

## Short Communication

# “Irreecha” Ceremony among Shoa Oromo

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## Abstract

*Irreecha has widely been celebrated by Oromo people for a long period of time. It plays a major role in the social life of the Oromo people. It is a ritual ceremony in which Oromos worship and praise “Waaqa”(which means God). Moreover, it enables Oromos to be united (strengthen unity), make conciliation among conflicting groups and promote their culture. The Irreecha ceremony selected for this particular study are Irreecha Horaa Arsadee (eastern Shoa) and Horaa Bisil (western Shoa). Many scholarly works have so far been dedicated to the study of the various aspects of Oromo history, culture, belief and folklore. However, these scholars have touched upon the Irreecha ritual only as a passing remark. In other word, no detailed study exclusively or broadly dedicated to Irreecha ceremony (ritual) has been carried out with a view to properly documenting it. . Therefore the main objective of this research work was to understand, describe and document the component Irreecha ceremony; to analyze the process of Irreecha celebration at Horaa Arasadee and Horaa Bisil; and to know the social values attached to Irreecha ceremony. In order to meet the stated objectives, the qualitative research approach was adopted for information gathering. This includes the use of, interview, participant observation and focus-group discussion. The result of the investigation reveals that there are two major types of Irreecha ceremonies: Irreecha Tullu (Irreecha celebrated on moutain) and Irreecha Malka (Irreecha celebrated on the bank of river), there are also variations across Oromo lands regarding the celebration (not uniform) and the ceremony is celebrated by all age group and gender regardless of status.*

**Keywords:** Ceremony, Irreecha, Shoa Oromo

## Introduction

### The Oromo People

Among the different ethnic groups living within the borders of present day Ethiopia, the Oromo constitute the most numerous (Bartels 1983:13). Oromia is the biggest region in Ethiopia. The total population of Oromia National Regional State

stands at 27 million. This makes the Oromo one of the most numerous ethnic groups in the whole of Africa (Mohammed 1994, Bartels 1983 and population House and census of Ethiopia 2007).

The Oromo people constitute various groups which for centuries were composed almost exclusively of a confederation of groups. The groups,

in turn, were divided into sub-groups, the sub-groups into clans, and the clans into lineages. Now a day's different Oromo groups occupy central, western, eastern and south eastern Ethiopia. Among the major regional groups includes, the Borana, Guji, Arsi, *Tulama*, Afan Qallo, Macha, Karrayu and Wallo. (Bartels-1983)

In his unpublished work titled “Continuity and Change in Oromo Administrative Practices (16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> century)” Zelalem (2002) in a study conducted had indicated that the Oromo are the largest Cushitic speaking people in Ethiopia. Beyond their population size and vast territorial distribution, they are known for their rich cultural heritage and complex socio-administrative practices. It is believed that during their expansion, the Oromo had used similar system of age classification.

Gafa gadaa kami? (During which gadaa?) It has the meaning of an official, Inni gadaa (he is gadaa i.e. an official). The term Gaada can be used in different context: gadaa nagaya (gadaa of the peace, gadaa qufa (gadaa of plenty), Gadaa Lola (gadaa of war), gadaa Kenya (our gadaa), etc. Gadaa is a measurement of time, but according to Anglo mizzi quoted in Mohammed (1994) it also has a religious sense. Gadama (sacredness) is associated with circumcision and thereby maturity for political power.

The Gadaa system is a system of classes (luba) that succeed each other

every eight years in assuming military, economic, political and ritual responsibilities. Each Gadaa class remains in power during a specific term (Gadaa) which begins and ends with a formal power transfer ceremony. Before assuming a position of leadership, the Gadaa class is required to wage war against a community that none of their ancestor had raided. This particular war is known as butta and is waged on schedule every eight years. (Mohammed 1994)

### **The language**

In terms of language, Oromo are one of the Cushitic-speaking groups in Ethiopia. Cushitic speakers have inhabited parts of north-eastern and eastern Africa for as long as recorded history. Some writers use Oromo term for both language and the community. But, Afan Oromo and Oromo are the language and the community respectively. Afaan Oromo (Oromo language) is most commonly written with a modified Latin alphabet called Qubee. Afaan Oromo and Qubee are currently utilized by the Ethiopian government's state Radio and Television and news paper. Like most Ethiopian languages, whether Semitic or Omotic.

