

A History of Oromo Cultural Troupes (1962-1991)

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the struggle of Oromo cultural troupes in creating consciousness among the Oromo to reconsider their lost rights. The study draws up on primary and secondary sources, which had been collected in the summer of 2008. Primary sources are securitized from archives and interviews. Informants were selected only on the basis that they had been direct participants of the events. Printed material as both primary and secondary sources are utilized with critical scrutiny. Many of these sources are indicators of the situation the Oromo had been forced to bear in those days. From the analysis of these sources, the paper is able to reveal how the Oromo troupes brought hidden grievance of the Oromo to the light under unbearable situations. It also shows how these troupes brought unstructured way of cultural resistance and rural social banditries into the modern form of organized struggle by attracting many minds of bureaucrats, military officers, students, professional groups and the business classes.

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of song in a society is as old as the beginning of the language itself. Song is one part of language expression by which people reflect what they feel. Song and in gradual development theatre are the expression of sorrow, inconvenience, grievance, objection, anger, conflicts, achievements, victories, observation, pleasure, and affection (Echeruo, 1975). They are the reflection of the life situation of the society the period they were composed. They have existed in any culture specially influencing political movements and ritual activities. Since overt opposition to injustice and support for free thought had been unusual, song and theatre had been used as the main outlet of revealing the facts (Tuohy, 1991). The song of Oromo language is typified with such reflection. Among the Oromo, singing is not used for ordinary communication. It needs special occasions in which the singer wants to express his or her internal feelings. The singing took over or covert expression, most of the time covert (Asafa, 1993). The contribution of music, dance, drama and theatre to the development of political consciousness is unquestionable. They also

attract many listeners, speakers and authors to use the language for different purposes (Tuohy, 1991).

Since the Amhara conquest of Oromo in the second half of 19th century, the Oromo were denied free cultural space and political voice. For the emperors' policy of one language, one religion and one nation, the new settlers designed systematic and organized cultural destruction and repression of the Oromo. The Oromo were forbidden and given no opportunities for developing their own institutions, and system that they used to hand over from generation to generation. Land confiscation, property extraction, cultural undermining and political marginalization were some of the conditions the Oromo were forced to bear. This life situation had been reflected by different Oromo cultural songs on the basis of individual until the Afran Qallo cultural troupe was organized in 1962 in Dirree Dhawaa to rally their opposition songs against the then oppressive government policy (Asafa Jalata, 1993; Mohammed Hassen, 1999).

The movement of Oromo Cultural Troupes under the Imperial Regime

In the history of their political struggle, the Oromo made courageous attempts to perform music, drama and theatre in their language to withstand the assimilation policy of the Ethiopian government (Bariisa, 1991). Although there were informant reports reflecting religious drama and singing of psalms on the bases of written themes by Protestant Christian Missionaries in Wallagga (Informants: Admasu Birehanu, Hailu Disasa, Kebede Firrisa), the written secular music and drama for the purpose of cultural movement were presented on stages by the Afran Qalloo cultural and musical bands (Bariisaa, 1991).

Oromo

Gariin ilma namaa yaada gabaabbataa
Qottuu jechuu se'aa arrabatti fudhataa
Waa arraba mitii maqaa tarkaanfataa
Ummanni wabaree qonnadhaan dhadataa
Dafquma isaa nyachuuf hojiidhaan bututaa
Hojjetee mullisee bilchesse oomishaatee
Dinagdee ol kaasuf qutudhaa hidhatee
Halkanillee hirafuu hojidaan bututee
Akkasumaan naminni itti dhaadatee
Roorroo keessa darbe yoom irranfatee.

The song dictates the ignorance of the people who called Afran Qalloo Oromo pejoratively “*Qottuu*” (Farmer) forgetting the importance of farming for the sustenance of the life of the people and for the development of the country. For the learned and those who have understood the world, farming is the bedrock of development for those who used to live on their products which is achieved not through dependence but through hard work. The song also taught people to recover their displaced names in the process of the imperial assimilation policy.

Nonetheless, according to Asafa Jalata, the immediate cause for the establishment of the cultural band was the refusal of Harare musical band on certain marriage of Oromo couple responding that their musical instrument could not produce Oromo language musical tone. The entire group of the nuptials who requested for the Oromo songs was Oromo language speakers.

