

Analysis of Mecha Oromo Safu-Moral system: Anthropological Linguistics Perspectives

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Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to analyse Mecha Oromo Safu as reflected in their language use and their culture. The data were gathered from some elders and community leaders selected purposely and by the researcher himself as he is native to the community. These data were collected through an open interview with the informants and through elicitation by the researcher. The major research methodology is qualitative and the research design is ethnographic. The findings and the conclusion were that safu themes: some linguistic expressions such as narration, and proverbs; cultural themes such as wisdom to lead, keep and empower the communities and harmony with nature. And thereby recommended the Oromo intellectuals should study these safu principles, and document and work collaboratively with the community and government so that they can be used in curriculum and social problem-solving strategies.

Keywords: Moral system, safu, anthropological linguistics, ethnography

Introduction

The Oromo people, one of Ethiopia's largest ethnic groups, inhabit diverse regions across the country, including the fertile lands of Mecha. With an estimated population exceeding 40 million, the Oromo are recognized for their rich cultural heritage, which includes the Safu moral system a complex framework governing ethical conduct and communal values (Central Statistical Agency, 2020).

The Mecha Oromo reside predominantly in the Mecha district of the West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. This area is renowned for its agricultural productivity and cultural diversity, providing a fertile ground for the preservation of traditional practices and moral teachings (Smith, 2018).

Linguistically, the Mecha Oromo belong to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family, primarily using Afaan Oromo as their

medium of communication. This language not only serves as a tool for everyday interaction but also embodies cultural narratives and moral teachings passed down through generations (Hetzron, 1980).

Ethiopia hosts the largest population of Oromo people, representing a significant proportion of the nation's demographic landscape. The Mecha Oromo contribute to this demographic richness, fostering a diverse cultural tapestry within Ethiopia's broader socio-political context (Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019).

Central to Oromo cultural identity is the accumulated wealth of oral traditions, including proverbs, folk tales, and songs. These narratives serve not only as repositories of historical knowledge but also as vehicles for transmitting moral values encapsulated within the Safu system (Megersa, 2015).

Despite the cultural significance of Safu among the Mecha Oromo, scholarly attention remains limited. Existing literature often overlooks the intricate intersections of language, culture, and moral systems specific to this community. This gap in research has motivated the current study to delve into the nuanced dimensions of Safu, exploring its role in shaping identity, fostering community cohesion, and adapting to contemporary challenges (Author *et al.*, 2023).

By addressing these gaps in knowledge, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of Safu within the Mecha Oromo community, highlighting its relevance in contemporary Ethiopia and offering insights into the resilience and adaptation of indigenous moral systems.

This study seeks to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Safu moral system among the Mecha Oromo of Ethiopia, exploring its cultural, linguistic, and anthropological dimensions. Safu, a foundational element of Oromo identity and societal cohesion, embodies a complex framework of moral teachings and communal values (Gufu, 2020; Tesema, 2019). Despite its profound significance, scholarly investigations into Safu among the Mecha Oromo, particularly from anthropological and linguistic perspectives, remain limited (Author *et al.*, 2023).

The Safu system is intricately intertwined with Afaan Oromo, a language belonging to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family, which serves not only as a means of communication but also as a repository for cultural narratives and moral teachings (Hetzron, 1980; Tadesse, 2017).

This study aims to fill this gap by examining how Safu is linguistically expressed, culturally practiced, and socially embedded within Mecha Oromo society by employing ethnographic methods and thematic analysis.

The objective of this study is to explore how Safu is reflected in some Mecha Oromo linguistic expression, and cultural practices and to analyze some Safu principles in the indigenous knowledge.

Review of Related Literature

Moral Systems

Moral systems constitute essential frameworks that shape ethical behavior within societies, encompassing a complex interplay of values, norms, and principles that define what is deemed morally acceptable or objectionable. These systems serve as foundational guides for individual conduct and social interactions, contributing significantly to the cohesion and functioning of communities (Haidt, 2012).

