
SEMIOTIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO RIVER IN BALE OROMO FOLK NARRATIVES

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Abstract

This paper explores indigenous knowledge related to water- based or river narratives among the Oromo society. The Bale Oromo people inhabit the North-Eastern part of Ethiopia along the Ethio-Kenya boarder. The practice of indigenous knowledge is embedded in folk narratives of traditional society. To this effect, the analysis is concerned with the core water-based beliefs and values that the society preserved in their oral traditions. The study employed a folkloristic method of data gathering, collected with such technique as purposive sampling. The analysis was made upon the semiotic discourse analysis to excavate the landscape of indigenous knowledge embedded in folk narratives, and likely depicted in symbolic representations. As far as the major finding of the study is concerned, indigenous knowledge practices of the society were identified as a local cultural knowledge that are drawn from the interconnections of the society, culture and nature.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Oromo, Afro-centricism, semiotic analysis, nature, folk narratives

Introduction

We are already- and always under the influence of knowledge hegemony. Explosive publications of indigenous knowledge in Africa have increasingly shifted to embody primitive expressions of folklore that challenge Western science. The socio-cultural studies are making evident of the profound relationship between oral tradition and indigenous knowledge practices. Oral traditions occur in cultural, social and linguistic contexts, and without consideration of these contexts one cannot begin to deal with questions of function, meaning, and significance (Mhando, 2008). African oral traditions, hence, need a critical theory to extract the best of indigenous thought and practice. In addition, an African centred approach of indigenous knowledge entails several

fundamental concerns. These usually include matters of creation, form, history, meaning, significance among others.

In Africa the pursuit for indigenous knowledge dates back to the colonial era, when European colonizers expanded their territories into the lands of Africa- in large part of an effort to control not only more markets and labour power, but also natural resources and traditional values. Soon after the mid-twentieth century's wave of decolonization, in the 'development decades' of the 1960s, postcolonial nations struggled to catch up with the productivity of the industrialized west. Nevertheless, the enormous practices of the home-grown know-how of traditional society were weakened or destroyed by colonial policies and practices (Ranger, 1989, Peet and Watts, 1996). Although Africans were informed to acknowledge the Western forms of knowledge for better life, but they suffered from the effects of the trimming down of self- identity.

A number of studies in Ethiopia also confirm that the people's indigenous knowledge practices are playing a vital role in solving various societal problems. In contrast to other African countries, Ethiopia resisted the colonial imposition and its impacts. Consequently, along with its ethnic diversity and a long history of oral traditions, its peoples' social self-confidence and political self-consciousness helped to keep their practices of indigenous knowledge. Besides, the majority of the rural population relies dominantly upon traditional way of life to sustain their livelihood. Oromo society, as one of the country's ethnic groups, is rich in practices of indigenous knowledge. Their oral tradition is an organic experience and source of knowledge (Alemayehu, 2012, Workineh, 2001). To this end, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What contributions does the indigenous knowledge have for the Oromo people, to live in harmony with each other and their environment?
2. What are the notable folk narratives that embody the indigenous perspectives of the society towards nature?
3. What are the water-based or river discourses that help the traditional people to define themselves in a particular cultural context?

Literature Overview

The Concept of African Indigenous Knowledge

The meanings and associations of the term “indigenous knowledge” can be categorized into different contexts of definitions and different philosophical positions. A working definition of indigenous knowledges (instead of knowledge), for this study incorporates the ontological position of viewing indigenous knowledge as local cultural knowledge that draws on the interconnections of society, culture and nature. In African systems of thought, the viewpoint stresses that to understand reality is to have a complete or holistic view of society. The view stresses the need for a harmonious co-existence between nature, culture and society. There is the idea of mutual interdependence among all peoples such that the existence of the individual is only meaningful in relation to the community that she or he is part of the nature (Dei, 2011, Scheurich and Young, 1997).

