

The survival of Matakal Oromos' Identity, Language and Culture in the bad condition

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Abstract: Like other Oromo communities living in Oromia regional state, Matakal Oromo has Identity, Language and Marvelous Culture. Therefore, for unspecified long period of time, struggling the oppressing factors in loving its identity, speaking and trying to develop its language; as well as, practicing its culture. However, it was bad condition in which the community has passed, and today on the struggle of protecting these three domains of humanities. The challenges are pre planned and tactic-full to negatively affect the identity, language and culture of the community. However, the Oromo community in the area sacrificed many things from material up to its life and made them to survive.

Keywords: Identity, Language, Culture, Struggle, and Survive.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historians like Fikire Tolosa (professor) wrote that Ethiop is a person who was father for all nations and nationalities currently live in and outside of Ethiopia, i.e. (Cushitic, Semitic, Omotic and Nilotic/ Nilo Sahara) language families. Cushitic language family holds Oromo, Agaw, Sidama, Somali, Afar, Cambata, Hadiya, Gedio, Qimant, etc and is the largest one, consequently, lives on the widest territory of Ethiopia. Among the communities of Cushitic language family, Oromo is the largest community, which covers almost half of the total population of the country, i.e. (Among 100,000,000 people about 50,000,000)

Encyclopaedia of the Nations (2007) report says the Oromo constitute 40%, the Amhara and Tigrean 32%, the Sidamo 9%, the Gumuze 6%, the Somali 6%, Afar 4%, the Gurage 2%, and the remaining others account for 1% of the Ethiopian population.

Therefore, as can be said in almost all of the regions in the country, significant number of Oromo community is settled. For instance, in Tigray region, **Raya Oromo** are living there since the unspecified time. In Amhara region, **Wolo Oromo** have their own broad zone and live there since unspecified time. In addition, in Harari region, rather than hundred thousand of Hadare's community which is narrated as it was taken from Afan Oromo phrase '**adda re'ee**' and some nation and nationalities of the country, majority (i.e., 56% to 60%) are from Oromo community; consequently, the region is currently ruled by representatives of Oromo and Hadare communities. Likewise, in Somali region, Gambella region, Beneshangul Gumuz region, South nation and nationalities region; as well as in two Administrative towns, i.e. (Addis abeba, or Finfinnee and Dire dawa or Dirree Dhowa) which were named by Afan Oromo terms are in the circle of the these wide community. Therefore, there is no one region in Ethiopia that can declare itself that it stands alone out of the contribution of the Oromo communities.

2. OROMO'S TERRITORY

Prominent literatures including bible put that Ethiopia is the land of Kush. Oromo is one of the sons of Kush and holding the largest community in the Cushitic family. Therefore, no one questions that Oromo community is living through out almost all of the land of Kush (Ethiopia). There are two contradictory narrations about the Oromo communities' land conquering process. The first narration says; the community lives at the place where it is living now, and normal production may continually increasing the number of the community and that number made to settle on the currently observed vast territory. The second narration says, no,... it was during the time known as '**Oromo Expansion**' that the community started its expansion from the place which is known as the former or origin of the community, known as '**Maadda Wolabu**' and expanded its territory to the broad and fertile area the community is owned.

Currently, these two narrations are the issue of debate among scholars in the field of history. Taking share in the debate, as the writer of this article has historical background and born of Oromo community, he agrees with the first narration that realizes the place on which Oromo is currently living is the original place for this community. There are indicators to the accuracy of this argument. Among the indicators, as has been mentioned earlier, the writer of this article is from Oromo Community in both sides, i.e., through (father and mother). The father of the writer is from Western Wallaga, particular area from Ebantu (Adamii). However, mother of the writer and her ancestors, who are known by 'Amuma' clan (one of the sons of maaccaa oromos) are since the unknown past time living at the place categorized under Benshangul Gumuz Regional State; particular area **Gongo** province. The life of this clan was not limited only around Gongo province. In addition to that the 'Wereda' which is called '**wanbara**' which is narrated that the name of the place itself was taken from '**walbarraa**' the phrase used by two sides Maaccaa Oromo forces. The meaning of the term is 'let's know each other'. Therefore; this area is also conquered and currently occupied by this community.

