplishes his deeds.

Ciicoo/Elementuu (milk pot); it is the cultural object which is held by women. It used to hold milk during different occasions and *irreechaa* ritual in particula. It signifies the peace and prosperity in cattle possession.



Picture 3: *Ciicoo* (milk pot) from Oromia museum. (Photo by researcher on Sep/2018)

Aannan (milk): it is held by women during the *irreechaa* ritual. The Abbaa malkaa and Abbaa Gadaa will taste the milk, then bless the ritual. My informant, Adde Dirribee K. told me that, in Oromo world view, milk represents purity and it is a drink free from alcohol. It is given to human beings by *Waaqaa* (God) who makes their cattle healthy and fertile. Therefore, to indicate these pure and alcohol free were given to them from God, Oromo women held milk on the *irreechaa* ritual to give thanks to the creator, who give them the milk and also symbolizes cattle fertility and their wish towards cattle fertility.

Muuda/Dhadhaa (butter): is held by women like milk. It is used by women for making meal delicious and builds the human body when used with other food. Butter is also used for anointing human face, the head/hair, and household materials to make it shiny for a long period of time. Therefore, they hold butter on the day of *irreechaa* ritual celebration to represent and witness and thanks to *Waaqaa* who gave them this butter. According to Adde Abarraash Araddoo, my informant, butter is a gift of cows and cow is sacred to the Oromo people. The cow gives the milk, which becomes butter, it is also believed in the community that nursing mother recovers from deliverance through soothes her body and heads.

Alangee (whip): it is made from Hippo and cattle skin. It is hand holding item, held by Abbaa *alangee* (justice man) and other members of Gada class. *Alangee* represents justice. The law which made by chaffee is proclaimed and transferred to the society by Abbaa *Alangee* (father own of whip). *Alangee* by itself represents the law of Gada. In Gada system, Abbaa Gadaa, does not make a law without holding whip (*Alangee*). All Gadaa members hold the whip to show that they have the power to make and amend the law and protect the right of individuals and groups. It is brought on *irreechaa* ritual of malka *ateete* to show Oromo is governed by the rule of law of the Gada system.

Gaachana (shield): is one of the cultural object that is held by *raba* and *kusa* grade on the *irreechaa* ritual in particular and on other ritual celebration in general. It is mostly held by *follee* (youths) or horsemen. The follees use shield for the horse riding game, which consists of fight exercise. Shield serves during the war and held by soldiers to defend themselves from their enemies. It symbolizes the bravery of the Oromo community in general and Oromo community living around malkaa *ateete* and its surroundings in particular.

Grass (*coqorssa*): in *irreechaa* (thanksgiving) ceremonies, most participants carry green grass and flowers. The grass symbolizes fertility and productivity as cows eat grass to grow strong and produce milk and offspring (informant, Abarraash A.). According to Obbo Gammachuu I. (informants), the flowers symbolize life and love. In different ceremonies, the grass has different names. In *irreecha* ceremonies, it can be referred as *coqorssa* (grass) and is taken from around the water. In *ateetee fala* (resolution) ceremonies the participants referred to the grass as *sardoo* and it is taken from a fertile location, such as a riverbed. At the end of the *ateetee fala* ceremonies, such as the prayers for rain, all of the women gave the male *saddeetta* members grass while saying blessings.

***Daraaraa keelloo* (Yellow flower);** is symbolized by the natures created by *Waaqaa* (God). The Oromo people select the flower to represent nature, in order to thank *Waaqa tokkichaa* (only supreme God) who created these beautiful flowers and the world. Flowers are the most beautiful and attractive part of plants. It also indicates the transition from summer to spring seasons and it marks the leading to harvest. Therefore, Oromo holds the flowers on their hands during the *irreechaa* ritual (informants).



Picture 4: People Holdings Flowers as the Symbol of Fertility. (Photo by researcher on Sep/2018 at *irreechaa* of Malkaa *ateetee*)

Finally, from the above discussion, Oromo people live in a world of objects that they constantly create and recreate by symbolically designating and acting toward them. And their orientation to the objects that constitute the environment at any given time is purposive and goal oriented.

Thick description of culture in symbolic anthropology is widely reflected in that culture is like an onion. That's shows a level of explicit culture by revealing various respected objects. There are a lot of actions and symbolic objects that express the norms and values of Oromo people during *Irreechaa* ritual. These symbolic objectives are making possible for the behavioral dispositions, or attitudes, of one individual to be reproduced in another person to transfer good assets of the society.

Most of the objects also show the symbolic power (Pierre Bourdieu 1989), which represents the Gada power. Furthermore, it shows the status of Oromo women in the Gada system and in *Irreechaa* ritual particularly.