Oromo has the typical southern Cushitic set of five short and five long vowels letters. The difference in the length is contrastive, for example, lafa 'earth' lafaa 'soft'. Germination is also significant in Oromo. That is,

consonant gemination can distinguish words from one another, for example, *badaa*, meaning 'bad', and *baddaa*, meaning 'highland'. In the Qubee alphabet, a single "letter" consists either of a single symbol or a diagraph (ch, dh, ny, ph, sh) Germination is not required to mark for the diagraphs, though some writers indicate it by doubling the first symbol *Laphee* 'heart' (Baye 1986).

According to Stroomer and Helmut Humbure (1984), three dialects of Oromo language are found in Kenya, six dialects are found in Ethiopia and one dialect found both in Ethiopia and Kenya. These dialects are: Raya Oromo, Wallo Oromo, Wallaga Oromo, Harar Oromo, Shoa Oromo and Arsi Oromo all found in Ethiopia. While Gabra Oromo, Orma Oromo and Waata Oromo are found in Kenya. The Borana Oromo is found in both Ethiopia and Kenya.

## Statement of the Problem

Many scholarly works have so far been dedicated to the study of the various aspects of Oromo history, culture, literature, belief and folklore. Among them, Asmarom Leggesse (1973) focused on `Borana Oromo; Knutsson (1967) on Machaa group, Dirribi Demissie (2009) on ideology of Oromo, Gammachu (1998) on the problems that arise in the understanding of Oromo culture. However, these scholars have touched

upon the *Waqqefanna*, *Qalluu*, *Irreecha*, *Waaka* and *Ayyana* only as a passing remark. In other words, so far no detailed study exclusively or broadly have been dedicated to *Irreecha* ceremony (ritual). This study try to bridge the gap with regards to the documentation of *irreecha* ceremony among the various Oromo groups. However, the scope is limited to *Irreecha* ceremonies celebrated at *Horaa Arsadee* in Eastern *Shoa* and that of *Horaa Bisiil* in western *Shoa*.

## Research Questions

- What are the phases of *Irreecha* celebration?
- What are the social norms and rules that guide the behavior of participants (actors and audience?)
- How can we preserve the authenticity of *Irreecha* ceremony in light of contemporary cultural contamination?

## Objective of the study

### Specific objectives:

- To identify and document the steps used in performing *Irreecha*;
- To identify customary rules and norms that guide social behavior.
- To recommend the ways and strategies of preserving the authenticity of *Irreecha* ceremony in view of its exposure to

distortion because of external influences.

## Methodology

### The field research

The study largely employs the qualitative research approach. As such the data gathering instruments employed includes participant observation, focus group discussion and interview with selected respondents.

### Participant observation

Participant observation, which has been described as “the most intimate and morally hazardous” form of social research (Lofland. 1972) enables me not only to see what is happening, but to act like a member of the group. As a participant, I visited and stayed in *Horaa Arsadee* couple of weeks before the main ceremony to make observations of the preparatory stages in September. The same was true for *Horaa Bisiil* which was held in October. All observations and note taking were made systematically before and after the ceremony.

### Interview

The interview was conducted on a purposively selected sample size, specifically targeting those who have knowledge on the irreecha ceremony. There are 36 respondents in total, of which 26 are Abba Gadaas and 10 were scholars. The questions administered for the Abba Gadaas are totally the same, while the questions

targeting the scholars was slightly different. Interviewees were selected purposively for their knowledge (age wise, sensitive to cultural things and social acceptance in the community). They were, mainly, youngsters, Abba Gadaas, and scholars, whom I believed to have knowledge on the *Irreecha* ceremony. The number of people interviewed was about 36 and equally distributed in both places. Among these 26 are Abba Gadaas and 10 are scholars are interviewed. The questions prepared for all Abba Gadaas are totally the same. But, for the Scholars one the questions are quite different.