Other supplementary truth, beside of the Oromo community currently living in 'Asosa' or 'Asasaa' Afan Oromo term, meaning 'talking in minimum voice' the capital town of the regional state and other, zonal and weredas' towns, three weredas namely Dibate, Bullen and Walbarraa (wanbara) are dominated by Maaccaa Oromos. To give witness to this narration, the writer of this article is from one of the three weredas called **Dibate**. During his study of elementary school, he attended at **yamp kebele**, the district that is about ten kilometer far from Dibate Wereda. At that time, the writer observed that if hundred students are the total number of students in one class, sixty of them, i.e., 60% students are from Oromo community. The rest forty or 40% of the total number of the students are shared to the other nation and nationalities living in the region.

The second witness is, the writer has attended the General Secondary level of his education at the district called **Bereber** (the place where the majority of Dongoro and Jaga, the two sons of Maca oromos are living), and there the writer has seen more exceeding number of students from Oromo community. For instance, based on the observation of the writer, the reality of that time indicates, if there were hundred students in the class room, about sixty five, or 65% of the total number of the students was from Oromo community, and the rest number, i.e., thirty five (35%) of the total number of students were from the others nation and nationalities.

The number the writer put for the students is directly going with the number of the teachers, i.e., it is known that unless we take in ratio or, many students for a certain amount of teachers, by any means the number of the students and teachers cannot be equal. However, it should be underlined that standing on the data of the students the number of teachers from Oromo community is more than the other nations in the Wereda. This number and description the writer gave is not carelessly stated and far from the truth, because anybody who is not convinced and interested to discover the truth can reach on the place and check how much the information is real.

The third witness may be the last from the writer's observation, when he has attended senior secondary, i.e., ninth and tenth; as well as, preparatory level, i.e. eleventh and twelfth at Dibate senior secondary and preparatory school, the same differences were seen on the number of the students, when counted for report. For instance, when the writer was studying grade eleventh, there were twenty eight students in the social stream class room, among these twenty eight students (28), about twenty two (22) were from Oromo community and the rest number (6) students are shared to the other nations and nationalities. The other Weredas the writer didn't mention are also not far from the mentioned reality about Dibate Woreda. However, the writer will come with accurate information after studying being near to either the individuals who are from the area, or going on the place of the reality on the ground

3. AMOUNT OF OROMO COMMUNITY IN BENESHANGUL GUMUZ REGIONAL STATE

It is obvious that based on the policy of the country, under the control of the federal government, the regional government was making census in the region. It was many times that the result of the census has been tried to be introduced. Accordingly, the amount of the Community was uncovered as it was once the third and other times the forth-largest Community in the region. However, the writer of this article argues the result of the report. Because, No one can be sure about the amount of not only the Oromo community, but also the other nation and nationalities living in the region even in the country. Jeylan(2008, p32-33) said

It is difficult to ensure the accuracy of reports on the ethnic composition of the people of Ethiopia given the socio-political and economic dynamism, which may in one way or another affect the ethnicity of a person or a group of people.

There are many factors which are unique reasons for this narration in the particular region. Firstly, it is obvious that, the region is among other regions in Ethiopia in which majority of uneducated people are settled. In addition, the writer was growing by observing and hearing Gumuze community's way of life, which is one of the five nations recognized as indigenous in the region. (i.e., Gumuze, Shinasha, Ma'oo, Komo and Berta). Therefore, others see some of the Gumuz communities as killers and no one dares to go to the areas of their settlement to make the right census. It is true that sometimes even, employers who are recruited to make census are attacked by members of this community and lose their unreplaceable life.

In the same way, it is obvious that federal government has the agents who are assigned as if they represent the community from different nation and nationalities of the region. Therefore, these agents take full responsibilities from main office, i.e. **(Federal Government National Census Coordination Office)** and come to the region they are assigned to. Then after, they select some personals from the region and the personals, also select other agents who collect data to them. In this process, some federal agents who think that the true result of the data may affect their domination over the region and want to live under the roof of false report, being with such kind of personals from regional state offices oppress the selected data collectors to do mistakes systematically on the counting of the number of other nations and nationalities houses and members of family in the home knowingly. Then after, they agree with each other, and send falsely undertaken report to the office of **(FGNCCO)**.

Therefore, census which is made yearly in Benshangul, Gumuz, Regional State, does not tell us the exact amount of all nation and nationalities living in the region. The case of the Oromo community is not different from the others. Consequently, the writer of this article disagrees with the report of census holding the fixed number of each community in respect to its nation and nationality. In general, no one can speak boldly that the exact number of Oromo community living in Beneshangul, Gumuz Regional State.