Moral systems are defined as the collective set of principles and rules that govern ethical behavior within a society (Haidt, 2012; Gert, 2005). They provide a structured framework through which individuals navigate their interactions and decisions, influencing personal choices and societal norms. These frameworks are constructed and reinforced through cultural, religious, and philosophical perspectives, reflecting the values and priorities of a given community.

Societal Functions

Moral systems play a pivotal role in regulating behavior and fostering social cohesion. They establish shared expectations and norms that guide interactions within communities, promoting trust and cooperation among individuals (Gert, 2005). From a sociological perspective, Durkheim (1893) posited that moral norms function as a collective conscience, binding individuals together and reinforcing social solidarity through shared values and beliefs.

Ethical philosophers continue to debate the nature and justification of moral systems, examining questions of moral relativism versus universalism and the application of moral principles in diverse cultural contexts. Gert (2005) argues for a pluralistic approach to morality, acknowledging the diversity of moral beliefs while emphasizing commonalities in ethical reasoning across societies.

In today's globalized world, understanding and studying moral systems are crucial for

addressing complex social issues and promoting ethical behavior across diverse cultural settings. The study of moral systems not only provides insights into human nature and societal norms but also informs ethical decision-making in fields such as law, healthcare, business, and international relations (Durkheim, 1893).

In conclusion, moral systems serve as foundational frameworks that define and regulate ethical behavior within societies. Rooted in cultural, philosophical, and psychological perspectives, these systems shape individual identities and societal norms, fostering social cohesion and guiding ethical decision-making. By exploring the definitions, functions, and contemporary perspectives on moral systems, this review sets the stage for examining specific cultural expressions of morality, such as the Safu-Oromo moral system, within anthropological and linguistic contexts.

Moral Systems in African Societies

Moral systems within African societies are integral to the cultural, social, and ethical frameworks that guide behavior and interpersonal relationships. These systems are rooted in indigenous beliefs, traditional practices, and communal values, reflecting a diverse array of moral principles and ethical norms across the continent.

African moral systems exhibit significant diversity due to the continent's myriad ethnic groups and historical influences. Each community develops its own moral code, often shaped by indigenous religions, oral traditions, and customary laws (Wiredu, 1992). These systems are dynamic, adapting to social changes while retaining core values that emphasize communal welfare, respect for elders, and reciprocity among members.

Philosophically, African moral systems challenge Western-centric notions by prioritizing community-oriented ethics over individual autonomy. Traditional African philosophies, such as Ubuntu, emphasize interconnectedness and collective

responsibility, asserting that individuals achieve moral fulfillment through harmonious relationships with others and the natural world (Gyekye, 1997).

The Concept of Safu in Oromo Culture

The concept of Safu holds significant importance within Oromo culture, representing a complex moral and ethical framework that guides behavior, social relationships, and community life. Safu encompasses a set of principles, values, and norms that are deeply embedded in Oromo oral traditions, religious practices, and customary laws. Safu can be understood as the Oromo moral code, prescribing ethical conduct and promoting social harmony (Legesse, 1973). It governs interpersonal relationships, resolves disputes, and regulates individual responsibilities within the community. Safu emphasizes virtues such as respect for elders, hospitality, integrity, and reciprocity, which are fundamental to maintaining Oromo identity and cohesion.

The origins of Safu trace back to the traditional governance system known as the Gadaa system. The Gadaa system organizes Oromo society into generational classes, each with distinct roles and responsibilities in governance and community affairs (Asmarom, 1992). Safu principles are transmitted orally through rituals, ceremonies, and communal gatherings, ensuring their continuity across generations.

Ethically, Safu promotes egalitarianism and collective decision-making, reflecting the democratic ideals inherent in Oromo social structures (Legesse, 1973). It upholds principles of fairness, justice, and mutual respect, fostering a sense of solidarity and unity among Oromo individuals and communities.

Linguistic and Cultural Expressions

Linguistically, Safu is expressed through Afaan Oromo, the Oromo language, which contains rich repositories of proverbs, folk songs, and moral teachings (Baxter, 1978). These linguistic expressions encapsulate the wisdom of Safu, offering practical guidance on ethical

behavior and reinforcing cultural identity among the Oromo people.