### Focus group-discussion

The focus-group discussion plays a crucial role in the gathering of information on irreecha ceremony. The focus group discussants was drawn from the interviewed group, with 14 Abba Gadaas. The main points for discussion was centering on the role of Abba Gadaas, why water body is preferred for this celebration, the significance of ritual objects and its symbolic meaning.

## Comparative Analysis of *Irreecha* Celebration among Eastern and Western Shoa Oromo

### Participants and their roles on the Eve of *Irreecha* Celebration

In this ceremony, all segment of Oromo society participate. For *Tulama* and *Macca* groups, *Irreecha* is ritual

ceremonys (a kind of a thanks giving) in which Oromo worship *Waaqa* (Supreme Being or Creator) at the end of the rainy season and the dawn of birra (Spring). So, there is no sex or age limitation in celebrating *Irreecha*. Children, women, youngsters, girls, elders and Abba *Gadaas* are all involved in the ritual. A lot of preparations are undertaken before the coming of the main celebration day.

### **The role played by women**

While observing the celebration, different groups of the society take part in the preparations, for the celebration of the main day. However, the main participants are women. Among others, the main actors at this stage are Qallu holder Women or the Qallitti who prepare different traditional drinks such as Farso (local beer), Araqee (local beverage alcohol), Borde (local beer) and so forth. These kinds of preparations are almost common in both places (Hooraa Arsade and Hooraa Bisiil). The other thing that women do is going to the big Oda tree where the celebration takes place having different gifts like Butter and Incense (sandeli). They find any opening in the tree and put the Butter in it and smoke the incense (sandeli). They sing a kind of ritual song until the spirit of Qallitti possesses them and communicate with the *Waaqa* (God). The Women who do not have *Qalluu* spirit come to the celebration place with grass and immerse it in the lake and sprinkle to their face and stay away.

### **The role played by children**

The result of participant observation reveals that, Children are important participants in the celebration of *Irreecha* at both sites. They make different performances: singing traditional songs and perform traditional dances. However, there are slight differences in the songs of children. For instance, in *Hooraa Arsadee* children say 'marewo.... marewo... Odaa guddaa marewo' meaning 'he surrounds the sacred sycamore tree'. They say it in the form of chanting mareo .... mareo.... While

In *Hooraa Bisiil*, children are grouped in different clusters to sing. They usually sing songs that are similar to Wallaga traditional songs and music. They say Ishoo...Obbokoo 'good deed my lord, good deed my father'. These kinds of gratifying songs are usually extended to creator (God). The other difference is that children who sing different traditional songs and dances of on the eve at *Hooraa Bisiil* receive blessing from the elders (ritual leaders) at the end of the ceremony. However, elders (ritual leader) in *Hooraa Arsadee* are not actively involved in the eve of the ceremony.

### **The role played by elder girls (unmarried)**

Elder girls have also been identified to play a significant role at *Hooraa Bisiil*. Being interviewed elder girls and the result indicates that, they come to the celebration with their mothers or grandmothers. In case a mother has *Qalluu* spirit, when they sing and try

to get into a trance the mood of the spirit, the elder girls prepare coffee and make smoke around the Odaa (sycamore tree) for the women who are singing and violently moving their heads in front of the Odaa to smell it. It is a learning process for the elder girls who watched their mothers pray and sing in front of the odaa, for they learn how to pray and the tradition is passed down to the elder girls who are expected to inherit the Qalluu spirit when the mother dies and keep worshipping afterwards.