4.10. Cultural Significance of Irreechaa Ritual.

Different benefits are obtained from the celebration of the Oromo *irreechaa* ritual from Burrayyu town and surrounding peoples in particular and whole Oromo people in general. The significances of *irreechaa* ritual can be broadly listed and discussed. However, I have focused only on the socio-cultural dimension of *irreechaa* ritual in this study.

The first significance of *irreechaa* ritual is to enhance the social bond. According to informants Adde Diribe K. and Adem B. (informants), on *irreechaa* ritual, different Oromo branches from different corner of the region would meet each other and warmly discussed their summer life and exchange the idea of their different issues. Besides, when the Oromo people gathered together from different parts of Oromiya zones, the pilgrims exposed and come to know various cultural artifacts and materials gathered from Oromo clans that displayed in shops. The malkaa *ateetee irreechaa* ritual also creates an opportunity to exchange diversified cultural values, artifacts and ritual objects. This can take place through gift and purchases from the sellers. It develops and promotes societal integration

The second socio- cultural significance of malkaa *ateetee irreechaa* ritual is that it helps to standardize *Afaan Oromo* words among different Oromo clans. Obbo Caalaa D, language expert at *Oromo Cultural Center* (informant), has told me that, during the *irreechaa* ritual celebration, formal and informal discussion would happen among the participants of different social classes (elders, women, girls, and youths). Through this, by default, they may use their own local words or dialects and exchange idea with each others, learn from each other, and then make it as common word. For instance, the Oromo youth who has come from Wollega or Arsi to attend malkaa *ateetee irreechaa* ritual, they song and perform with youths from *Tuulamaa* Oromo, and might discus, on their own issues. Through this meeting, they exchange local words and other cultural values of where they come. Additionally, for Oromo youths: *Irreechaa* ritual is a symbol of peace, love and unity. Therefore, people acquire and share such important socio-cultural values.

Consequently, *irreechaa* ritual serves as a tool of public relation, even for non Oromo communities of Ethiopia. For example, during my field work, I have seen when the Sidama, Gamo, Amhara, Konso and other ethnic group participates and performed the ritual ceremony. This public relation or social bonding can enhance peace and unity of the people of the country. By this process, culture and language would be shared and learned among the people who participate from these areas.

The third significance, it brings reconciliation among individuals and/or groups who had disputes. For example, among the processes during the *irreechaa* ritual, one is the system of “*araaraa*” (which means settling the conflicts). According to Obbo *Gammachuu I*, the Abbaa Malkaa of Malkaa *ateetee* ritual, “*araaraa*” program is done before ritual undertaken by the general assembly of Gada and /or *Jaarsummaa* (elder council) if there is disputant in the community.

In line with such issues, I have observed for half day during my fieldwork, the process undertaken between disputant caused with property at *Gefersa Burayyuu Kebele*; when elders and Abbaa Gadaa declare the reconciliation process for those individuals and groups those in dispute to forgive each other before they go to pray and give thanks. The Abbaa Gadaa said “*adaraa Waaqaaf jedhaatii waliif dhiisaa, Waaqaa haa hafu jedhaa*” literally means “please forgive each other for the sake of *Waaqaa*, let you say pardon”. The disputants fear that if they

refuse the reconciliation, they may be cursed by *Waaqaa* (God). In *jaarsumma* (arbitrary) process, the elders may voluntary help or come from requests of the conflicted group. Both conflicted parties bring *jaarsa* (elder) to represent them. They (the disputants/the conflicted individuals) inform everything that dissatisfied them to their *jaarsa* on pre-*jaarsummaa* process or even while the *jaarsumma* process is going on. The *jaarsa* biyyaa from both sides' mediate cautiously to bring the balanced reconciliation and to bring long lasting harmony among the disputants. They minimize the destructions and look for positive effects in a reasonable way to construct a beautiful harmony among conflicted individuals. Then to assure and show their reconciliation, the elders give them a bunch of grasses and they kiss each other by holding the grass in their hands. The elders' council (*miseensa jaarsummichaa*) observed their forgiving by ululating, showing their happiness and motivating them by shaking their hand. Finally, they conclude the *jaarsummaa* program by blessing Oromo culture. Therefore, the *irreechaa* ritual is very important among the Oromo people in general and, that of the area under study, i.e, Burayyuu Town and surrounding for conflict resolution within the community.

Another significance can be gained from *irreechaa* ritual is a cultural promotion. All activities that are undertaken throughout the *irreecha* ritual process show the Oromo culture. That is highly oppressed for many decades under different regimes. So it creates opportunity to recalling and reviving the oppressed culture in different regimes. Therefore, they take the pilgrims to show the indigenous cultures of Oromo to different world community who watch local and international medias. It introduces the Oromo people to the other Ethiopian community, particularly and enhances the good image of Oromo.