In contemporary times, Safu continues to play a vital role in Oromo society amidst socio-political changes and modernization. It provides a framework for addressing challenges such as land disputes, environmental conservation, and social justice issues (Asmarom, 1992). Safu's resilience lies in its adaptability to evolving contexts while preserving core values that define Oromo cultural heritage.

The concept of Safu in Oromo culture represents a profound moral and ethical system that shapes individual conduct and community relations. Rooted in historical traditions and philosophical principles, Safu underscores the enduring significance of indigenous knowledge in fostering social cohesion and resilience within Oromo society.

This overview provides a comprehensive exploration of Safu in Oromo culture, highlighting its definition, historical context, ethical foundations, linguistic expressions, and contemporary relevance within Oromo society.

Linguistic Expressions of Safu

Linguistic expressions within the Safu-Oromo moral system play a pivotal role in conveying and reinforcing ethical principles and cultural norms among the Oromo people. These expressions are embedded within the Afaan Oromo language through proverbs, idioms, folk

songs, and oral narratives, serving as vital mediums for transmitting the wisdom and values encapsulated in Safu.

Research Methodology

This segment outlines the approach and methodology adopted for the study. Employing a qualitative research design, the subsequent sections delve into detailing the study's geographical scope, data collection methods and procedures, sampling techniques, criteria for inclusion, procedures for data analysis, study limitations, and ethical considerations.

Consequently, the West Shoa Zone serves as the focal point of this study, renowned for its Mecha Oromo populace characterized by their Oromo lineage. Primary data sources were native speakers of the language, gathered predominantly through interviews and elicitation. Given the study's nature, it adopts an ethnographic research design. Five informants were purposefully selected to ensure data richness, particularly targeting elders and traditional leaders. Introspection also played a role in data collection. The researcher, having prior knowledge of indigenous knowledge and Oromo culture, also contributed as a data source. Qualitative analysis was employed to scrutinize the study's findings. All data collection adhered strictly to the informants' consent, and data gathering occurred at mutually convenient times agreed upon by the informants. The following figure reveals the summary of methodology of the researched utilized in the study.

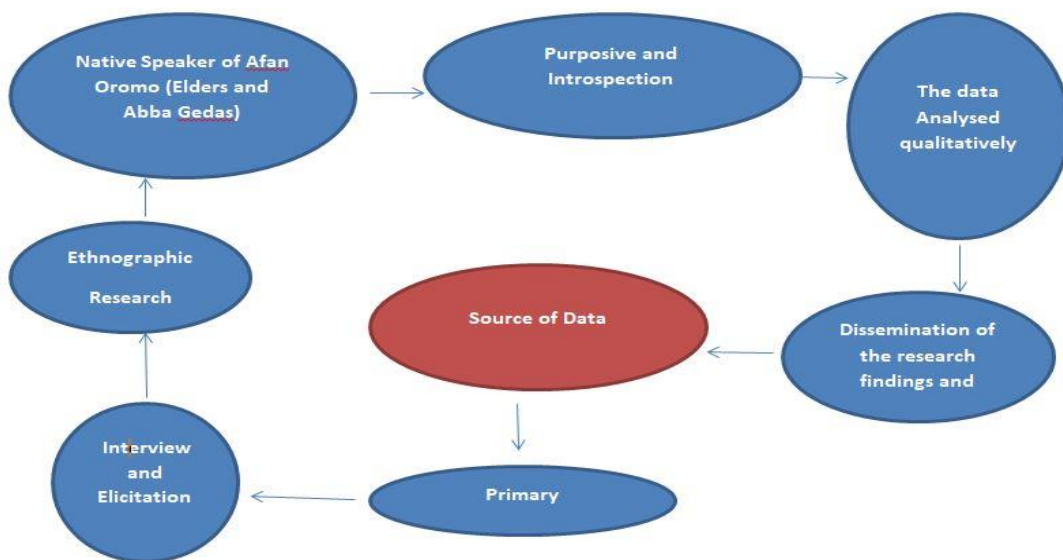


Figure 1: Research Methodology Designed by the Researcher for this particular study

Researcher engages in prolonged fieldwork within Oromo communities to observe and document the enactment of Safu in various contexts. Ethnographic data provide rich descriptions and contextual understanding of how Safu influences behavior, norms, and social relations.