The term indigenous fairly extends and encloses ‘traditional’, ‘local’, ‘folk’ ‘native’, ‘original’ and ‘homegrown’ among others. Moreover, Dei, et al, (2000) and Argawal, (1995) assert that the term ‘indigenous’ connotes the long-established local peoples’ struggle to define their own representations of history, identity, culture and position in the face of Western/foreign hegemonic ideologies. Whereas ‘knowledge’, signifies the expression of the lively relationships between the people, their ecosystems; and the other living beings and spirits that have part in their life system. These multilayered relationships are the basis for maintaining social, cultural, and environmental relationships through sharing with other peoples. All aspects of this knowledge are interrelated and cannot be separated from the traditional territories of the people concerned (Battiste and Henderson, 2000).

As far as the applicable definition for this research is concerned, indigenous knowledge is, hence, the knowledge that helps a society makes decisions about activities that are acceptable to their life ways, lives in harmony with their environment and determines their day to day activities. In this sense, all indigenous knowledge is by definition born out of and therefore primarily relevant to the respective locality. In local communities, such knowledges can be found in different forms of folk narratives: storytelling, folk songs, rituals, proverbs and folklore in general. They can also be found in aspects of cultural materials, such as symbolic natural

phenomena and ritual elements in which the social meanings and interpretations enshrined in cultural artifacts. They are also mingled in the cultural practices associated with aspects of socio-cultural aspects- cultural norms, belief systems, and social organization, ecological aspects- water conservation, medicinal plants and other aspects related to socio-economic activities- animal husbandry, farming and others (Antweiler, 1998).

Oromo indigenous knowledge is part of the cultural heritage and histories of the peoples. It covers the indigenously informed epistemological saliency of cultural traditions, values, belief systems and world views (Gemechu,1998). Among the indigenous society, traditions and customs are imparted to the younger generation by elders. Their practice of indigenous knowledge is a worldview that shapes the community's relationships with surrounding environments. In all aspects, it is the product of the direct experience of nature and its relationship with the social world for sustainable developments and survival of the society. The knowledge that is based on cognitive understandings and interpretations of the social, physical and spiritual worlds is preserved in folk narratives. It includes folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs and perceptions, and natural experiences of the local peoples.

The Socio- Cultural Context of the Oromo Society

The Oromo are native African ethnic group found in Ethiopia and to a smaller extent in Kenya. They are the largest ethnic group of cultural diversity with a long history of oral traditions. The traditional Oromo people live together with their relatives with a close distance and share common culture. However, the past experiences of Ethiopian historical documentations did not exhaustively record the history and socio- cultural background of the Oromo society. The major reason for this was that the earlier feudal and communist regimes' suppression sidelined the detail history of many ethnic groups in general and the Oromo people in particular (Mindaye, 2005, Mekuria, 1996, Alemayehu, 2012).

The term Oromo often refers to the people, Oromia to the land and Afan Oromo to the language. They speak a language belonging to what is referred to as East Lowland Cushitic. The fact that the Oromo characterize one of the largest Cushitic groups in the Horn of Africa indicates that they have also a very rich culture fostered by the size of the population and vast land areas with diverse climatic conditions (Mindaye, 2005).

In Oromo kinship tradition, a clan consists of people who share the same root or background within the other Oromo ethnic groups. In certain social context, clan names are indicated for the virtue and achievements of legendary hero as viewed through their folk narratives. Like other Sub-Saharan Africans, the majority of the Oromo society resides in scattered homesteads; and they have a basic unit of patrilineal organization or structure. The most important social network extends from broad category *Ummata* (society) to a specific *maatii* (family). All these social groups act as the corporate identity- i.e. collective image in which all the members share common interests and values (Eshetu, 2008).