The other thing that obtained from *irreechaa* ritual is: its value of tourism development. To welcoming the participants who came from all Oromia regional state and other region to celebrating *Irreechaa* ritual and, tourist and journalist, the town administration would motivate or encourage hotels with their sanitation and service deliverance accordingly. They are also adjusting town road to make conducive for coming guests. Makes green and keep clean the surrounding environment and the place of the ritual ceremony as the values of Oromo people. Paying attention for the safeguarding of natural resource is the significance of the *Irreechaa* ritual. The researcher observed the area kept properly during the field work at Burayyuu town.

The *irreechaa* ritual also gives mental satisfaction to the participant who performs cultural and religious activities. As the informants report, they perceive as they have a meeting place and also a sacred place to communicate with *Waaqaa* (God). The place served the community to naming ceremony for those who believe in *Waaqa tokkicha* (indigenous Oromo religion). Because of such *bakkeewwan ardaa jiilaa* (ritual places) we avoided by the influences of other modern religion, now they perceived and take self belongings and morally and/or spiritually survived by praying and thanksgiving to God on the ritual.

Finally, the *Irreechaa* ritual is believed to give solution to those who are in the problem of fertility, the individuals who in such dilemma and believe the system come to *Irreechaa Malka ateete* and then pray to *Waaqaa* (God).

Irreechaa ritual is an important part of the Oromo society in providing a sense of security and loyalty to groups, as well as each individual person as one of the ritual significance in like every world society.

In general, regarding to the cultural significance of *irreechaa* ritual, it strongly builds the social bond by promoting social integration, and solidarity among Oromo people and between other ethnic groups. This out come of *Irreechaa* ritual is approving the basic contribution of functionalist perspective in Social Anthropology, as the researcher proposed to confirm the theory by the study.

It keeps social stability in peace through women's involvement accordingly, and encourages the socio-cultural and economic development of the society which has high vulnerability threatened to state collapse for Ethiopia. The *Irreechaa* ritual enables strong social community and contributes to build great country with political stability.

4.11. Changes and Continuities of the Irreechaa Ritual.

As we have seen in different literature and Oromo mythology, Oromos have their own culture and *Waaqaffannaa* religion as the indigenous religion of the people. Currently, this culture and religion is dominated by other modern religions like Christianity and Islam. Therefore, there are a lot of changes and continuities that face the Oromo culture in general and of the *irreechaa*

ritual in particular. It has been accompanied by challenges and opportunities. These variables are consequently stated as follows.

To begin with the challenges, the first changing forces that affected *irreechaa* ritual in Oromo history is problem of political, cultural and religious domination of the Ethiopian past autocratic regimes. During the past regimes, the governors made different proclamations to eradicate and dominate the indigenous culture and even the Gada system of the Oromo in general and, *irreechaa ritual* in particular. Obbo Alamayehu H.confirmed that, these rulers have forced the Oromo people to accept their own religion and culture, then destroyed all Oromo cultural elements like a sacred place, respected sycamore (*oda*), *Galma waaqeffannaa* (temple), *ujuba* (grave), and the respected object of the Oromo people like (*callee, caaccuu, kallachaa, bokkuu, siiqqee* etc) as valueless. This intrigue, action was continued until the Dergue regime. Rituals like *ateetee* and *irreechaa* were also forbidden and treated as backward tradition.

Alemayehu also stated that, Oromo preferred absenteeism participation. As the subject people, the Oromos were denied the rights and opportunities to be part and parcel of the mainstream of the socio-cultural and political economy of Ethiopia for over a century. Successive Ethiopian Regimes have forcefully destroyed the Oromo *Gadaa* system, robbed the Oromo land and natural resources, denied them official use of their language (*Afaan Oromo*), and prevented them from exercising and developing their culture. And they systematically pushed the Oromos away from participating in key economic matters (Assefa Jalata 1998). *Irreecha* happens to be one of the Oromo's' religious and cultural rituals abandoned by these ruling regimes (Alemayehu Diro 2016:2).

But despite the cruelty and enmity, the Oromo paid heavy sacrifices to preserve their language, culture and religious values. At present, at least in theory, the Oromo have repossessed their land and natural resources. After 1991; *Afaan Oromo* becomes the official and educational language in Oromia Regional State. *Gadaa*, the Oromo indigenous democratic system of governance, is reviving. The practice of *irreechaa ritual* is just one of the major cultural rituals that the Oromo communities were able to preserve by overcoming several odds and difficulties. It constitutes one of the vivid cultural renaissances the Oromo have been experiencing for the last few years (*ibid: 1*)

Therefore, informant Tsige W. has confirmed this as follow: most of the Oromo ritual ceremony in general and *irreechaa* in particular, tended to disappear after the conquest and were forgotten for a long period of time. As a result, what observable today from all Oromo culture, Gadaa system and *irreechaa* ritual is not totally reflect the ‘original’ ones.