Oromo

Ka'aa hirribaa kottaa walbarrannaa
Dardara alagaa if cina hingartaanii
Ameta sadii dura maaliin wal faarsanii
Ameta sadii dura walleen *Afaan* keenyaa
saan nijjirratan nut immoo inteenyaa
Durbumaan keenyallee kan karaa yaatulleen
Wanuma wallisan tan jaraati walleen B
(Bariisaa, 1997)

Afran Qalloo musical and cultural band, which was established in Dirree Dhawaa in the early 1962, was the first Oromo troupe to appear in an organized manner for preserving Oromo culture and reflecting multifaceted subjugation of the Oromo (*Ibid.*). Name Afran Qalloo was to refute the pejorative name “Qottu” given to them by the newly Amhara settlers for the four sons of Qalloo: Alaa, Babbillee, Dagaa and Oborraa (Badir Kabir, 1995). Afran Qalloo began the opposition against the Oromo with the early naming of the cultural band itself. The band posed their objection to this name “Qottuu” by the following songs composed by Abubakir and later on presented by Halloo Dawwee on the Oromo cultural show of 1977 in Addis Ababa (Alfia, 2007). It reads as follows:

Gloss

Some people are narrow-minded
Consider farming as insult
Not insult but advancement
Civilized people take pride in farming
Strive hard to live on his work
By showing practically and working exhaustively
For development has to farm without reservation
Never slept even in the night being exhausted by work
People roared at him without reason
He never forgets the tyranny passed through

(Asafa, 1993). However according to Bariisa on the marriage ceremony of the Oromo the Harare and Somali musical bands were invited with compensation. The then privileged band playing in Amharic was not willing for they had low honor for the Oromo. It was on this circumstance that certain Hassan Omar Tarree forced to advice the Oromo youngsters to establish their own cultural band. The advised youngsters were Ismail Mohammed, Abdulhaji Mohammed, Abubakri Musa, Abdurrahman Yusuf, and others. Consequently, Afran Qalloo Musical and cultural band was established by eighteen members in 1962 (Bariisa, 1991). Whatever the argument is the immediate causes for the establishment of *Afran* Qalloo Musical and cultural band was in response to the Oromo subordination to the Harare language. The Afran Qalloo musical and cultural band responded to the Harare band by its first song as follows.

Gloss

Wake up, let us understand each other
Why you do not see the alien youth
Three years before in what they sang?
Three years before, our language song
They changed but we quitted
Our girls who travel along the road
Sing the songs of the others (Harari and Amharic)

The song indicates that while the Harare has resumed their songs against the assimilation, the Oromo were kept quite. The Oromo youth themselves even began undermining their own vernacular and began singing in others language. It informs the Oromo the decisiveness having their own cultural bands. Thus, it clearly shows that the main objective of the Afran Qalloo cultural and musical band was to protect and preserve the Oromo language. It also advise those who undermine their vernacular and praised those who were proud of it.

The band also performed dramas that mirrored the situation of the period. As in the drama both the male and female representatives had to be represented in order to reveal the situation in which both genders were living, the male also acted like female since the period did not allow Muslim female actors on the stage. One of the artists who represented female characters was Abdurrahman Yusuuf. Separately seeing their Oromo culture from religion, immediately they recruited females into the cultural troupe although the females were still separately organized from the males (Informants: Hallo Dawwee, Abdullah Mumme Ibrahim Haji and Hamid Mude).

To direct all activities towards the development of Oromo culture and language as well as to give protection for the band, the committees were organized from the elders. The committees were named based on their duties and work divisions in the cultural band. There were *koree tikstuu* (caring committee), *Koree gargaartu* (aiding committee), and *koree goristuu* (advising committee). The members of the committees were Yusuf Abdullah (Gurachoo), Hassen Omar Turee, Ismail Galmoo, Mohammed Rabsaa, Idris Abdulle, Mohammed Ibrahim Wooday (Shantam Shubbisaa), Mohammed Abdi Omar, and Abdi Mohammed (Bariisaa, 1991)

The Afran Qalloo cultural band had different branches based on their age groups. The division and decisions were given to the committee so that recruitments and assignments were made on the basis of the determination and understandings of the recruits. The division based on the ages of the members was to present Oromo arts according to age relevance. This was because in Oromo culture elders did not interfere in youth matters and *vice versa*. The eldest group was named *Urjii Bakkalchaa* (Big star), *Hiriyaa Jaalalaa* (Teenagers), *Tokummaa*

Jaalalaa (love for Unity) *Biiftu Ganamaa* (Morning sun) and Mascob (Alfia, 2007).