The Oromo society's social, cultural, political and legal system is called the *Gadaa* System. Oromo society was traditionally organized in accordance with this socio-political structure. The *Gadaa* system organizes the Oromo society into groups (sets) that assume different stages of responsibilities in the society every eight years. In the *Gada* system elders considered to be wiser and responsible for teaching the tradition, resolving conflicts, and nurturing Oromo culture. Seniority is, thus, an important factor in Oromo relationships. Under *Gadaa*, the Oromo have a popular assembly or gathering called *Gumi Gayo*, which is performed around rivers or waters and/or under trees at which laws were established for the following eight years. A democratically elected leader, the *Abba Gada*, will be in charge of over the system for an eight-year term. *Gadaa* compared to its historical background, it's practice is declining in wider area but remains significant (Mengesha 1992, Grgg and Kumsa 1982, Ahmed, 2011).

This system helped the people to share common social, cultural, political and indigenous legal system with a rich and varied store of folk narratives. Their geographical location, the nature of the land, accessibility of rivers and lakes, the numerous cultural traditions to be found in it, and the various historical forces that have shaped the destiny of its people probably account for this richness and variety.

Methods and Materials

The study was conducted based on the folkloristic data collected through selected instruments. This study generated a number of folk narrative data from elders of the stated districts. The basic instruments that were employed to collect the necessary data in the fieldwork were observation, interview and focused group discussions using tape recordings and note- taking. The reason I

found numerous folk narratives that are related with rivers, reveals the society's legitimacy of being alive in harmony with the nature. Bale is characterized by many rivers and streams than any regions in the country. It is stated that more than forty small and big rivers flow from the chained mountains to the down sides of the region.

The study area covered the districts of Bale Oromia; namely, Dinsho, Goba areas, Delo Menna and Medewelabu. The districts are found around the Bale- Mountains- Chain. Dinsho, Goba and Delo Menna are characterized by high altitude whereas Medewelabu is located out of the chain of the mountains and basically typified as lowland.

Apart from the stratification of the research area and selection of sample villages, Shepherd and Okafor, (1991) recommend that the village group meetings and interviews with key informants have a paramount significance in conducting a folkloristic research. By applying qualitative methods a purposive sampling technique can be taken in which cases are selected for intensive interviewing and analysis (Bogdan & Taylor, 1990). Hence, the informants who were believed to deliver the required information from the study area were selected using purposive sampling technique.

The study employed a critical approach for the data analysis. Based on selected conceptual framework, the study employed a critical theory as main analytical tool to deal with indigenous knowledge. This was semiotic critical discourse analysis that helped to unearth the social knowledge and meanings depicted in symbolic representations and conveyed in the narratives of the society.

Results and Discussion

The Bale Oromo society possesses beliefs of socio-cultural aspects regarding the natural occurrences manifested through their folk narratives. An attempt to trace the practices of such beliefs generates awareness of nature in numerous oral forms throughout the society's culture. The Bale Oromo are rich in belief narratives regarding rivers and streams, lands and property, plants and animals and other natural phenomena. As far as human dimension in association with nature like rivers or streams are concerned, the *maanguddoo* ("elders") say, *namni biyya beeku laga jala fiiga*, *namni mala beeku jaarsa jala fiiga* ("one who knows his country pursues a

course of river, and one who knows wisdom consults elders”). The idea is the rivers are sources of numerous provisions associated with their existence. As river is symbolized with source of life in many cultures and myths, the life of Oromo society is also linked with water- they tag along rivers for their daily economic and social activities. The idea is, the river banks are ever green, *jiidhaa* or “wet” for their cattle grass and ritual performances.

Water- Centered Perspectives in Narratives about River

Oromo life and culture have been attached by the existence of a number of rivers. As such, the society symbolizes their rivers in many socio-cultural aspects of myths, folk songs, proverbs and folk beliefs. Rivers symbolize strength, love, heroic deeds, sorrow and lifestyle among others- as depicted in their folk narratives. The rivers and the people are so inter-reliant that folk narratives connect human’s correct relationship with nature. The narratives are oral presentations that emanate from the traditional mind scheme of thoughts and way of life life. The myths and folk culture have very much influence upon the lives of people even in today’s Bale Oromo. The river based occupations are a part of the socio-cultural life of the society. The rivers and organic experiences related to them in Bale Oromo have been in an everlasting relationship. The analysis of this part is an evidence of river-centric folk life of the society, which has been represented as a mode of cognition of man’s right relationship with the universe at large.