However, after the current constitution has been made following the 1991 G.C regime change in Ethiopia, the indigenous religion system started to revive in the region. But again, due to fear of political suspicions, it faced escaped. After a long patience, struggle of Oromo elders, and youths twenty five years ago, the *irreechaa* ritual started to be celebrated at different part of Oromia, especially at *hora harsadee* and followed by *malkaa ateete* celebration. In these past few years, the Oromo youths initiated to learn and reflect their culture and become followers of their own indigenous religions.

Obbo Dirribii D. (informant) told me that, *irreechaa* celebration faced a problem between the government party and the participant. Especially, the youth group used this *irreechaa* ritual as a reflective of revulsion the ruling party holding different flags of political parties they need to support. This was invited that *irreechaa* ritual to be interfered by the government. The Government also has got an interest on the ritual. It broadcasts its policy on the platform which was not favored by the participant. On *irreechaa* ritual, in the recent past, there was a fear that, if the Oromo youth and intellectuals come together for this ritual, the Government scared and entitled them as if they are organized only for the sake of political purpose and not for celebrating the *irreechaa* ritual. So, the Government repeatedly prohibited them from celebrating the ritual for the purpose of his interest on *irreechaa*. By this pressure, above two hundreds massacre and destruction faced on *irreechaa* of *hora harsadee* in 2016 C.G, which was the cause, the interruption of the *irreechaa* of *malkaa ateete* ritual in 2016 from its yearly celebration.

Obbo Caalaa S. and Obbo Galaanaa D. told me that, however, there were some groups who came to *irreechaa* ritual celebration for mainly targeted for political movement. Now a day’s *irreechaa* is celebrated by well organized structure of Gada system and elders that give encouraged assert the reliability of the ritual ceremony and also started to perform love and peace. Abbaa Gadaa condemns the participant and gives orientation on rule and regulation, even the mythology of *irreechaa* ritual celebration. “This political mobilization by two sides (Government and youths)

is creating challenges on our thanksgiving to *Waaqaa*. Everybody should stop such unethical action on the ritual. A person who comes to *irreechaa* for a purpose of his own is believed as a person who make obstacle to eradicate the Oromo indigenous culture, and calling them to good ethical action during the celebration”. These condemn and calling was make all should have stopped political impression on *irreechaa* ritual. Therefore, it allowed and started to be celebrated with more colorful and slender celebration than that of the first one, and celebrated by the huge number of Oromo community and tourists who are coming from different parts of the world. I have observed, this year (2018) when *irreechaa* ritual celebrated by quoting “*irreechaa* of love, peace and liberation”. This shows the limitation of Government interference in *irreechaa* ritual celebration. The participants performed freely, lovely and in peace.

In another ther way, the problem that face the Oromo culture in general and *irreechaa* ritual particularly, is that there is rare elders who knows about rule and regulation of the *irreechaa* ritual, so the myth of theology of the ritual should be documented for the next generation to overcome the existed confusion among the participant. Additionally, to illustrate cultural indicators of the ritual for those who came from different religions.

Now a day, the climate change is one of the challenges that threaten the well being for the sacred place of the ritual. Rivers and lakes are dried and decreased in amount from different parts of the country. Similar problem also happens to, *malkaa ateete*. So, it is better if environmental conservation activities are undertaken by the society and the concerned Government body unless the river is under question.

Finally, I observed that *Malkaa ateetee* has no enough facilities like road, hotels, resorts and other services for the participants. There is only one entrance to the *malkaa* (river). So, unless these facilities were provided and solved for surrounding, *Irreecha malkaa ateete* may face big challenges in the future.

4.12. Factors that Contributing for the survival and Revival of Irreechaa

Before explaining the factors contributing for the revival of *irreechaa*, It is important to mention the factors that contribute to the survival of *irreechaa* ritual. Some of them are the following.

The first one is performing *irreechaa* mysteriously; as we have seen in the previous discussion *irreechaa* would be accomplished in the house and at backyard of the house, therefore, most of the Oromo society didn't escape to perform *Irreechaa* at these places.

The second is that, make far apart from bad habit and an usual actions, which may violate the indigenous Oromo culture and keep the originality values of *Orom-duroo* (former Oromos). For instance, modern religion movements and westernization.