These techniques for data analysis are particularly relevant for studying Safu in Oromo culture because they allow researchers to explore the intricate relationships between language, culture, and moral systems. By employing qualitative methods such as thematic analysis, ethnographic methods, and cross-cultural comparative analysis, researchers can gain deeper insights into how Safu is understood, practiced, and transmitted within Oromo society. These methods facilitate nuanced interpretations of qualitative data, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of Safu's cultural significance and adaptation in contemporary contexts.

The techniques for data analysis in a study of Safu in Oromo culture would typically involve qualitative methods that are well-suited to explore complex cultural and linguistic phenomena.

Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and categorizing themes within qualitative data related to Safu. These themes could include moral principles, cultural values, linguistic expressions, and social contexts. Researchers systematically code qualitative data (interviews, texts, narratives) to identify recurring themes related to Safu. Themes are then organized and interpreted to provide insights into the cultural significance and variations of Safu within Oromo society.

Results and discussions

Result

Table 1. Responses of the research participants

L	Researcher’s Questions	Informants’ Response	Remarks
1	Mee. mammaaksa safuu ibsu tokko kennuuf yaalaa.	‘Hindaanqoon yoo mana seentu, safuuf gadi jetti’	When a hen enters into a house, it bends down for norm of a house.
2	Sirna dinqisiffannaa Uumaa safuu ibsu tokko kennaa	Waaqni utubaa malee samii dhaabe.	God erects the sky without supporting pole.
3	Yaada safuu abba Murtummaa Waaqaa ibsu tokko kennaa	Waan facaafatan haammatan	You harvest what you sow."
4	Any proverb you know on plantation.	Kichuu hin kutan	A growing plants are not cut down.
5	Mee, fakkeenya sirbaa safuu oguma ibsu kennaa	‘... wallaalaan nurraa goree beekaan nu fure.... Ali Birra’s songs.	‘... while an ignorant ignores us a wise relieves us from challwnge,’

Data Analysis

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromoo safu (Informant 1)

When this informant was asked to give an example safu oral narrative: ‘Hindaanqoon yoo mana seentu, safuuf gadi jetti’

Translation: When a hen enters into a house, it bends down for the norm of a house.

1. Linguistic Analysis

"When a hen enters into a house, it bends its head for the respect of the house and its owners."

Language: This expression likely comes from an Oromo saying or proverb.

2. Cultural Analysis

Customs and Values: This practice reflects the Oromo value of Safu, which is an ethical and moral code emphasizing respect and proper conduct. The hen’s gesture symbolizes how individuals should behave respectfully towards others and their property.

Cultural Symbolism: In many cultures, animals are used to teach and reflect human values. The hen's respectful gesture as it enters the house is a metaphor for how humans should show humility and respect when entering someone's home.

Moral Lesson The behavior of the hen is used to teach a moral lesson about respect and humility. It suggests that, like the hen, people should show deference and respect in others' homes, recognizing the sanctity and authority of the household and its owners.

This combination of linguistic and cultural expressions illustrates the depth and importance of Safu in the Oromo moral system, where respect and proper behavior are emphasized

through everyday actions and symbolic

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromoo safu (Informant 2)

when informant was (2) asked: Waaqni utubaa malee samii dhaabe. Translatio: God erects the sky without a supporting pole.

1. Linguistic Analysis

"God erects the sky without any pole."

Language: This expression is likely a traditional Oromo saying.

Symbolism: The sky and the absence of a pole are symbolic. The sky represents vastness and the heavens, while the lack of a pole emphasizes the miraculous and omnipotent nature of God.

2. Cultural Analysis:

Divine Power and Omnipotence: This expression reflects the cultural belief in a powerful, omnipotent God who can accomplish the impossible. It underscores the community's faith and reverence for divine power.

Natural Order and Harmony: By highlighting that the sky is held up without physical support, the expression underscores a belief in a natural order maintained by divine will. It emphasizes the idea that the world is organized and harmonious under God's control.