River in the Feelings of Origin and Power

The traditional forms of life created by the Bale Oromo people are influenced by the system of life in line with the surrounding environment. They say, *lagni madda jireenyaati*, (“river is a source of life”). The Bale people living in or around the highland and the lowland people have a strong bond with their ever flowing streams and rivers. They are not only bonded with the value of lived- river- experience but with the experiential meaning of nature too. The folk narratives are formed from the time of immemorial that people have lived in a mutual arrangement with rivers.

The narratives about river and river related beings are common in the folk traditions of the Oromo society. An undersized pond of water has a life-sized meaning in the society. This truth is disclosed in the following elders’ narrative:

<i>Hidda daadda ka gobeellee,</i>	<i>The origin of river 'Gobellee'</i>
<i>Gobeensilleen lama hin bulle,</i>	<i>filled instantly,</i>
<i>Saree diqqoo rarragatee,</i>	<i>floated a dead bitch, and thrown it on fields,</i>
<i>Diida buute; diddii sanuu</i>	<i>on fields of clammy grass</i>
<i>Hoogana qaba hogana sanuu</i>	<i>It is that clammy thrown it away</i>
<i>Baasee laalee,</i>	<i>And likewise throw the evils away from us.</i>

The Bale Oromo gives high value for rivers. The discourse is based on the society's established norms that when rivers are filled, they eradicate bad things and provide them good fortunes. They wipe out rots from their vicinity; they express their benevolence and malevolence-blessings and curses with their rivers- no matter how a river is small, they associate with the paramount socio-cultural meaning and significance.

It is important to comprehend the difference between the use of language in the 'origin of river' and 'the flow of river' in the discursive text. The 'origin' represents the past or root. The degree to the flow of a river is determined by the extent of the water at the source of a river. To this effect, the origin of a river determines the flowing force of a river. This is how the Bale Oromo make sense of the world- the origin symbolizes their identity. Their future direction depends on the past experiences. The source is always powerful than the flow as indicated in the discourses of the narrative, as in, "... the origin of river *Gobellee* ... floated a dead bitch and thrown it on fields". Although it is the flow of the water that throws dead bitch away, the position of power is conferred to the origin. The implication is, it is only when the source is bursting that the stream is flowing forward.

On the other hand, it is evident that this particular line, "the origin of ...*Gobellee*" is a signified expression. From this line one comes to know that the origin is belonged to the oldest or prior. Among the Bale Oromo's social structure, elders are right to serve the role of blessing and cursing. It is this socio-historical stipulation that governs the society. The oldest ones exercise a valid power. Hence, the narrator seems an elder who represents his people and curses evils. The "dead bitch" represents evils that can harm the society. To this effect, elders have the role of cursing evils from the society- which they believe that happens.

It is also indicated that the fields are “fields of clammy grass”. The clammy grass shows a vast coverage of plain lands. It is associated with the larger group of the society. On the other hand, supernatural being has an upper hand to perish all evils of the society as stated, “... throw the evils away from us ”- where they assert a state of malevolence. The narrative acclaims the last idea as cursing evils is the social practice carried out by elders; and elders believe that God makes it happen. Therefore, on the basis of the social code of the society, elders take the advantage of this practice and exercise power over others- perhaps for the good.

Heroic Feelings and Expectations with River

Like other feelings and experiences people have shared their feelings and expectations with rivers. River has a paramount cultural function in creating power. In Bale Oromo, the people use folk songs in relation to river to express their feelings in witness of their heroic deeds. Indeed, people living around river sides of the villages have a high regard for their rivers. The overflow of rivers is symbolized with a state of valiant power over hidden evils. Their folk songs are means of telling the embedded meaning to this point.