The third is diminishing conflicts among the clans and strengthening other indigenous Oromo institutions; such like Gada system, *Waaqeffannaa* institution, *siiqqee* institution, *Qaalluu* institution, *ateetee* and other social structure to create unity among them self. And the last one is, struggling against those who want to damage the Oromo culture and identity.

Generally, the Oromo identity; including *irreechaa* ritual is survived by the sacrifice of many Oromos, And they also used different techniques to save the culture from the past autocratic regime.

Consistently, when we see the factors contributing towards the Renaissance of the *irreechaa* ritual, the factors, that contributing to the revival of *Irreechaa* ritual are the following;-

The first factor is awareness of the participants and the attention given to it by the government. The consciousness of the Oromo youths and elders are becoming the story and store for keeping rule and regulations of the ritual by *qeerroo/foollee* (youths) being acting as security and associated by all participants of the ritual.

The Oromo people started to practice their own cultural practice of their region in lovely and even other ethnic groups started to take part in celebrating the ritual with the Oromo people. The Government has also given attention for the reason of good image of the country. Ratifying peace and political stability of the country was one of very crucial for the government and developing tourism industry on such grand public ritual.

The constitution of the country also allowed any citizen the right to believe and follow any religion and demonstrate his/ her cultural practice. So the government and the community started now to share responsibility with youths by keeping the peace of the participant accordingly.

The next factor is; *Irreechaa* was survive from extinction and is revived during the last two decades. One can mention as factors which make the *Irreechaa* an intangible cultural heritage worthy of UNESCO's recognition and protection.

The last factor for the revival of the *irreechaa* ritual is technological development and the enhancement of mass media. Some facilities of transportation services like expansion of road through local villages were maximizing the participant of the celebration. Mass and social media, like OMN, OBN, ONN, OBS, WALTA, ETV, Fana, others and international media's, magazines, newspapers have started to have coverages. All of them have been transmitted by their News and make documentaries on the ritual ceremony. These are the most contributing factors for the Renaissance of the *irreechaa* ritual celebration.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study deals with the *irreechaa* ritual relation to *ateetee* ceremony, its cultural significances, and symbolic meaning within respective objects used during the ritual focusing on the Tulama Oromo in Finfinnee surrounding Oromia Special Zone, *Buraayyu* town. The study revealed that every activity performed by Oromo people has its own symbolic significance and values within the framework of Oromo culture.

The study also shows the relationship between the *irreechaa* ritual and *ateetee* ceremony in which both of them are to pray and thanksgiving to *Waaqa*. *Ateete* is performed only by women for fertility, healthy and peaceful. It is performed twice a year similar to *irreechaa* ritual. It is also interconnected. After *ateetee* ceremony, *irreechaa* ritual is undertaken by the society.

The main result of this study shows that, the *irreechaa* ritual is performed for different purposes. It is the ritual celebrated for praying to *Waaqa tokkichaa* for health, fertility, blessing, better harvest, and rain, to create harmony between the people and nature, and also thanksgiving. We have also seen in this study the two types of *Irreechaa* ritual; *irreecha malkaa* and *irreecha Tulluu*. The major purpose of *irreecha Tulluu* is to beg for usual rain during the next rain season while *irreecha malkaa* is celebrated at the end and the begging of October in different part of Oromia.

The purpose of *irreecha Malkaa* is associated with thanksgiving to *Waaqaa* who gives normal and expected rain, helps all peoples during the dark summer season and also shows them the grown of scattered seeds in summer season.

The other purpose of *irreecha malkaa* is to praise God for the peaceful transfers from the dark rainy season to bright season.

The study has shown that the *irreechaa* ritual is celebrated in contemporary of religious and cultural practice. The majority of key informants agreed it was a cultural ritual, whereas the other group argued that it is a religious ritual. There are also informants who conclude *irreechaa* ritual as a combination of both religious and cultural aspects by showing the indicators of the cultural

and religious practices. These controversial arguments seemed caused by the culture and Oromo outlooks that faced challenge by the past different regimes and assimilation of Oromo with other religious.

The Oromo women have their major role in celebrating of the *irreechaa* ritual, by deciding the day of celebration and the place where the ritual is undertaken with Abbaa Gadaas, Abbaa Malkaa and elders. They are also expected by the community as the decoration of the celebration. Because the women are dress cultural cloths and they hold respected objects of the Oromo people during the ritual celebration. It has also seen in the myth that, *irreechaa* ritual by its self was started by women, so no *irreechaa* ritual is celebrated without the involvement of the women.

Irreechaa ritual plays different roles among the Oromo people in general and the Oromo of Finfinnee surrounding Oromia special zone and Burayyuu town particularly. It is great rituals for Oromo society which brings together all Oromo groups that have developed different cultures at different parts of Oromia Regional State.