Humility and Awe: The expression fosters a sense of humility and awe among people, reminding them of the limits of human power and the vastness of divine capability. This aligns with the concept of Safu, promoting humility and respect for forces greater than oneself.

Moral Lesson: The saying encourages people to acknowledge and respect the unseen forces that

representations.

maintain the balance of the world. It suggests that just as the sky is held up without visible support, there are unseen moral and ethical principles (like Safu) that sustain societal harmony.

This analysis shows how the linguistic structure and cultural symbolism of the expression "God erects the sky without any pole" convey a deep respect for divine power and the natural order, reinforcing the values of humility, reverence, and ethical conduct central to the Oromo moral system of Safu.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromoo safuu (Informant 3)

Yaada safuu abba Murtummaa Waaqaa ibsu tokko kennaa, waan facaaffatan haammata. Translation: any one harvest what he sows.

1. Linguistic Analysis

"You harvest what you sow."

Language: This expression is a common proverb, likely found in many cultures, including Oromo.

Symbolism: "Harvest" and "sow" are agricultural terms. "Sow" symbolizes actions or efforts, and "harvest" symbolizes the outcomes or consequences of those actions.

2. Cultural Analysis

Moral and Ethical Conduct: This expression reflects the cultural belief in the principle of cause and effect. It emphasizes that actions have consequences, aligning with the concept of *Safu*, which stresses ethical behavior and personal responsibility.

Work and Reward: The saying underscores the value of hard work and diligence. It suggests that positive actions and efforts will lead to positive outcomes, while negative actions will lead to negative consequences.

Accountability: The expression promotes the idea of accountability. Individuals are responsible for their actions and must face the results of their behavior, whether good or bad.

Moral Lesson: The saying teaches a moral lesson about the importance of making good choices and putting in consistent effort. It encourages individuals to act wisely and ethically, knowing that their actions will determine their future outcomes.

This analysis demonstrates how the linguistic structure and cultural symbolism of the expression "You harvest what you sow" convey the values of ethical conduct, personal responsibility, and the connection between actions and outcomes. It aligns closely with the principles of Safu, reinforcing the importance of making positive contributions and understanding the consequences of one's actions within the Oromo community.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromo safuu (Informant 4)

When the informant (4) was asked to give an example of safu that shows the respect of creatures, like plants and animals.

Linguistic Expression:

1. Linguistic Analysis:

"Do not cut growing plants or trees."

Language: This instruction is likely a traditional Oromo proverb or guideline.

- **Symbolism:** Plants and trees symbolize life, growth, and sustainability. The act of cutting them symbolizes destruction or disruption of natural processes.

2. Cultural Analysis:

Respect for Nature: This practice reflects a deep respect for the natural world, which is central to the Oromo moral system. It underscores the belief that all living things have intrinsic value and should be protected.

Sustainability and Stewardship: By prohibiting the cutting of growing plants or trees, the Oromo people demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. This practice ensures the continued growth and regeneration of natural resources.

Interconnectedness of Life: The belief highlights the interconnectedness of all life forms. Plants and trees are seen as integral parts of the ecosystem, contributing to the well-being of the community and the environment.

Moral and Ethical Standards: This practice aligns with the concept of Safu, which emphasizes ethical behavior and respect for all forms of life. It promotes harmony between humans and nature, encouraging actions that support the common good.

Cultural Symbolism: In many cultures, trees and plants are symbols of life, growth, and continuity. Protecting them reflects a broader cultural value of nurturing and preserving life.

Moral Lesson: The prohibition against cutting growing plants or trees teaches a moral lesson about the importance of conservation and respect for the environment. It encourages individuals to consider the long-term impact of their actions and to act responsibly.

This analysis illustrates how the linguistic expression and cultural symbolism of the practice "do not cut growing plants or trees" convey the values of respect, sustainability, and ethical conduct central to the Oromo moral system of Safu.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromo safuu (Informant 5)

When informant (5) was asked to cite an oral song that express value of Oromoo sage: '... wallaalaa... beekaan nu fure.... Ali Birra's songs.