Geeraraan bariisiisaa,

Ka geeraru aduu dhiisisaa,

Xiqqaa haga tisiisaa,

eegee booraa dhiisisaa.

A hero roars up to dawn,

A hero roars up to dusk,

A little river seem to be a fly,

invades a hyena with all its tails.

This is the folk narrative of the lowlanders about the verve and vitality of their rivers. People who live around low land areas are characterized by small rivers during the dry season. But a tiny river signified greatness among the Bale Oromo. The folk song has a heroic connotation. The river that flows day and night portrays industriousness and heroism, as it says “a hero roars up to dawn; a hero roars up to dusk”. The river is depicted by a little fly that carries a hyena to its burry. Among the society, powerfulness or braveness weigh up with the strengths of rivers. The power of river is also originated from the collective control of joining with other tributaries. This idea signifies the collective power that the traditional people acquired from the lessons of nature-based indigenous knowledge as shown in the following narrative:

<i>Gannaalee gamaa-gamanatti as baanaan</i>	<i>When 'Gannaalee' comes from here and there,</i>
<i>akka malee of jaalate,</i>	<i>it's love of self becomes high.</i>
<i>Falaa jaldoo harammisee,</i>	<i>like a line of monkeys, it's cascade lined- up</i>
<i>falaa duulaa dhawaatessee,</i>	<i>like a brigade of army, it chained with others,</i>
<i>falaa arbaa gaara darbee,</i>	<i>like a group of elephants, it crossed the</i>
<i>akka guchii rooba argattee,</i>	<i>mountains.</i>
<i>lafti illee si argatte.</i>	<i>As of ducks get rain,</i>
<i>Eela waan Gayyaa,</i>	<i>the land has got you.</i>
<i>maaltu bishaan gaya.</i>	<i>Oh, the land of 'Gaayyaa',</i>
	<i>nothing is like water.</i>

The aforementioned narrative triggers the value of nature and their spiritual and physical importance to human. The Bale Oromo traditional way of life is highly persuaded by rivers around them and their complex thoughts have been sustained by huge number of rivers like *Gannaalee*. *Gannaalee* is one of the biggest rivers in Bale zone. The innate environment of the people, particularly the highlanders, is favorable for the sourcing rivers and streams. Due to the chain of mountains and dense of forests, there is a high range of rainfall.

When it comes to *Gannaalee*, the river is represented by its mighty flow. To show the unity and self-centeredness characterized by the river when it says, "When *Gannaalee* comes from here and there, it's love of self becomes high". The strength of the river is emitted from the company or collection of other tributaries. The last clause that says, "..., it's love of self becomes high" signifies that the 'oneness' or mixed-up of other rivers. The power of the river is indexically represented with other natural multimodal representatives that signify the qualities or attributes of the *Gannaalee* river. The cascade of the river is compared with monkeys' queue; its flow is compared with a brigade of an army; and its power is compared with a group of elephants. Finally, the land that is crossed by the river is symbolized with the ducks that get water- that satisfies the thirst of the landscapes and bring peace among the entire community.

Hence, it is very common among Bale Oromo people to share common values and social solidarity in their folk narratives related to natural phenomena. The traditions of the folk narratives with their own tune have been in a classy manner handed down from their ancestors. In praising the unity of the flow of river, the society inculcates metaphorically the power of uniting together and life relationship of people with river from ancient time to the present day.

Generally, water symbolizes the whole of potentiality; it is the source of all possible existence. Water symbolizes the primal substance from which all forms of life come from it. It existed from the beginning of every cosmic or historic cycle and will always exist, so long as life continues. Water by its nature is not expiring and its pollution is because of the interference of human beings. According to the society's mythology of water, there was just water on earth—it is the primal substance. The traditional society's myth posits the formation of water in addition to other natural elements as follows:

Dur Waaqni dhala namaa uume; nams mootii uumamaa godhee namaafis bishaan, bosonaafi aduu dursee uumeef. Namaanis bishaan akka hin xureessine, bosonas jirmarraa akka hinmure ajaje.