The little girls who sing traditional songs in groups are also expected to inherit the activities of the elder girls when they grow up and actively participate in the ceremony. The elder girl who serves the Qalluu spirit are (is) believed to (receive ) get blessing from the spirit to be rich, enlightened to get a good husband, blessed children and so on. Due to this girls usually get in to competition so as to get the opportunity of serving the Qalluu spirit. Finally, they receive blessings from Abba Gaada express good wishes to each other and go away.

In the case of *Horaa Arsadee* elder girls do not actively participate in the ceremony. The Women similar to the case of *Horaa Bisiil* pray in front of the Odaa (sycamore tree). But, elder girls show lesser interest to serve the spirit of Qalluu unlike elder girl in *Horaa Bisiil*. They only come to the lake wearing different traditional clothes, cut grasses and splash the holy water

from the lake to their faces and stay away.

### **The role played by little Girls**

The direct participation and observation of the ceremony indicates that, the active participants on the eve of *Horaa Arsadee* are little girls. They engage in most of the activities to serve the Qalluu spirit like elder girls of *Horaa Bisiil*. They make coffee, smoke the fumes around the tree and decorate the surrounding with grasses and so on.

In the ceremony of *Irreecha*, it is believed that only virgin girls are allowed to serve the Qalluu spirit. Because, it is believed that Qalluu is a 'blessed' spiritual leader of the people. The blessed relics of the Qalluu spirit could only be used by virgin girls. If materials offered for sacrifice are touched by non virgin girls before it is offered to the Qalluu, it is believed that the 'blessed' materials will be cursed. If *Dubari holu qabdu* meaning unclean girls (girls with sexual experience, but not married) touch the 'blessed' relics of the Qalluu spirit, it is believed that they could be ill or be killed by the anger of the spirit. Finally, the elder girls who have been dancing and singing and also the little girls who have been serving the spirit go to the lake and immerse a grass in to Water and touch their faces and say it to creator 'let us be reach for the next time in good health', 'bless us' and they express their good wishes and go to home.

### **The role played by Elders**

The result of participant observation reveals that, one of the major participants of *Irreecha* ceremony is the elders. They actively participate in this ceremony in both places. The elders in *Horaa Arsadee* prepare *korma* meaning Bulls to be slanted for the ceremony and welcome ritual leaders (Abba *Gadaa*) who come from different corner of the country. Besides preparing sacrifice for the ceremony elders as one part of the society go to lake and pray the *Waaqa*. The elder who do these kinds of activities are not Abba *Gadaa*. The same is true in *Horaa Bisiil*. According to my elder informant, Motumma Cimdessa *Irreecha* is a crucial tradition of the Oromo people and a base for *Gadaa*. He continues, *Irreecha* is an expression of Oromo philosophy of the world, miracle of the creator and mystery of life of generations.

### **The role played by Abba *Gadaa***

Abba *Gadaa* is believed to have a great place both in *Horaa Bisiil* and *Horaa Arsadee*. The blessing and cursing of Abba *Gadaa* are believed to be effective in the society. They are considered as great ritual leader and main actors in the ceremony. Abba *Gadaa* only shows up either in the eve or on the main day of *Irreecha* ceremony unlike other participants of the ceremony. In *Horaa Bisiil* some of the Abba *Gadaas* come to the place at the eve of *Irreecha* ceremony. Whereas, in *Horaa Arsadee*, Abba *Gadaa* come to the ceremony on the main ceremony

only. According to Sidaa Badhaso, Abba *Gadaa* comes to the ceremony having a Grass, Chira (flywhisk), and wearing beautiful traditional clothes. If it is power transfer, the recipients of the authority make psychological preparation to administer for the next eight years. This is done on the day before the eve and the eve itself.

In the case of *Horaa Bisiil*, Abba *Gadaa* come in the eve night surrounded by youngsters and blesses the people by sprinkling Water on them. Abba *Gadaas* transfer a message and advice the community to love and respect their culture and keep or transfer this unique indigenous Oromo ritual ceremony for the coming generation. At the end, they go back home surrounded by youngsters. This is not observed at the *Horaa Arsadee*.