All the members of the groups made division of labor among themselves based on their abilities. Those who were good singers were assigned to sing, those who had good composition ability were assigned to compose songs, those who could play musical instruments were assigned to it, those who had good knowledge in cultural elements were assigned to collect and write on Oromo culture. Since there was not organized training and no freedom to do so, the division of labor was based on the natural gifts of the participants. Adaptation to modern ways of dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, writing suitable poems and mixing were acquired through trial and error. In such a way, the cultural band became much more planned and monolithic than for what it was intended at the beginning (Informants: Abdallah Mumme, Musa Ahmad, Abdi Bu'iaand Ibrahim Haji).

Initially, the cultural troupe began singing and dancing with traditional musical instruments. Later on the Harar well-to-do Oromo elders sponsored them with harmonica, radio players, accordion, tambourine, sacs-phone, trephine, jazz and others. The committee hired a trainer in musical instruments from the Catholic Church in Harar. Ali Tuuchee and Abdullah Mohammed immediately naturalized the procedures and began training the others by themselves. In the composition of the songs, Ayub Abubakir became a renowned Oromo poet like his teacher Bakrii Saphaloo. Later on, Abubakir Musa and Abdi Bohi followed him (*Ibid.*).

After they were well established, the Afran Qalloo Musical and cultural band attempted to get legal recognition from the emperor through the arbitration of the elders. Until the official establishment of the Maccaa-Tuulamaa Self Help Association in 1963 and the Somali invasion, the Emperor gave permission for the Afran Qalloo singers to transmit one song over the Radio every Monday at four o'clock in the afternoon if the band could pay 30 Ethiopian Birr per song for the radio station. The permission was obtained based on a sample song presented to the emperor by Ali Shabboo one of the member of cultural band. The song praised the glories of the emperor achieved over the Italian invading forces. It reads:

Oromo

Mootii biyya keenyaa yaa Hayilee Sillaasee
Xaaliyaaniin si'agarraan dheeffaa dhokkee kaasee(Ibid.)

Although the permitted time was not convenient for listeners since it was the time when they went to bed, the Afran Qalloo were able to break the established stereotypical attitude that "the Oromo language would break a radio".

On the other hand, when the Oromo national consciousness was transformed into armed insurgency as what happened in Baalee, all the songs of Arfan Qalloo failed under a strong censorship. Order was passed to hunt down all the members and the committees of the band. Some were imprisoned, and some of them became insane because of the severe torture they had undergone. The others like Ayuub Abubakir, Abubakir Musa, Yonis Abdullah, Abdullah Arsi, Shantam Shubbisa, and Suleyman Yusuf were exiled to Somalia, the then deadly enemy of Ethiopia. In such a way, the band was forced to cease its movements under the name of Arfan Qalloo cultural and Musical band and was disintegrated into village based minor groups who sustained the already started musical culture clandestinely (Alfia, 2007). Yet, the village based musical band produced large number of musical poems and theatrical essays in Oromo language. Most of the songs and theatrical essays were loaded with covert opposition to the imperial regime (Alfia, 2007).

Out of Hararge, there were also individuals included into the bands of Amharic language to present their songs occasionally. Such singers were mainly found in the imperial military orchestra. Ababa Tesemma, Wasanuu Diido, Birratuu Lammaa and Tilahun Gesessé were some of them. Informants assert that such singers were allowed just only one Oromo language song at one occasion in order to avoid

Oromo

Bilisummaan aannanii nama beekutu dhugaa
Kan bilisummaa hi beeknee bira taa'ee mugaa.
Bilisummaan bilisummaan gaaridha
Yaa obolleeyyan ka'aa hirribaa .
Baasa hinjirree nuutti as baasee
Haqa keenyaa addaan facaasee.
Dachee keessan masinoo keessan
Kan irra taa'u adawwii kessan
Maa callistanii teessan?
(Ibid.)