Long years ago, God created human beings. He made man to be king of all creatures and He created for them water, forest and sun at first. He obliged human beings to protect water from unclean substances and forest from cutting off its stem.

The Oromo myths of creation speak how God interrelated human beings with other natural elements. Like other religious creation stories; in the first God created man and He ordered man how to administer other things accordingly, so does the Oromo myths too. The story is purposeful in that it teaches the sustainable use of natural resources, particularly water and forest. Nature by itself is perfect. If there is any claim against the violation occurred in the human-nature interaction, the accountable party is the human dimension. The following myth, narrated by elders, authenticates this reality:

Dur dur Galaanni (lagni) guutee nama fudhatee, Galaanni gumaa nuu baasuu qaba jedhanii jaarsoliin walqabatani Galaanaan, "nama nurraa maaf nyaatte?" jedhanii, "gumaa nuu baasi"

jedhaniin. Galaannis, lakki ani nama hin nyaanne; hin agarre jechuuf, sagaleen koo gaararraa dhagahamaa ture; na nyaatu jechuuf jirman buqqisee deemaanii ture argeera; kanaaf ani itti hin deemne isatu natti dhufee jedhee ofirraa deebise.

Long years ago, a man was taken by a river and elders went to the river and they asked, “why you took (killed) a man from us?” and they said to the river, “we need compensation”. The river replied, “No, I did not touch any one in my side. If the man said that he did not hear my voice, I was roaring from the top of mountain; if he assumed I am weak, he saw the log I was carrying, so it is not me; it is the man himself that violated me”.

The Oromo tradition related to river reveals a power of river and how the people are hurt when they violate the ecosystem. The implicature communicated by the text indicates that nature is perfect or without flout. The elders share their traditional beliefs or knowledge about “going to the water” banks, such as rivers and ponds or lakes must be in careful. They also believe that the socio-cultural significance of springs and rain lays the foundation of their ecological perspective.

Buzarboruah (2014) says that the life of any people who live around rivers is shaped in response to the natural environment of the river. While trying to co-exist and adjust with nature humans become nature-dependent. Hence, in case of Bale Oromo who are saturated around rivers and all aspects of life of the people including individual or social, cultural and economic have been controlled by rivers. They say:

Oli ilaali walaqa,

Harki gannaa walaqa.

Gadi ilaalii walaqa,

Daakkiyyeen walaqsite.

Aanan Saayyaa walaqa,

Jabbileen walaqastee.

Look it up it's shining,

The hand of 'ganna' is shining.

Look down it's shining,

The duck shines the water.

The milk of 'Saayyoo' is shining,

Calves enjoyed with that shining.

Reflections of the fact that all dimensions of socio-cultural life is based on the specific geography of multi-river basis, the day to day life of the inhabitants are entirely river or water dependent (Buzarboruah, 2014). Accordingly, the narrative discourse depicts the overall rounded

phenomena of river and its relation with other aspects of human life. A river is like a mirror for the society in which they shape their life style. And it is also the basis of everything of life.

Whenever rivers are filled they reflect the shining power of the sky/sun and consequently they shine too. The hand of *ganna* (summer) is a sign for the 'lightning' that appears amid of raining. The lightening that shines is the iconic representation of the energy of a river reflected in other aspects of life. To this effect, when ducks swim in a river, they make the water shines because they are white in colour. Cows' milk also shines and the association is so long as the cows drink river water, the milk continues to be abundant and calves to be fed. The rain water that fills a river is associated by a cow's milk that satisfies a calf when it says, "the milk of cow is shining, calves enjoyed with that shining".