Translation:"While an ignorant ignores us, a wise relieved us from our challenges"

1. Linguistic Analysis

"While an ignorant ignores us, a wise relieved us from our challenges."

Language: This expression likely comes from an Oromo song.

Symbolism: "Ignorant" and "wise" are symbolic of two contrasting qualities: ignorance (lack of knowledge or understanding) and wisdom (knowledge, understanding, and the ability to make good judgments). "Challenges" represent difficulties or problems faced by individuals or the community.

2. Cultural Analysis:

Role of Wisdom: This expression emphasizes the value placed on wisdom and knowledgeable leadership within the Oromo culture. It reflects the belief that wise individuals are capable of providing solutions and relief during difficult times.

Critique of Ignorance: The reference to "ignorant" people ignoring the community's needs serves as a critique of those who lack understanding or awareness. It underscores the negative impact of ignorance on the well-being of the community.

Community Support: The idea that the wise "relieved us from our challenges" highlights the importance of communal support and the role of wise leaders in guiding and aiding the community. It aligns with the concept of Safu, which emphasizes ethical leadership and responsibility towards others.

Moral and Ethical Standards: This saying promotes the value of seeking wisdom and learning while criticizing neglect and ignorance. It encourages individuals to strive for knowledge and to value wise leadership.

Cultural Symbolism: In many cultures, wisdom is highly regarded, and those who possess it are seen as pillars of the community. This expression reinforces the cultural significance of wisdom and its role in overcoming challenges.

Moral Lesson: The song teaches a moral lesson about the importance of wisdom and the detrimental effects of ignorance. It encourages individuals to respect and seek guidance from the wise, and to be aware of the harm caused by ignorance and neglect.

This analysis demonstrates how the linguistic structure and cultural symbolism of the song "While an ignorant ignores us, a wise relieved us from our challenges" convey deep respect for wisdom and knowledgeable leadership. It aligns with the values of Safu, reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct, community support, and the pursuit of knowledge within the Oromo community.

Discussions

The exploration of Safu, the moral system inherent within the Oromo society, can be effectively analyzed through the theoretical frameworks and techniques proposed by prominent scholars. Kottak (2017) advocates for cultural analysis to understand the complexities and nuances of indigenous moral systems. His approach emphasizes examining cultural practices, symbols, and narratives to gain insights into the societal norms and values that underpin Safu. Alessandro Duranti (1997), on the other hand, provides a linguistic analytical framework that focuses on how language and discourse shape and reflect cultural practices and ethical principles. By employing these complementary methodologies, this section aims to delve into the linguistic expressions and cultural practices of the Oromo people, highlighting how Safu is manifested and perpetuated through their rich oral traditions and everyday interactions.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromoo safu (Informant 1)

'Hindaanqoon yoo mana seentu, safuuf gadi jetti.' Translation: When a hen enters into a house, it bends down for norm of a house.

Linguistic Analysis

This expression likely comes from an Oromo saying or proverb. It metaphorically expresses that Oromo society bows when he /she/ enters into one's house.

Cultural Analysis

This analysis shows customs and values. This practice reflects the Oromo value of Safu, which is an ethical and moral code emphasizing respect and proper conduct. The hen's gesture symbolizes how individuals should behave respectfully towards others and their property. In many cultures, animals are used to teach and reflect human values. The hen's respectful gesture as it enters the house is a metaphor for how humans should show humility and respect when entering someone's home. as a moral lesson, the hen is used to teach a moral lesson about respect and humility. It suggests that, like the hen, people should show deference and respect in others' homes, recognizing the sanctity and authority of the household and its owners.

This combination of linguistic and cultural expressions illustrates the depth and importance of Safu in the Oromo moral system, where respect and proper behavior are emphasized through everyday actions and symbolic representations.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromoo safu (Informant 2)

'Waaqni utubaa malee samii dhaabe.'
Translation: God erects the sky without supporting pole.

Linguistic Analysis:

This expression is likely a traditional Oromo saying. The sky and the absence of a pole are symbolic. The sky represents vastness and the heavens, while the lack of a pole emphasizes the miraculous and omnipotent nature of God.