The song expresses the need of freedom for oneself to live as a human being and agitates the Harar Oromo to stand against the *naftagna* who took their land, properties and destabilized their

Gloss

O! Haile Sillasie our king
Terrified by you the Italians had run away and escaped

identity question to be posed by the Oromo in the military forces of the emperor. Even with purposive participation, some of the singers like, Wasanuu Diidoo and Birraatuu Lamma experienced an unwelcome reception and were reported to have been repeatedly imprisoned simply for singing in *afaan Oromo*. Moreover, as the political inspection on the Oromo was strengthened, doing such activities in groups gradually declined.

The exiled members of Afran Qalloo began serving as singers and journalists in radio Mogadishu which began transmission in Oromo language in 1963. Although the Somali government used the radio for its war propaganda against Ethiopia over the Ogaden, it also became good advantage for the exiled Oromo to address their cases to their people. The transmission was conducted in the name of exposing the marginalization policy of the emperor against the Oromo and Muslim societies of eastern Ethiopia. The Oromo language songs and drama transmitted over Mogadishu radio served for such purposes although its primary aim was to create pan-Oromo movement against the burdens imposed on them by the *naftagna* administrators(Abduselam, 2008; Informants: Ibrahim Haji, Musa Ahmad and Ali Dima).

Most of the songs broadcasted over the radio Mogadishu were composed by Ayyub Abubakir and Abubakir Musa in Somalia. Informants also reported that Shayk Bakrii Saphaloo was sending his revolutionary poems to be broadcasted and the songs were transmitted without mentioning the name of the author (Ibid.). One of the sample songs sang by Yonis Adullah over the radio Mogadishu is transcribed below.

Gloss

Freedom is milk and who knows drinks it
Who does not know it catnapped being aside
Freedom, freedom is good
O! Brothers do not sleep, be awake.
They brought up on us which does not exist
They disturbed our right
Your land, your farm
Is taken off by your enemy
Why do you sit keeping quite?

cultural treatment of fairness. In doing so, it was able to withdraw many Harar Oromos and Muslims to the side of Somalia, besides aggravating the Baalee peasant rebellions. The

message of the song had historical connection that it is said to have provoked the Harar and Baalee Oromo who went beyond control (Informants: Ibrahim Haji, Mohammad Qophe, Mahadi Mude). The fact that the Somali government allowed to broadcast Oromo songs that expressed their deep feelings in their language, the Harar and Baalee Oromo admiration for the Somali government outweighed that of Ethiopian.

While the Oromo cultural movement was within such circumstances, the reign of the emperor began to be challenged by all corners political turmoil. The combination of the establishment of different ethnic based liberation fronts, peasant rebellions, university students call for land reform, establishment of Machaa-Tuulama Self Help Association, objection on educational sector reviews, and the likes overthrown the Emperor and shifted power to Darg (Markakis, 1994, Bahru, 1992).

The movement of Oromo Cultural Troupes under Darg. As soon as *Darg* came to power, it had understood the importance of communicating the mass through the media. (Informants: Hamide Mude, Kebede Firrisa and Ibrahim Haji). No less than the socialist propaganda, by design or default, the Oromo proverbs, folklores, songs, glories of culture and history were broadcasted through the Oromo language mass media (Olana, 1993; Informants: Mahadi Mude, Ibrahim Haji). When the broadcast educated people about their culture and language, inadvertently the people learned the glories of their language, culture, and history. The Oromo of border areas like Harar, Bale and Wallagga, who could get easy access to radio through smuggling, were the most influenced areas. The regions became the areas where armed insurgency operated unlike the other parts of Oromo land (Informants: Ali Mohammed, Hallo Dawe and Adimasu Berhanu).