Irreecha ritual is used as tool for restoration and reconstruction the exhausted, assimilated ‘original’ Oromo culture to the next generation.

The ritual also creates a close friendship between Oromo and other people of Ethiopian ethnic group. This is magnified that what we have seen in literature part of the study; the mechanical and organic solidarity. That is inter and intera social relation to enhance peace and harmony among the societies. It creates good relationship among human, and Environment which facilitate to build a strong nation.

Now a day, the *Irreechaa* ritual is not only promoting the religious, but also cultural ritual which used to promote the Oromo culture, and shows the Oromo identity to the whole world community.

In this study, we have also seen different cultural and respected objects held by the participants of the ritual according to the social position. But, most of the individuals have not awereness about the meaning and their cultural representation in the community. For instance, according to

the Oromo culture and norms, in Gada system *siiqqee* held only by women who get married and it is a symbolic manifestation of peace and woman power.

There are some indicators for the revival of the *irreechaa* ritual; from these indicators, the political challenges faced the Oromo society is in the process of being resolved. Government interference gets a side in performance of the ritual celebration except security issues. It started to be performed by the concerned bodies like *Abbaa Gadaas*, *Abbaa Malkaa* and elders with its own rule and regulation of the celebration ethics.

The Oromo nationalism (*Sabboonummaa Oromummaa*) has been developed throughout the region and a sense of belongingness among the society has also improved by different mechanisms due to the awareness created among the community.

The *irreechaa* ritual may have more significance, like the economic significance regarding job creation for jobless youth at the place where the ritual is celebrated. It can also maximize the income of the town from the coming tourist/participant.

Some aspects of *irreechaa* still require further study. I invite other scholars to study this big institution within comprehensive study of *Irreechaa* ritual of the Oromo people in general.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Guiding Questions for in-Depth Interview.

A. English Version

I. Personal information

1. Name _____
2. Age _____
3. Sex _____
4. Marital status _____
5. Educational status _____
6. Occupation _____
7. Religion _____

II. In-Depth Interview Questions

- Which types of the Oromo *gosaa/* branch inhabited around Malkaa *ateete*?
- What are indigenous social institutions exist in this community and what are their roles in all aspect of the society?
- What are the ritual carnivals that practiced in this area? Please, would you tell me some of them?
- What is *ateete* ceremony in the community of this particular area? How is it performed, why and when is it practiced? How many times it conducted per a year?
- What does *irreechaa* mean, How is it performed, why and when is it practiced? How many times it conducted per a year?
- What is *irreechaa* ritual in the community of this particular area?
- Is there the relationship between *ateete* ceremony and *irreechaa* ritual in the community of Malkaa *ateete* and surrounding? If yes, how can they be interrelated?
- Why has the Malkaa *ateete* been selected to be the official place for the *irreechaa* ritual for the community of in the study area?
- Is there any relationship between *irreechaa* ritual and Gada system?

- What is *irreechaa* ritual, is it religious ritual or an indigenous non religious ceremony?
- What is the role of women in the *irreechaa* of Malkaa *ateete*? How women participate in the *irreechaa* ritual?
- What are the special objects that are held by the participants during the *irreechaa* ritual? And what do they signify or represent /what are their symbolic interpretations?
- What are the benefits obtained from practicing and attending an *irreechaa* ritual?
- What is the of *irreechaa* ritual of the Malkaa *ateetee* in promoting and developing Oromo culture in the community of study area?

A. Afaan Oromoo Version

I. Odeeffannoo Dhuunfaa

1. Maqaa _____
2. Umurii _____
3. Saala _____
4. Haala gaa'elaa _____
5. Sadarkaa barnootaa _____
6. Hojii _____
7. Amantaa _____

II. Gaaffiiwwan Qorannichaa

1. Gosti Oromoo naannoo Malkaa *ateetee* baay'inaan jiraatu kamii?
2. Dhaabbileewwan hawaasummaa naannoo kanatti beekaman maal maal fa'i, qoodni isaan jiruu hawaasa kanaa roga hundaa keessatti qaban hoo maal?
3. Kabajni ayyaanotaa naannoo kanatti beekaman ykn gaggeeffaman maal maal fa'ii? Isaan keessa kanneen addatti beekaman natti himuu danddeessuu?
4. *Ateetee* jechuun maal jechuudha? Haala kamiin, maaliifi yoom kabajama?
5. *Irreecha* jechuun maal jechuudha? Haala kamiin, maaliifi yoom kabajama?
6. Hawaasa naannoo kanaaf Ayyaana *irreechaa* maali?
7. Ayyaanni *Ateeteefi* kabajni *irreecha* Malkaa *ateetee* hariiroo yokaan walitti dhufeenyi inni hawaasa kana biratti qabuu? Yoo qabaatan, maaliin? Akkamittiin?
8. Hawaasa kana biratti, Malkaan *Ateetee* kabaja ayyaana *irreechaaf* addatti maaliif filatame?
9. Hariiroon kabaja ayyaana *irreechaafi* sirna Gadaa gidduu jiru maali?