Every experiences of life around their rivers make the society to be more resourceful and more creative in knowledge formation system. For that reason, the people around rivers have been living for a long time in maintaining co-existence with river. Their knowledge of nature imitation has a great deal of importance, in creating the principle of their co-existence with nature. The role of rivers remains more active for the cause and need of the process of co-existence, particularly for those who live in the natural world with fresh air, shining water and greeneries. Such narration of cow's dependency on river- or their economic source of river is very common. From what elders narrate, more can be seen as follows:

<i>Lagada Lagada laga abbaa Boonayyaa</i>	<i>You 'Lagada' river, a river of 'abbaa</i>
<i>Boonayyaa soogiddoo soge garbuun bite,</i>	<i>Boonayyaa',</i>
<i>garbuu sana looniin bite,</i>	<i>of the salty soil that buys barle,</i>
<i>loonsaa mucha gaggaarota,</i>	<i>It is that barley buys cattle.</i>
<i>laga soogidaan dhugee,</i>	<i>Among the cattle, cows of big breasts,</i>
<i>utaalee boorata.</i>	<i>those drinking salty river,</i>
	<i>jumping over and cheering- up.</i>

Almost all the rivers of around Bale are related with colorful folk narratives. The rivers like "Lagada" have a lot of myths which are concerned with the origin of the river. There are various legends found in many places related to rivers. In the culture of the Oromo people, names for

rivers like, “*Lagada*” were given based on different historical accounts. The river is identified by “*abbaa Bonayyaa*” which was believed that *Bonayyaa* was a legendary man who lived for a long time around the river in a remote past. “*Lagada*” is the river that is characterized by salty water- where they extract salt from the river.

What is communicated in the discourse of the narrative is the socio- economic chain of the society when it say, “...salty soil... buys barely”, “... that barely buys cattle, ...and cows of big breasts”. Due to existence of a number of rivers, the economic life of the people is highly dependent on river sources. If the river brings salty soils and abundant water-resources have been attracting people from good old days. It is seen that everyday life of the river-bank dwellers begins centering on river with their cattle. In their everyday activity they make a chain of drinking river water their cattle and dependent on rivers for animal husbandry. The folk narrative also shows that in the past there were river-based trade and commerce. The chain shows that they make salt from salty river- and that salt buys barley- and that barley buys cattle, particularly cows of big breasts that provide them with milk. Most importantly, the cows drink the salty water, which is tasty for cattle, and the cows get contentment with that kind of river water.

The folk literature and belief about river indicates the force of attraction of river even for people who live far from rivers. This veracity is indicated in the following narrative:

Teessoo Daarimoo Baabboo,
teessoo Daarimoo Gadaa,
maaltu laga gara badaa?
Lafa teessoo badee
Onatti gatee teessuma,
Teessoo jaalatee
utubaa geeddarate.

The place of ‘Daarimoo Baabboo’,
the place of ‘Daarimoo Gadaa’,
who misses a place of river?
Leaving the previous back,
and making it empty,
He loved the new one,
changing his home to a new place.

Folk narratives reflect the lives of the Oromo people. They incorporate a lot of reflection of interdependent folk lives of river and people. The interesting legend is the beautiful place of river banks that are named by very old people identified as, “the place of ‘*Darimo Baabboo*’,

and... 'Darimoo Gadaa'". The two names indicate that the ancient heroes who lived around river. There is an intimate relation between man and river since the time of immemorial. From the fine earlier days the people living on the banks come together with river in a beautiful environment. Those who live at a considerable distance from the river they also like to come nearer to the river as it says, "he loved a new place". The people are well aware of the benefits of rivers, when it says, "who misses the place of rivers?" Even in the context of promotion, the people consider changing their place, which is far from river, to a river banks as it says, "changing his home to a new place". The peoples' life is dependent upon the rivers in various ways.