With the revolutionary regime which presented itself as people's government, any forms of written Oromo language literature including drama and songs got some outlets. In 1975 the second generation of the Afran Qalloo cultural band; Ali Birraa, Ibrahim Haji Ali, Himee Yusuf, Adam Usuman, Mohammed Umar, Abubakar Addawwe, Ahmad Yonnis and others were reorganized under *Biiptuu Birra* Band (Autumn Sun) and began their performances in different night clubs in Addis Ababa. In doing so, they enabled Oromo music to see the light of the day in the country's capital. They also made the Oromo language the source of income (Informants: *Ibid.*, Mahadi Mude, Ibrahim Haji).

This band was also able to play their songs and perform dances over the Ethiopian Television and popularized the Oromo musical band of *Aduu Birraa*. The members of Maccaa-Tuulamaa Self Help Association and Oromo students who heard them either on musical shows at hotels or on Television began encouraging them to go to the provinces where the Oromo population was dominant. In 1976, they went to Wallagga and presented their cultural show almost in all the major towns of western Wallagga. On that occasion, one of campaigners of the development through cooperation, Abtaw Kabada, dissented the campaign and joined the band. At Harar Abtaw also produced revolutionary songs which revealed Oromo feelings for the *Darg* administration. They also encouraged the Oromo youngsters of the region to establish their own cultural bands to express their feelings. Based on that *Guddattuu Wallaggaa*, *Burqaa* Boojji, *Biqittuu Mandii* and *Lalisaa* Najjoo in Wallagga were established immediately following the cultural shows (*Ibid.*)

In the organization of the Wallagga cultural bands Tesemma Nagarii played amazing roles being within the highest officials of the *Darg*. According to my informants, he saved the lives of many singers from the guns of the *Darg*. He also composed many songs which express the condition the Oromo had experienced under Imperial regime and what they going to test under *Darg* covertly. Majority singers originally from Wallaggaa were the unreserved works of Tesemma Negeri (Gada, 1998).

The government also employed some Oromo singers in the National Theatre, *Hager Feqer* (Love of the Country's Theatre), Addis Ababa Cultural Theatre and in the military divisions. Ali Birraa (For some Time), Hailu Disaasaa, Admasu Berhanu, Taddasa Cuqee, Darajé Zamadu, Sahela Dagaagoo were among the employed artists. However some of the peoples whom I interviewed claim that they were rarely invited on people's gatherings and were only allowed to sing only one or two Oromo songs at occasion. They claimed that abroad cultural shows were rarely permitted for the Oromo singers. Non-Oromo speakers, who did not know both the cultures and language of Oromo, were invited to present Oromo songs by trial. According to the informants, such kind of maladministration had two impacts. The first, since the imitators could not show the real culture to which he did not belong, it reduced the entertaining elements of the culture. Secondly, it also affected the morals and economic aspects of the singers the cultures belong (Informants: Hailu Disasa, Admasu Berhanu, Mahadi Mude, and Ibrahim Haji).

The composition of Oromo language songs of this period proved the abilities of Oromo poets and singers. The composers made great efforts to include the songs that teach Oromo people about right, importance of using their vernacular, importance of their unity and how much the Oromo language is powerful to convey messages both covertly and overtly. The cultural songs composed by the Oromo peasants to oppose the exploitation of proprietors were also electronically recorded with their original rhythm and were presented to the listeners by cassettes (*Ibid.*).

Thus, the contributions of Oromo songs in developing Oromo political struggle and even incorporating Oromo oral folklores into written forms is beyond one's expectation. They also assisted the struggle of the Maccaa-Tuulama Self Help Association in the recovering of Oromo identity through Oromo cultural and musical groups in many parts of Oromia. The Maccaa-Tuulama Self Help Association established a

Oromo

Qeerroon mataa tuutaa hinjarjartuu suutaa
Aduun takka dhiitee takka nuubartee
Kan akka keenyaa hinjiruu kan garbummaan miitee
Osoo biyyaa qabnuu biyyaa keenyaa dhabnee
Osoo Heera qabnuu heera keenya dhabnee
Osoo aadaa qabnuu aadaa keenyaa dhabnee
Osoo *Afaan* qabnuu *Afaan* keenyaa dhabnee
Akkaa baala mukaa faffacaanee hafnee