### **The main day of *Irreecha***

#### **The role played by Women**

On the main day of *Irreecha* ritual ceremony, in both places women begin to take what they have been preparing to the Odaa (sycamore tree). They are colorfully dressed and have Siiqqee (thin women stick) on their hand. Especially *Qalluu* holder Women or the *Qallitti* in most cases hold Butter in *Qaabe* (traditional Butter container) one hand and fresh Grass on other hand and go to the celebration site.

The women who have the spirit do not take a food at all, till the praying is done and the spirit communicates the

people with *Waaqa* (God) through these Women. another point concerning the women who have the *Qaallu* spirit is that they start giving the sacrifices in different directions. They throw the Bread, the Grains in different directions and also splash the *Farsoo* (local beer), *Itittu* (yogurt), and *Araqee* (traditional destiled alcohol) in different directions. In addition *Qalluu* holder women or *Qallitti* sprinkle perfume to the other participant of the ceremony.

The result of participant observation reveals that, the participants are not allowed to take anything from the sacrificed food and drink before the *Qaallu* spirits do this praying. The women who have a *Qaallu* spirit sprinkle a perfume around the lake where the praying is done and smell spread to the participants of the ceremony.

The women who have *Qaallu* spirit are considered as the main actors for the activities under the *Odaa* tree. The women hold Umbrella colored with green, yellow and red, their clothes are very attractive. They hold a special kind of Grass called *Coqorsa* meaning Grass indicator of fertility and *Siiqee* (thin women stick) and go around the *Odaa* tree. They sing for the spirit and being in the mood of it, moving violently by it and put the Butter on the tree. The other women who do not have a *Qalluu* spirit, holding their grass, immerse in the lake and sprinkle to their face then take blesses from Elders finally, go back home.

The other important thing on this day is that it is usually believed that new women who have not had spirit of *Qaallu* might get it if their mother had spirits and die having handed down to them. Women who get new spirit of *Qaallu* are identified to be shouting too much, mooring their heads violently here and there and so forth. All these activities of Women who have *Qaallu* spirit are common both in *Horaa Bisiil* and *Hora Arsadee*.

On the other hand, Women believe that they would get good chance on this celebration. Especially, barren Women immerse their breasts in the Water for they believe it would fertile their womb. For instance, one of my informants, *Addee Dirribe Dhaba*, told me that she did not have any child for nine years after she got married. But, four years ago she came to *Horaa Arsadee* and immersed her Breast in the lake where praying is done and prayed that *Waaqa* (creator) would give her a child. After a year she gave birth to a child and now the boy is three years old. *Addee Dirribe* said that she had given birth to other two children after this and her riches is increasing. She believes that this is the blessing of *Waaqa* (God). On figure 16 *Adde Dirribe* wandering is the *Odaa* tree with her child to the left of a Woman holding an Umbrella. Although, the above example is taken from *Horaa Arsadee*, this tradition is common in *Horaa Bisiil* too.

The activities of Women are the same in both places. But, sacrifices presented to the spirit such as, the

Butter, the Bread, and the Liquor and so forth are covered by curtail all around in the case of *Horaa Bisiil*. They believe that they are trying to hide the secrets. In the case of *Horaa Arsadee* the sacrifices are left open in front of the Odaa (sycamore tree) and the people leave. In general, on this day, women (mothers) wish good for their people, children, country and everything.

### **The role played by the children**

Children below 15 (fifteen) years in general have great role in this ceremony. Children whose mothers do not have *Qalluu* spirit go to the Hora and sprinkle water to their face by using fresh grass and daisy. On the other hand those whose mother has *Qalluu* spirit show respect for their parents on this day by carrying the sacrifices prepared for the *Qaallu* spirit. They have to take a great care not to take a food prepared for sacrifice for it is believed that unless the Women with *Qaallu* spirit throw the sacrifice to the spirit, it is impossible to eat for them. If in case they do eat, they could suffer from different sicknesses like diarrhea, headache and even death may follow. As part of the community they immerse the fresh grass and daisy in the lake and sprinkle it on their face.