4. BAD CONDITIONS DIRECTING IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

4.1 Challenges directing towards identity

All human beings have on their side contribution in owning their own identity. All are created differently holding their own unique and precious identity. The same is true in case of Matakal Oromos. They do have their own identity in which they are proud of. The writer of this article believes that no one identity is better than the other's identity. We simply saw what are already given to us. Therefore, all identities need equal respect and honor. However, what was done in Beneshangul Regional State in general and Matakal Zone in particular is different. The identity of Oromo community living in the area is bitterly tempted. For instance, the students complete 10th grade and if they don't get pass mark, they cannot compete for work with those five recognized illogically as former/primitive communities of the region with identity card of Oromo. Therefore, many poor families and employers forced to change their identity in to one of which has recognition in the region. However, there are others who sacrifice in many to survive their identity.

In addition, those students who get pass mark join preparatory level and attend colleges and universities also after completion of their study; do not have equal chance with those communities to be recruited in different offices. Persons of the area who are on the position assume that Oromo out of Oromia is rightless, strange, who can only use his/her rights of employment, life and education only at Oromia region. Therefore, this also makes unemployed Oromo communities to pass in bad condition with their identity.

4.2 Challenges directing towards language

Language is an asset of all community owned that language. It is difficult to separate language from identity, and identity from culture. They are interconnected that one is expressed in the other. Ethiopia stated on her policy that all languages

are equal, and respective community can develop its language through education and different social activities. Ethiopia's Education and Training Policy of 1994 Declares that:

Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages P, 23.

However, Oromo community lives at Benshangul Gumuz in general and Matakal in particular has been treated against the policy of the country. In the region, students are not given the chance to even express their interest towards their language. For instance, I remember, it was in 1996 according to Ethiopian calendar, we were organized and formed Oromo students support association and I was the chair person for the association. Therefore, we set our objectives that to organize our community, to learn in our language and to make different social activities. However, one day while we were on meeting, we saw ourselves surrounded by security forces. Then we were taken to police station and asked different cross sectional questions. Then after, they sent our profile saying that we captured them when they are trained to be the member of OLF (Oromo liberation front). Finally, we left that area and persecuted to the remote areas. However it was fabricated false information. Consequently, students do not learn in their mother tongue (Afan Oromo). However, Jeylan argues it saying that:

The denial of a people's development and use of its native tongue is thus a denial of its participation in society and its people hood (Jeylan, 2008,p51)

In addition, because of two reasons, they are not allowed to communicate in their mother tongue with their teachers. Firstly, teachers who are trained to teach these students do not train in Afan Oromo, so that they do not know it. However, the policy says against this practice:

The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area (EETP 1994,p23)

Secondly, some teachers of the region themselves do not have positive attitude towards Afan Oromo and Oromo community. Therefore, they deteriorate the community in their language. Through doing it, they break the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) to formulate social and political policies that would embed the ethnic groups'

'Right of self determination and the right to speak their own languages, develop their own cultures, and reconstruct their own histories'.

However, surprisingly, majority of the Oromo community are happy in the sacrifice they are paying because of their language. I am one of those who are victims of mentioned problems in the article.

4.3 Challenges Directing towards culture

The communities of Oromo are rich in culture. They do have together a package of culture which is revealed in different societal activities. Likewise, Matakal Oromos are proud of their culture, such as wearing style, eating style, process of marriage act, reconciling procedures, and elder respecting and taking blessing of elders are among cultural operations. To start from their wearing style, Mothers wear 'Qolo', or 'Wondabo' fathers wear 'Gabi' and girls wear 'Zura'. Among their eating styles, Anchote, Cumbo, Cacabsa etc are common. Up to the level to say all cultural activities are similar with what are practiced in Oromia regional state, especially with western Oromia.

Likewise, as the writer of this article mentioned earlier, he is from Nagaso, Dongoro Oromos. Therefore, there are cultural activities annually carried out by Dongoro community. Among these activities, all of the four sons of Dongoro meet each other, and discuss on different issues, then pass different decisions. On this, meeting, if illegal acts are done and announced; for instance, if the male have sexual intercourse with his relative female. They call and ask the mistaken individuals from the community, then, if they regret in their action, they punish them and allow living with community in peace. Unless, they outrage them and neglect from the peaceful coexisting community