Cultural Analysis

Cultural analysis shows the Divine Power and Omnipotence: This expression reflects the cultural belief in a powerful, omnipotent God

who can accomplish the impossible. It underscores the community's faith and reverence for divine power. By highlighting that the sky is held up without physical support, the expression underscores a belief in a natural order maintained by divine will. It emphasizes the idea that the world is organized and harmonious under God's control. The expression fosters a sense of humility and awe among people, reminding them of the limits of human power and the vastness of divine capability. This aligns with the concept of Safu, promoting humility and respect for forces greater than oneself. The saying encourages people to acknowledge and respect the unseen forces that maintain the balance of the world. It suggests that just as the sky is held up without visible support, there are unseen moral and ethical principles (like Safu) that sustain societal harmony.

This analysis shows how the linguistic structure and cultural symbolism of the expression "God erects the sky without any pole" convey deep respect for divine power and the natural order, reinforcing the values of humility, reverence, and ethical conduct central to the Oromo moral system of Safu.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromo safuu (Informant 3)

'Waan facaaffatan haammatan'. Translation: Anyone harvests what he sows.

Linguistic Analysis

This expression is a common proverb, likely found in many cultures, including Oromo. "Harvest" and "sow" are agricultural terms. "Sow" symbolizes actions or efforts, and "harvest" symbolizes the outcomes or consequences of those actions.

Cultural Analysis

Moral and Ethical Conduct: This expression reflects the cultural belief in the principle of cause and effect. It emphasizes that actions have consequences, aligning with the concept of Safu, which stresses ethical behavior and personal responsibility. The saying underscores

the value of hard work and diligence. It suggests that positive actions and efforts will lead to positive outcomes, while negative actions will lead to negative consequences. The expression promotes the idea of accountability. Individuals are responsible for their actions and must face the results of their behavior, whether good or bad. The saying teaches a moral lesson about the importance of making good choices and putting in consistent effort. It encourages individuals to act wisely and ethically, knowing that their actions will determine their future outcomes.

This analysis demonstrates how the linguistic structure and cultural symbolism of the expression "You harvest what you sow" convey the values of ethical conduct, personal responsibility, and the connection between actions and outcomes. It aligns closely with the principles of Safu, reinforcing the importance of making positive contributions and understanding the consequences of one's actions within the Oromo community.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromo safuu (Informant 4)

When the informant (5): 'Kichuu hin kutani.'
Translation: "Do not cut growing plants or trees."

Linguistic Analysis

This instruction is likely a traditional Oromo proverb or guideline. Plants and trees symbolize life, growth, and sustainability. The act of cutting them symbolizes destruction or disruption of natural processes.

Cultural Analysis

This practice reflects a deep respect for the natural world, which is central to the Oromo moral system. It underscores the belief that all living things have intrinsic value and should be protected. By prohibiting the cutting of growing plants or trees, the Oromo people demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. This practice ensures the continued growth and regeneration of natural resources. The belief highlights the

interconnectedness of all life forms. Plants and trees are seen as integral parts of the ecosystem, contributing to the well-being of the community and the environment. This practice aligns with the concept of Safu, which emphasizes ethical behavior and respect for all forms of life. It promotes harmony between humans and nature, encouraging actions that support the common good.

This analysis illustrates how the linguistic expression and cultural symbolism of the practice 'do not cut growing plants or trees' convey the values of respect, sustainability, and ethical conduct central to the Oromo moral system of Safu.

Some Linguistic expressions of Mecha Oromo safuu (Informant, 5)

When informant (7): '... wallaalaa nurraa goree... beekaan nu fure....,' Ali Birra's songs

Translation: 'While an ignorant ignores us, a wise relieved us from our challenges.'

Linguistic Analysis

This expression likely comes from an Oromo song. 'Ignorant' and 'wise' are symbolic of two contrasting qualities: ignorance (lack of knowledge or understanding) and wisdom (knowledge, understanding, and the ability to make good judgments). 'Challenges' represents difficulties or problems faced by individuals or the community.