The other thing children do in this ceremony is, making groups on the eve and singing different traditional songs and dances till the praying is finished and its time for eating. Having eaten and received blessing from the fathers and elders, children

take all the different materials that they have brought to the celebration place. They take holy water from the lake because they believe it is good and have a curative power when they are sick and so on. This believes are common in both *Horaa Arsadee* and *Horaa Bisiil*.

### **The role played by the Youngsters**

Youngsters who are generally above 15 (fifteen) years are also active participants of this ceremony. They come to the celebration place getting dressed of colorful traditional clothes such as shoes made from hides, trousers made from cotton and also scarf clothes made from cotton.

They have the special kind of grass called *Coqorsa* and flower called *Kelloo* (daisy) on one hand, and special stick called *Bokkuu*. They come singing in group the song of *Gadaa* year. Like this, *hayyee hoo Gadaa Birmaji qufaa hoo* meaning the *Gadaa Birmaji* is indicator of satisfaction. According to my informant, *Caala Fayyisa, Irreecha* give them strength. According to him, youngsters say that “*Irreechi irree Koo ti*” meaning *Irreecha* is my strengthening.

Youngsters are advised by elders for it is believed that they will inherit and serve *Waaqa*. They get recognition from elders and begin to be involved in different activities. According to *Caala Fayyisa*, in *Horaa Bisiil*, a Youngster starts to involve in different activities done by his *Gadaa* father such as traditional court

(juries), reconciliation and so on. This is also observed in *Horaa Arsadee*. In general, having finished the praying and blessing, they go back to their homes following their fathers playing traditional songs. This is common in both places.

### **The role played by elder girls (unmarried)**

It is well-known that girls have great role in domestic chores and works in Ethiopia. This is particularly true in Oromia region. Girls take responsibility of their house and help parents in a great deal. I try to discuss the role of elder girls on the main day of *Irreecha* ritual ceremony in both places.

In the case of *Horaa Bisiil* elder girls play pivotal role in the celebration of *Irreecha*. They come to the celebration place getting dressed of different colorful clothes of different Oromo groups. For instance, if the decent of a girl is from Harar Oromo, she will look dressed of Harar traditional clothes and so forth. An elder girl is too busy especially if her mother has a *Qalluu* spirit. In the case of *Horaa Bisiil*, Young girls help their Mothers (Qaallu holders) by presenting the incense, the food and the drink sacrifices in front of the Odaa (sycamore tree). It is also believed that if a young girl is Orphan or got her mother died, the Qaallu spirit passes down to her from her mother.

On the main day of the ceremony, these young girls come to the celebration place chanting different

songs that signify the greatness of *Waaqa* (creator or God) for they believe he has given them the land, the sky, the river and so on. Any young girl in *Horaa Bisiil* is expected to serve her mother (spirit holder) in the Odaa. She has to make coffee and present the sacrifices to the Qaallu spirit which is believed to reside in her Mother.

The result of participant observation reveals that, unlike in the case of *Horaa Bisiil*, in *Horaa Arsadee*, young girls are not active participants in the *Irreecha* ceremony. They don't usually serve their mothers praying in the mood of the spirit under the Odaa tree. Rather, little girls under 15 fifteen years are seen actively involved in the ceremony. They present different food drinks and sacrifices such as *Faffato* (minced injera), *Caccabsa* (a piece of Bread mixed with butter), *Qori* (roasted sorghum mixed with butter), bread, mead, Farsoo (local beer) and Ititto (yogurt) to the Qaallu spirit which is believed to be residing in the mother or grandmother. Whereas, in *Horaa Bisiil* little girls chant and sing about the ceremony but they are not old enough to serve the spirit.