In his song Gadisa acknowledged the *Darg* regime overtly for its little improvement of plight of the Oromo language and culture. Two of the lines of the song connoted the *Darg* as the rising sun, which gives light to darkness within the then political view of the composer of the song. Nevertheless, he was covertly informing what was going on with the suspicion on the continuity

Oromo

Owwalamnee turree jiruun nu sabni ballaan durattii
Nama yartuu cunqurstuu harkattii
Meeqatu bayee bade biyyaa ari'amee
Meeqatu karaamalee cubbudhaan qalamee
Haqa isaa himachuuf meeqatu fannifamee
Osoo *Afaan* qabnuu irraa ugguramnee
Afaan biraa baruuf qawween dirqamnee
Kunoo har'dha ijaarrachuuf
Qaawwaa xinnoo argannee
Dhiiraa fi dhalaa if booda akka hinjennee
Biyyaa teenyaa tiruu maqaa jijjiranii
Afaan nut hinbeennen meeqa moggasanii
Warri cunqurstonni yoom nudamdamanii

In his song, Shantam comments on the maladministration of the *nasftagna* in which the mass had no right to raise their grievances, and

committee that facilitates such activities. With encouragements of the committee and the supports of other Oromo, six cultural and musical groups from Baalee, Arsi, Hararghe, Shawa, Ilubbaabooraa and Wallagga came together and precipitated the Oromo cultural, social and political movements at the hall of Ethiopian National Theatre for two days in 1977. In the cultural show, 150 singers and actors were taken part. The bands of *Guddattu Wallagga*, *Biftuu Birraa* and *Biiftuu Biyya Kenyaa* (Our Country's Sun) were actively participated. Thousands of Oromo from across the country attended the show (Bariisaa, 1977; Asafa Jalata, 1993).

The songs of the cultural show analytically presented the contemporary and past regimes suppression of Oromo culture, language, history, and traditional practices. Some of the songs presented on the show by Gaaddisaa Abdulah, Shantam Shubbisaa, Zerhun Wadajo and Ilfinash Qannoo are read as follows.

Gloss

Bachelor with thick hairs do not be in hurry
The sun darkened and then rose for us
No one was enslaved like us
While we have a country deprived off it
While we have constitution forbidden to use it
While we have a culture we are deprived of it
While we have language we are without it
We remained dispersed like shaded leaves

of the little outlets. However, the central idea of the song is about the attempt of replacing the Oromo language with other and the failure of the Oromo to unite and lift the imposition burdened on them. As the following song indicates, Shantam Shubbisaa also presented cultural show with a song that has both historical and linguistic significance. The song reads:

Gloss

Previously all people were suppressed
In the hands of minority oppressors
Many were forced into exile from the country
Many were slaughtered illegally
Many were hanged for expressing their problem
While we have language we were deprived of it
We were forced at a gun point to learn other's language
Today to reconstruct
We find little outlet
Both males and females do not hesitate
They changed the name of our beloved country
They named us in the language we do not know
The oppressors

only lived to fulfill the interests of their lords. According to the song the then Oromo had no right of speaking their language and no right to

refuse what they could not bear or offend them. He inserts in his song that failure to accomplish the need of the *naftagna* was followed by punishments. The song describes that the Oromo were forced to lose their language, culture, country, constitution, and failed into an oppressed situation comparable to serfdom. It also gives advice that their contemporary Oromo should not inherit the enslavement of their fathers. He also commented on the attempts of replacing the names of Oromo towns, places, and animals by that of the Amhara's.

The singer of this song tried to highlight what happened to Oromo language during the imperial regime. According to the singer, many Oromo were forced to learn other language being forced at the gunpoint. Because of fear of such actions, a few Oromo lost their language and culture and deviated to others opting to be assimilated (Gada, 1988). The singer also condemned such people and advised his then Oromo audiences to stand for their right to speak and sing in their language in public. He also attacked those egotistic individuals denied their ancestors.