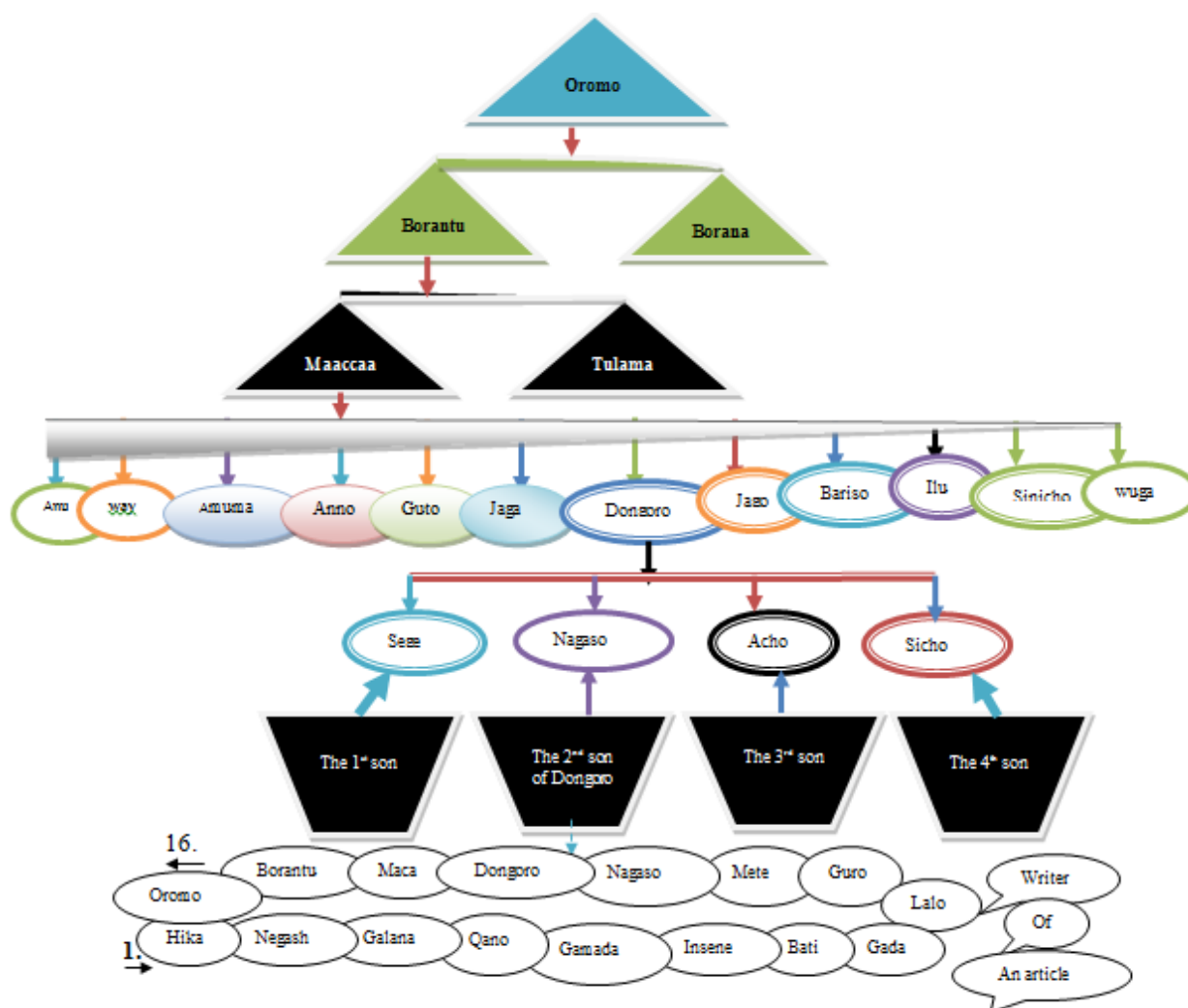


Figure 1: Ideal structure of Matakal Oromos

Description of the figure

The figure implies that the Oromo communities living in Matakal are from Maaccaa and Maaccaa is from Borantu. Then the two confederacies such as Borana, and Borantu are the sons of Oromo. In addition, among the twelve sons of Maaccaa Oromo who are living in Matakal, Amuma community lives around Wonbara, or 'Walbarraa', Gongo and Tullu Dimitu areas, whereas, Jago lives around Gallessa, Geshee Tuski Gambela, and Cali'ea areas. And others live around Bereber, Gipho, Albasaa, Dalle, Damadas, Daalaattii, Qoriqa, Addis Alem, Dobban and other areas.

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