### **The role played by Elders**

The analysis of the interview conducted also indicated that elders have great roles in the Ethiopia community. They are highly represented and respected section of the society. They are involved in different social issues such as reconciliation, marriage deals and

many other tasks. The place of elders in *Irreecha* ceremony is also decisive. They prepare Oxen to be slaughtered as sacrifices for the *Waaqa* (God) on the main day. They welcome different Abba *Gadaas* coming from different areas and so forth. This is common in both *Horaa Arsadee* and *Horaa Bisiil*. They slaughter the Bull and splash the blood under the Odaa tree. They do the cooking and fumes and smokes are believed to extend to the *Waaqa* (God) or creator. This practice exists in both places. The striking difference is in the color of the Bulls slaughtered. On the main day of the ceremony elders come to lake holding fresh grass, daisy and traditional stick. As one part of the society, elders pray, thank and pray *Waaqa* by immersing *Coqorsa* and *Kelloo* in the lake and sprinkle to their face.

In the case of *Horaa Arsadee* the bull to slaughtered is always *Korma Gurracha*, meaning black bull. The reason is that the first person who slaughtered the bull is believed to have presented a black bull which was sacrificed in at *Bishoftu* ( *Horaa*). According to key informant, *Abba Gadaa* Takala Badhaso, the first person is *Arsade*. Since then, the area is called *Horaa-Arsadee*. This has become an example for that. The place of the praying is named *Horaa Arsade'* (Lake of *Arsade*).

Generally speaking, in the case of *Horaa Bisiil*, the color of the bull slaughtered is not specific to any particular color. In both cases, the elders bring fresh Grass *Coqorsa*

(indicator of fertility), *Kelloo* (Flowers) and so forth. Having got the blessings of *Abba Gadaas*, they go back to their various homes.

### **The role played by Abba Gadaa**

*Abba Gadaas* are the most respected and honored traditional leaders of the Oromo people. They act as lawgivers, judges, and leaders. They are thought to bless or curse what they believe to be good or evil in the society respectively. They are also the main actors in the *Irreecha* ceremony. They are dressed traditional clothes holding flywhisk (*Chira*) and special stick called *Bokkuu* (sign of authority) and attend the ceremony and they are given honored places in the ceremony.

*Abba Gadaas* come to the celebration site surrounded by old, youngsters and children, chanting '*Hoo... Gale Abban sera dhufe'*, meaning 'come father of law' 'come father of law'. They are well honored and highly respected in both places. In *Horaa Bisiil*, they chant special song if incense the time is a year of power transfer to new *Abba Gadaa*. The *Abba Gadaa* who is transferring power says: *Hoo Darara* (take flower or honey), *Hoo Qoori* (take a roasted grain mixed with Butter), *Hoo Caccabsa* (take a piece of bread mixed with Butter), *Hoo Itittu* (take yogurt). The recipient of the power (the new *Abba Gadaa*) responds by saying: *Mee Darara* (give me the flower or honey), *Mee Qoori* (give me the roasted grain mixed with Butter), *Mee Caccabsa* (give me a piece of bread mixed with Butter) and

Mee Itittuu (give me yogurt). Then both shake each other’s hand and this signifies the official democratic power transfer to the new Abba *Gadaas*, which will last for the next 8 (eight) years. This is in the case of *Horaa Bisiil*.

In the case of *Horaa Arsadee*, the power transfer is similar with *Horaa Bisiil*. First the Abba *Gadaa* nominates the new Abba *Gadaa* and give the authority in front of the people. After these ceremonies, they bless the people and express good wishes to the people and the country and then, curse any evil thing. They believe that the God is able to punish those who go beyond his limits of what is morally, socially or legally acceptable.