Oromo

Gargar gargar baanee teenyeee bara baayyee turree
 Waan isin gaafadhaa akkamiin walbarree
 Kun Arursii jedhanii kun qottuu jedhanii
 Ilmaan hadha tokkoo addan nubasanii
 Mee hayadannuu nu cunqursaa jiruu
 Maqaa laffallee nigegegederu
 Adaamaadhaan Naziret jedhanii
 Tolasaa fi Badhaasaa Kirstinnaa kaasaanii
 Kann darbellee hindarbee
 Dhaamsan sitti dhaamaa Yajoollee Oromootaa
 Akkamtiin baddii seenaan kan dhalootaa
 Safuun keewoo baddee bara dhibba baatee
 Utuu ati maalitti jirtuu aramaan sinyaaatee
 Nurratti jigea turee ba'aan innii guddaan isaa
 Qawwee malle maaltu bilisa nubaasaa

Thus, both songs clearly show that the literature of Oromo language played a significant role in informing, teaching and initiating the Oromo so that they should protect their right of using their cultural naming system, their language in particular and the spiritual and material cultures of their fathers in general. They repeatedly demonstrated with their songs and

Kottaa harama haramna
 Midhaan keenya keessaa
 Tuufoo bubuqsna
 Cobasaatu ballessaa
 Lafasaatu borqiidha
 Kanaaf tuufoo baasaa

Similarly, from Wallagga, Elifinesh Qannoo and Zerhun Wadajoo gave comments on the suppression of the Oromo language by the rulers of the imperial regime. Ilfinesh cited some of the towns and persons names changed into Amharic in order to erase Oromo names even from the written literature of even written in other languages. In her song, she opposed the changing of Adaama to Nazerete, the Christianization of Tolasaa and Badhaasaa. She also commented on the giving of Oromo provinces as it was intended to eliminate Oromo identity in order to assimilate them after they had been evolved into independent ethnic groups. According to the intention of the song, this and others similar incidents were not only to snatch *Afaan Oromo* from the mouths of the speakers but also to avoid even the terms of Oromo language from the literature written in others languages. As the following song indicates, she also pointed out how Christianity played its own major role in the displacement of Oromo names. The last line of the song calls for an armed struggle and thus it seems that she was never satisfied with the development seen under the *Darg* regime.

Gloss

We remained in isolation for a long time
 Let me ask you how we acquainted with each other
 They named this Arusi that Qottuu
 They isolated the offspring of one mother
 Let us remember they are oppressing us
 Even they changed the name of the places
 They named Adaamaa Nazirat
 They Christianized Tolasaa and badhasaa
 The past is past
 I send you a message the children of Oromo
 How our ancient history is destroyed?
 Since you lost your culture a century ago
 While where you are you are the weeding ate you
 O! heavy load was piled on us
 It is only gun that will make us free.

dramas at the gatherings of the Maccaa-Tuulama Association.

In the song Zerhun presented at his 15 years age, he was pointing that still the remnants of the past were in drag that it needs the Oromo to fight against such individuals. The song was metaphoric that it was not easy to capture the meaning easily. The song reads:

Let come to weed
 From our farming
 We will uproot wild flower
 What dangerous is its droplet
 The soil is infertile
 That is why it grows wild flower

Unlike the songs of the period, this is ironical and its meaning is covered. It also indicated how the Oromos were challenging the mal administration by using the language which was considered shameful to speak in a public.

After the major Oromo cultural show of the 1977, songs and traditional dances were popularized and were performed at every Oromo gathering. The Oromo resistance against oppression through songs of cultural groups had grown rapidly when different Oromo political parties got the support of the singers. The songs were either part of communal or personal creations. It also served as a strategy of reviving Oromo culture and language (Informants: Mahadi Mude, Mohammed Qophe, Zerihun Wadojo).

In the attempt of addressing the Oromo questions which were reverberating during the imperial regime, Darg permitted regular broadcast in Afaan Oromo. Singers were invited to broadcast the songs that could expose the serious corruption and exploitation which characteristics of the emperor's regime. The songs were even made to have the contents to educate, disseminate science and technology within the main stream of socialism.

No less than the socialist propaganda, by design or default, the Oromo proverbs, folklores, songs, glories of culture and history which were broadcast through the Oromo language mass media inadvertently taught the people about the glories of their language, culture, and history. The historical injustice, like the continuous aggression, suppression and exploitation inflicted on the Oromo nation during the imperial regimes were recited. Based on the examples of the radio, many Oromo began composing songs in the Oromo language for their *kebele* (village administration), *Wored* (sub district), *Awraja* (district) and Zonal musical shows. (Informants: Mahadi Mude, Ibrahim Haji, Kebede Firisa).