Cultural Analysis

This expression emphasizes the value placed on wisdom and knowledgeable leadership within the Oromo culture. It reflects the belief that wise individuals are capable of providing solutions and relief during difficult times. The reference to 'ignorant' people ignoring the community's needs serves as a critique of those who lack understanding or awareness. It underscores the negative impact of ignorance on the well-being of the community. The idea that the wise 'relieved us from our challenges' highlights the importance of communal support

and the role of wise leaders in guiding and aiding the community. It aligns with the concept of Safu, which emphasizes ethical leadership and responsibility towards others. This saying promotes the value of seeking wisdom and learning while criticizing neglect and ignorance. It encourages individuals to strive for knowledge and to value wise leadership. The song teaches a moral lesson about the importance of wisdom and the detrimental effects of ignorance. It encourages individuals to respect and seek guidance from the wise, and to be aware of the harm caused by ignorance and neglect.

This analysis demonstrates how the linguistic structure and cultural symbolism of the traditional song. While an ignorant ignores us, a wise relieved us from our challenges' and conveys deep respect for wisdom and knowledgeable leadership. It aligns with the values of Safu, reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct, community support, and the pursuit of knowledge within the Oromo community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As the objective of this article was to explore and analyze the concept of Mecha Oromo Safu-moral systems within the Oromo anthropological linguistics perspectives, the following conclusions and recommendations were forwarded.

Conclusions

The safu Oromo linguistically as a proverb (1) reflects safu deep-seated cultural values of respect and hospitality. Through discourse and ethnographic analyses, it was evident that such expressions play a critical role in teaching and maintaining social etiquette and respect within the community.

In proverb (2) as a linguistic expression and cultural practices of religious belief indicates safu for divine power and omnipotence. The linguistic and cultural analysis showed how this metaphor reinforces the community's reverence for divine creation and the acknowledgment of a higher power in the natural order.

In proverb (3) as both linguistic and cultural practices underscore the safu principle of personal responsibility and the consequences of one's actions. The thematic and ethnographic analyses highlighted how this expression is used to instill values of hard work, accountability, and justice within the community.

As in societal principle (4) in the meaning of narration or the text, both literal and metaphorically it illustrates the safu of nurturing and protecting natural resources. This reflects cultural values of sustainability, patience, and respect for life, which are central to the Oromo ethical system.

In the phrase from the Oromo song, (5) as both part of oral literature and cultural expression, in theme- 'while an ignorant ignores us, the wise relieve us from our challenges,'emphasizes the value of safu placed on wisdom and the role of knowledgeable individuals in overcoming difficulties. The analysis revealed how such expressions reinforce the importance of seeking guidance from the wise and respecting their contributions to the community.

In conclusion, through the analysis of these linguistic expressions and cultural practices, it is clear that Safu encompasses a broad spectrum of moral and ethical conduct in the Oromo culture. The proverbs and sayings not only reflect the community's values but also serve as tools for teaching and maintaining social order. By understanding these expressions, one gains insight into the cultural fabric that holds the Oromo community together, emphasizing respect, responsibility, wisdom, and the interconnectedness of all life.

Recommendations

As oral traditions are crucial for maintaining cultural identity and passing down ethical values, Oromo intellectuals / at educational, cultural, and research centers,/ together with the government, should conduct research on these Oromo linguistic expressions and cultural practices.

Oromo educational experts should conduct safu in indigenous knowledge of language and culture and incorporate educational systems at various levels, from primary to higher education. The government regional state /including the federal/ should provide establish research centers and provide resources and encourage oromo intellectual who works on these themes of safu. The government together with its educational and cultural research institutions should create awareness programs on the importance of safu for Oromo people and the country as well. The Oromia government with multidisciplinary experts / such as environmental protection, and political bodies should encourage the researchers to systematize the safu knowledge so as to solve the society's problems.

The Oromia government, together with the federal, and intellectuals should design a programme and should create a partnership with concerned international organizations such as UNESCO/ that can work on safu. Oromia regional state, including federal state, should play their roles in preserving, promoting, and adapting to contemporary contexts, the rich cultural heritage and ethical framework of the Oromo people and thereby help values of Safu continue to guide and inspire future generations.

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