10. Ayyaanni irreechaa: kabaja ayyaana amantaatimoo, ayyaana ummataa aadaan kabajamudha?
11. Qoodni dubartootaa kabaja ayyaana irreechaa malkaa ateetee keessatti qaban maali? Hirmaannaan isaani akkamiin ifuu danda'a?
12. Meeshaalewwan ulfoo yookan wantootni guyyaa ayyaana irreechaa hirmaattotaan fayyadamaman maal maal fa'i? Maal bakka bu'u? Maaliinis fakkeeffamu?
13. Faayidaan ayyaana irreechaa kabajuunifi wagga waggaan irratti hirmaachuun argamu maal maal fa'i?
14. Faayidaan kabajni irreecha Malkaa ateetee, dagaaginaafi guddina aadaa Oromoo keessatti qabu maali?

B. Guiding Questionnaires for FDG

A. English version

1. What is the relationship between *ateetee* ceremony and *irreechaa* ritual in this society?
2. What are the roles of women in *irreechaa* ritual of the Malkaa *ateetee*?
3. What are the special objects that held by participants during *irreechaa* ritual and what does it represent and what are their symbolic interpretations?
4. What are the cultural significances of *irreechaa* ritual in the community?

B. Afaan Oromoo Version

1. Ayyaanni Ateeteefi kabajni irreecha Malkaa ateetee hariiroo yokaan walitti dhufeenyi inni hawaas kana keessatti qabuu? Yoo qabaatan, maaliin? Akkamittiin?
2. Qoodni dubartootaa kabaja ayyaana irreechaa Malkaa ateetee keessatti qaban maali? Hirmaannaan isaani akkamiin ifuu danda'a?
3. Meeshaalewwan ulfoo. Yookan wantootni guyyaa ayyaana irreechaa hirmaattotaan fayyadamaman maal maal fa'i? Maal bakka bu'u? Maaliinis fakkeeffamu?
4. Faayidaan kabajni Irreecha Malkaa ateetee, dagaaginaafi guddina aadaa Oromoo keessatti qabu maali?

Appendix B: Discription of Key Informants

1. Adde Abarrash Araddoo lives in Burayyuu near Malka ateete, Gafarsa nonnoo kebele. She is a farmer. She is 66 years old. She is a mother of ateetee at the area and she is well informed about the indigineous Culture of Tuulama Oromo, specially the ateetee in relation to Irreechaa ritual and serves the Burayyu town Culture and Tourism of as agent.
2. Adde Lomi Gameda lived in Burayyu town Lakku kattaa kebele. She is 54 years old. She is a mother of ateetee at the area and she is well informed about the indigineous Culture of Tuulama Oromo, specially the ateetee in relation to *Irreechaa* ritual and serves the Burayyu town Culture and Tourism of as agent. Her religion is Waaqeffaanna. She has performed *ateetee* during past different years.
3. Caalaa Soorii lives in Finfinnee Surrounding Oromia Special Zone Dukam town. He has been a worker of Bishoftu town Administration Culture and Tourism Office. He is a member the Tuulamaa Gada and Abbaa Caffee of the general assembly member of Gada council. He is 59 years old. He is reasercher on the Oromo culture and puhlised one book on *irreechaa* ritual. He follows the indiginious Oromo religion (waaqaffannaa).
4. Alemayew Haile is a researcher at Oromo Cultural Center. He is one of the scholars in Oromo intellectuals. He has published different books on the Oromo culture and Gadaa system in general and theHe is 55 years old. Tulama Gadaa System in particular. He is well known by his book entitled by “*the history of Oromo up to 16th century*”. He is researcher. He lives in Finfinnee and follows Waaqeffannaa.
5. Magarsaa Dadi is the young from Tulama Oromo. He is a language expert at Oromo Cultural center. He is 34 years old. And well awared by the Oromo Culture. He lives in Finfinnee surrounding Oromia Special zone Chanco town. He follower of Orthodox Chritian.
6. Aadde Diribe Qana’a is an expert at Oromo Cultural Center. She is a group leader at OCC. She is 38 years old. She lives in Finfinnee. She follows Orthodox Chritian.
7. Obbo Gammachu Ida’e is the Abbaa Malkaa (lineage leader) of Malkaa ateetee. He is 58 years old and he well knows by the Oromo indiginious culture and lead the community.