At the *kabala* level, the youth who were organized under the ideology of socialist *Darg* propaganda began composing songs that praised the socialism in Oromo language. Dramas were also prepared and presented at the anniversary of September 12. Sometimes such songs and dramas were broadcast over the radio. Many of the Oromo youth who were the members of *Abeyotawi Kenét* (Revolutionary Troupe) were able to write impressive types of songs and became the known singers from the Oromo nation. Those who heard the songs of their friends over the radio attempted to do so by themselves (Ibid.).

Thus, after these pioneer singers, many Oromo musicians had come to the scene and publicized Oromo culture, language, political consciousness and others aspects of Oromo life to the world. The songs for the musicians were composed and organized by Oromo elites. In connection with this Sahile Dagaagoo, Abubakir Musa, Tesemma Negeri, Mohammed Qophe and some others played a leading role. In one way or another, almost all the songs composed in Oromo before 1991 were directed towards the expression of Oromo life situation under the ruling classes. The covert implications of the songs were more significant than the overt. The singers braved to present these songs to the masses under heavy security pressures. They attempted to revive Oromo culture, songs, and traditional dances which they performed and popularized at every Oromo gathering (Ibid.). Thus, the majority of Oromo songs during this period can be categorized as revolutionary songs.

They became one of the rallying points in the development of written Oromo language and literature. Many Oromo Youth made great efforts to record songs embodying political, cultural, and social resistance against the policies of the Ethiopian regimes. Some such songs remained unpublished either because of strict censorship or because of lack of money. Informants report that many of such songs are still in circulation in the form of manuscripts and are also being copied into cassettes. Some of them were published after 1991 and distributed to the people who were interested to have them (Ibid.).

Generally, since the beginning of singing in *Afaan Oromo*, two categories of Oromo singers emerged. The first group which constitutes the largest members was the bands of extreme nationalists. They took revolutionary songs as major instruments of fighting to manifest their grievances and to awaken the Oromo so that they stood for their rights. The second are those who ventured and were able to bear the political impositions of the period and courageously sang Oromo songs on the stages although their measures were not from the Oromo nationalistic perspectives. Among such singers Tilahun Gesese was worth mentioning as he never forgotten sing at least one Oromo song in all his Amharic Cassettes. My informants even argue that Tilahun taught the possibility of singing very interesting songs in *Afaan Oromo* to the Ethiopian officials beginning from the emperor's period. He attracted their attention to listen to entertaining *Afaan Oromo* songs together with that of Amharic (Ibid.). Production or singing such songs was not without risk. When the *Darg* regime began facing

serious opposition from students and the insurgents, it imposed stringent restriction and censorship policy on any products of the nations' mass media. Thus, all these struggles were expected to pass through politically unforgiving censorship of the *Darg*. If politically opposing case was proved and reported what would be expected from the doer was execution in public or flight into exile. The assassination of Mustafa Abdi, Fatuma Ahimad and Abubakar Musa and the imprisonment of Elfinesh Keno, Gaadissa Abdullah, Zerhun Wadajo was part of such measures (*Ibid.*).

CONCLUSION

The cultural song in Oromo partially shifted the paradigm to resistance songs with the conquest of the region by the Abyssinian expansion. It was made the main breathing wheel to comment on the maladministration of the *neftegna* (gun bearers of the conquerors). Children, youth and elders used to convey their feelings through songs under any circumstances. After more than half a century, the urbanized Oromo transformed arts into an organized form of movements. The establishment of Afran Qallo, the first organized Oromo cultural troupe, was one such organized movement. The Afran Qallo pioneered Oromo of the others areas. The cultural bands of *Guddattuu* Wallaggaa, *Burqaa* Boojji, *Biqiltuu* Mandii and *Lalisaa* Najjoo were the results of the movements. Under taking such movements was not without risk. When the songs they were singing was discovered subversive, the discovered composers and singers were either exiled or executed or imprisoned. It was under such circumstance that the Oromo cultural troupes used to resist the maladministration of consecutive administrators of Ethiopia.

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