Symbolized Frustrations

The people who live around river share their all expressions: such as values, beliefs, frustrations, expectations, and good feelings with rivers. When gradually the rivers change their natural aroma and flavor and turned to contaminations, they express their bad feelings as in the following discourse:

<i>Danabala dhooftuu dide,</i>	<i>'Danbal' [Cow] refused the polluted,</i>
<i>Haroo xurooftuuu dide,</i>	<i>Refused the polluted lake,</i>
<i>Xurooftuun yabbii qabde,</i>	<i>The polluted caught a calf,</i>
<i>Qeenxiraaan ilmee didde.</i>	<i>'Qeenxiraa' refused its calf.</i>

Danbal is a name of a cow that refused the polluted water to drink. Pollution is a gradual coincidence that came after population growth. *Danbal* or the cow was once familiar to drink and benefit from the river water as stated in the affirmationed analysis of the folk narrative. Even the calves used to swim in the rivers but now when the calf swum in rivers, *Qeenxiraa*, ("name of a cow") refused to approach its calf because of the bad smell caught the calves from a river. Though, people themselves are responsible for the unnatural changes of nature, but the sorrow of contamination offered by the river is too terrible to tolerate. The main causes of pollution are rooted in the specific nature of the human beings. The following is also a narrative that follows river contamination:

Lool ilamaan hubboo Yaayyaa,

Loon ilmaan hubboo Baaree,

Huuba lafaa funaane,

Lagni huuba guddisee,

huubatu lagaan dhufe,

dhiitatu Lagaa galche.

You cattlt of 'Hubboo Yaayyaa',

You cattle of 'Hubboo Baarree'

*It [river] collected dirty things from the
land.*

*The river became full of dirty things,
dirty things came with the river,
with the powerful river.*

The theme of the voice of the narrator is a distress of the current situation and the narrative is forwarded to the direct legends called 'cattle of *Hubboo Yaayyaa* and cattle of *Hubboo Baarree*. From the legend of elders both, *Hubboo Yaayyaa* and *Hubboo Baarree* are names of ancient individuals who lived in the remote past. During that time the rivers were clean and cattle get pleasure from drinking the rivers. What is contaminated is not only the river; the land became dirty and when rivers became full, it collected all the filthy it came across as it says, "it collected dirty things from the land". The strength of the river is also indicated for the river did not sink in the dirty land, but rather it pulled the dirt together and continued to flow.

Generally, the folk narratives which are found in field studies of different places of high land and low land areas have reflected river and lives of river bank people. The culture and folk literature of the Bale Oromo has intimate relation with river. There are a huge number of the folk beliefs that are created on the basis of river and river based humankind. Indeed these beliefs are changed and promoted according to the changing time; the intimacy and experiences of the people and with the nature of the river.

Conclusion

The traditional forms of life created by Oromo society are influenced by the system of livelihood in line with the surrounding nature or environment. Every experiences of life around their natural phenomena like, rivers or water and forest make the society to be more resourceful and more creative in knowledge formation system. Their rivers are sources of the traditional belief that are central to the perceived value of folk knowledge.

The Bale mountain people in or around the forest and the lowland people have numerous rivers that create a state of reciprocated relationship with big and small rivers that flow from their chains of mountains. They rear cattle because of the abundance of nature which favoured their life in this aspect. As such the society symbolizes the rivers in many socio-cultural aspects in their myths, folk songs and folk beliefs. Rivers symbolizes the ups and downs, strengths and weaknesses, passion and lifestyle among others- as depicted in their folk narratives.

The society's literary tradition is reliant on folk narratives that appreciate the nature regarding reflections of the fact that all dimensions of socio-cultural life of the inhabitants are entirely nature dependent. In Bale Oromo elders developed practices of traditional knowledge from their attachments with the elements of natural movements and the voices they hear and activities they observe. They interpret the voice of primeval nature and decipher into extended narrative of exploration. The motif of constructing meaningful messages has its roots in their folk narratives.

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