His branch/ clan is Gutu. He blesses the participants on different ceremony and rituals. He lives in Burayyuu Gafarsa Nono kebele. He follows the waaqeffanna religion.

8. Obbo Diribi Damise is a researcher Oromo Cultural. He is 66 years old. He is one of the scholars in Oromo intellectual. He published different books on the Oromo mythology and the history of Oromo society. He is well known by his book entitled by “*Oromo society in black civilization*” and *Ilaalcha Oromo*” He is a researcher. He lives in Finfinnee and follows waaqeffannaa.
9. Adde Tsige Waqtola is a civil servant. She is 65 years old. She lives in Burayyuu Town. She is Waaqeffata.

Appendix C: List of Key Informants and Places of Contact

| No | Name | Sex | Age | Job | Place of contact |
|----|----------------------|-----|-----|---|------------------|
| 1 | Adde Aberrash Araddo | F | 66 | Farmer | Burayyu |
| 2 | Adde Lomi Gemeda | F | 54 | Self worker | Burayyuu |
| 3 | Obbo Caalaa soorii | M | 59 | Abbaa caffee of Gada Tuulamaa and self worker | Dukam |
| 4 | Adde Diribe Kanea | F | 38 | Civil servant | Finfinnee |
| 5 | Obbo Alemayew Haile | M | 55 | High expert at Oromo Cultural center | Finfinnee |
| 6 | Obbo Magersa Dadi | M | 34 | Civil servant | Finfinnee |
| 7 | Obbo Diribi Demisse | M | 66 | Self worker | Burayyuu |
| 8 | Obbo Gamachu Ida'e | M | 58 | Farmer | Burayyuu |
| 9 | Adde Tsige Waqtola | F | 65 | Farmer | Burayyu |

Appendix D: List of FGD Informants and Places of contact

| No | Name | Sex | Age | Job | Place of contact | Religion |
|----|------------------------|-----|-----|------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Obbo Adem Beriso | M | 38 | Sivil servant | Burayyu | Muslim |
| 2 | Obbo Baqqalaa Dhaba | F | 42 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Waaqeffataa |
| 3 | Obbo Caalaa Diroo | M | 48 | Sivil servant | Burayyu | Orthodox |
| 4 | Obbo Araarsoo Qoricho | M | 47 | Member of Tulama Gadaa | Burayyu | waaqeffannaa |
| 5 | Obbo Getacho Abera | | | | Burayyu | Protestant |
| 6 | Obbo Baqqalaa Buko | M | 42 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Waaqeffata |
| 7 | Adde Kuli Araarsaa | F | 38 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Protestant |
| 8 | Obbo Daniel Deresa | M | 50 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Protestant |
| 9 | Adde Milki Adisu | M | 34 | Engineer | Burayyu | Waaqeffata |
| 10 | Adde Alemthehay Mitiku | F | 32 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Protestant |
| 11 | Obbo Dawit Chala | M | 20 | Farmer | Burayyu | Orthodox |
| 12 | Obbo Teshale Hordofa | M | 47 | Farmer | Burayyu | Waaqeffata |
| 13 | Obbo Alemuu Caalaa | M | 63 | Driver | Burayyuu | Waaqeffata |
| 14 | Obbo Charuu Badada | M | 58 | Merchant | Burayyu | Muslim |
| 15 | Adisu Badada | M | 47 | Contractor | Burayyu | Waaqeffata |
| 16 | Obbo Abera Girma | M | 35 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Orthodox |
| 17 | Obbo Lensa Tegeng | F | 32 | Civil servant | Burayyu | Protestant |
| 18 | Obbo Girma Mokonin | M | 28 | Teacher | Burayyu | Waaqeffata |
| 19 | Abara Waqtolaa | M | 40 | Farmer | Burayyu | Muslim |

Appendix E: Photos of Some Key Informants

Pcture 5: Some of the Key Informants at Gafarsa Noonnoo, Elders and Youths. (Photos; taken by the Resercher and His associates during the field work).



Picture 6: Youths (Qeerroowwan) Ceremony to Play their Role and the pho of Abbaa Gadaa and Other participants' thravilling to Irreechaa ritual of the Malkaa ateetee (photo by a researcher on Sep/2018 at Burayyuu).



Picture 7: Parcial View of the Participants Performing Irreechaa ritual at Malkaa Ateetee. (by supporter, on Sep/2018).





Picture 8: Picture of the participants from other Ethiopian ethnic group with the researcher (photo by a researcher's associate)



Declaration

This thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all source of materials used for thesis have been duly acknowledged

Name: Tiruneh Rebuma

Name signature_____

Date_____

This thesis has been submitted with my full approval as advisor.

Name: Taddesse Berisso (PHD)

Signature_____

Date_____