Evans-pritchard (1969) asserts that God is conceived of not only as a creator but also as a guardian of social order who punished transgressors, who breaches any of the interdictions which serve to maintain the social order. Finally, the Abba *Gadaas* go back home. When they go back home, they are surrounded by the youngsters, elders, children who also chant a song like this:

*Biyya ambayyoo yaa raaba* ‘it is your land children’

*Biyya ambayyoo* ‘it is your land’

*Gadaa gatte yaraba* ‘you left *Gadaa* the children’

*Biyya ambayyoo* ‘it is your land’

*Gadaa gaatte nagafate yaa raba* ‘Don’t ask me you are the one who lost *Gadaa*’

*Biyya ambayyoo* ‘it is your land’

The main message of the above song is ‘Children you left *Gadaa*’ this is common in both *Horaa Bisiil* and *Horaa Arsadee*. This is to encourage children to understand their culture with a view to preserving it for the future. Generally, Abba *Gadaas* are the most honored members of the Oromo people.

### **The social roles of *Irreecha***

*Irreecha* has an important role in reconciliation, unifying the Oromo people and promoting their culture, custom, beliefs system. In addition *Irreecha* play a pivotal role in social inclusion and social exclusion, meaning those who do good things will be appreciated and get acceptance in the society and for those who are engaged in evil are blamed and cursed.

### **Conclusions**

Human being has developed its own culture, way of life, philosophy, and belief right from inception, which makes him different from animals. Africa can be identified with peculiar culture, dozens of original traditions, and ways of life, custom, etc. Among African countries that can be mentioned as multicultural and multilingual are Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan not to mention a dozen more of such multi -cultural and multi-lingual countries.

*Irreecha* is a spectacular show of cultural, historical and natural

beautification in their full glory at the height of the season. *Irreecha* celebration in Oromo society indicates the end of the rainy season and the beginning of a blossom harvest season of Birraa. It is in Oromo tradition to gather at the river banks, mountains tops and lakes shores to give thanks to the almighty *Waaqa* for all the blessings throughout past years and ask for Araaraa (Reconciliation), Nagaa (Peace) and etc. for the coming year. *Irreecha* ceremony has a pivotal role in strengthening the unity of the people, promoting and exchanging cultures among the society, forcing elders to keep peace in the community. In addition, *Irreecha* makes a person ruled by social laws (customary laws) for any problem and conflict. Social rules have big role in solving them. Therefore, social rules are confirmed in the *Irreecha* stage among *Macca* and *Tulama* of Oromo.

The length of time or celebration is another point of difference between the two *Irreecha* places. At *Horaa Arsadee Irreecha* is celebrated for five consecutive weeks but at *Horaa Bisiil* only for three weeks. The participation of girls in the *Irreecha* ceremony is another difference between *Horaa Bisiil* and *Horaa Arsadee*. Young Girls are very active and eager in the case of *Horaa Bisiil* to serve the *Qalluu*. This however is weak in the case of *Horaa Arsadee*.

When we come to the common features of *Irreecha* in the two places, in both places (*Horaa Aarsadee* and *Horaa Bisiil*) every one (from children

to elders) is a participant in the *Irreecha* ceremony. This ceremony is not left for a particular group such as children, youth, or Elders. It is equally celebrated by every section of the society. Any participant begs God for the well being of not only him/her self but also for other people as well as every creature in the world.

On the ritual ceremony of *Irreecha*, following the blessing and praying of a ritual leader, people pray to and ask *Waaqa* what they wished to get though the content varied. However, the prayer were usually aimed at prosperity i.e., to have many cattle, health and to get a child. For instance, a sterile woman usually asks to get children. This is common in both cases. These are some of similarities and differences in *Irreecha* ceremony of both places.

For many *Macca* and *Tulama* Oromo, *Irreecha* is a special day of prayer, thanksgivings and so forth. In addition, it is a ritual that has been transferred from generation to generation. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the *Irreecha* ritual ceremony is celebrated in different parts of Oromia regions. The *Irreecha* celebrated in *Horaa Arsadee* and *Horaa Bisiil*, with the exceptions of some differences, are similar in many aspects. The main aim of the ceremony of *Irreecha* in both places is to pray and thank *Waaqa*. But now days, the *Irreecha* ceremony at *Horaa Arsadee* has become an annual festival of splended size where people different religion and age group

gather not only to pray and give thanks to almighty *Waaqa*, but also to express their cultural solidarity and relax.

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