RESEARCH ARTICLE

ORAL SONGS IN THE CULTURAL RESISTANCE OF SALAALEE OROMOO.

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to collect and analyze oral songs in the Cultural resistance of Salaale Oromo. In the history of written literature of a given society, poetic compositions constitute one of the most important elements of the literature. One of the ways in which these poetic compositions are expressed is through songs by individuals or bands. In one way or another, the songs by individual vocalists or bands express the life situation of the society. The contents of the songs might be political, economic or social. In line with this, through oral songs, the Salaale Oromo expressed how much their incorporation with Ethiopian empire brought about significant socio-economic and political changes with far reaching consequences. The researcher found that the lives of slaves were better than that of Salaale gabbar under the four distinct political systems namely: Menilik II, the imperial, the Derg and Tplf. Besides commenting on the military regime, oral songs also advised the Oromo to have patience if they wanted to use their language for public purposes. The Salaale internal migration to Arssi and Baale has been repeatedly described in their songs. In Salaale, heroes are celebrated and their deeds retold as a role model through songs and folklore. The purpose of these oral songs is to portray the extent and form of the economic subjugation of peasants. They also show the peasant protest and social critique about local official’s confiscation of land, corruption and policy change. In dealing with the paper, qualitative research methods (narrative and descriptive research methods) have been used. The necessary data for this study were collected from primary and secondary sources. The data from primary sources were collected during field work. On the other hand, secondary sources relied on documents that used before and after fieldwork. As a result, the study is the product of two types of works; library and fieldwork. The main purpose of this study, hence, is to produce academic research in the cultural heart land of Salaale Oromo. Little has been done on this subject. Hence, the researcher has recommended that oral songs should be appropriately collected and recorded. Efforts should be made to preserve and maintain oral songs as cultural heritage as well as history. Studying oral songs contributes to the recording and preserving of the Oromo literatures that is part of the oral literature of the region. In such a way, it would have significance for academic

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research activities, general public and could advance the frontier of our knowledge on Cultural resistance of Salaale Oromo through oral songs.

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Introduction:

The Oromo are a Cushitic people who live in the East African region known as the Horn of Africa. The Salaale Oromoo is the Tulama branch of the Cushitic Oromo in Ethiopia inhabiting northwest of Finfinne. Because of their closeness to the Shawan Amhara Christians to the north, the Salaale lived under an uneven historical relationship. The people of Salaale are rich in oral literature. In his authoritative book, Wax and Gold, Donald Levine wrote that the genius of peasants is visible in the stories, songs, verses, proverbs, etc., that make up their rich oral literature. In Salaale, narratives and other folkloric expressions, the themes of bravery, patriotism and the pride are constantly repeated in their song. In this regard, Assefa Tefera writes the following: “The Salale songs of grievances, quuqaa, about land are typical examples of historical songs. By singing such songs as faarsa commemorative songs, full of life and ardor, the people share not only history but also a common ground and perspective”.

The Salaale are also well known for their tradition of geerarsaa, which is the song of the brave men. Thus, the study of historical oral song and poetry is an important field of research in Oromoo literature but it has not been systematically investigated specifically on the various genres of Salaale oral song and poetry that was handed down through generations. On the other hand, the oral song and poetry of the Salaale people is an unexplored genre. One finds only a few studies in such a widespread and most functional genre. As a result of this condition, it becomes very important to study the oral songs which have long been used in the area and to preserve them in a way which would be helpful to see the people’s thought, feelings, beliefs, hopes and desires as well as their way of living in general through subject matter analysis.

Objectives

1.2.1. General objective
The general objective of this study is to collect and analyze oral songs in the Cultural resistance of Salaale Oromoo.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of the study are:
1. To collect historical oral songs and poems dedicated to Salaale heroes;
2. To collect historical oral songs and poem dedicated to patriot (1935-41);
3. To analyze oral songs according to their central ideas and contexts;
4. To suggest better ways of preserving possible ways how the existing historical oral song; and poems handed down through generations.

1.3. Significance of the study
By carrying out a research of Oral songs in cultural resistance, the researcher hopes that this research on oral songs would:
1. It helps others to appreciate the creativity and wisdom of the community where the oral song and poetry comes from.
2. Contribute its part to the development of Ethiopia oral literature, in general, and Oromoo oral literature in particular.

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1 Workineh Kelbessa,”Traditional Oromo Attitudes Towards the Environment an Argument for Environmentally Sound Development”, Social Science Research Report. Series - No. 19, (Addis Ababa, 2001), p.1; see also P.T.W.Baxter,Jan Hultin and Alessundro Triulzi, “introduction” in Being and Becoming: Oromo Historical and Anthropological Enquires, (Uppsala, 1996), p.7.

2 ASSEFA TEFERA, “HEROES AND HERETICS: PERFORMING NATIONALISM IN ETHIOPIA CUSHITIC SALALE OROMO IN NORTHEAST AFRICA”, (INDIANA UNIVERSITY, 2013; ALSO AVAILABLE AT ETHNOECOLOGY.COM.

3 Donald N. Levine, Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture, (Chicago, 1965), p.243.

4 AssefaTefera, “Ethnography of Resistance Poetics: Power and Authority in Salale Oromo Folklore”, (PhD. Dissertation, Folklore, Indiana University, 2015), p.56.
3. Serve for other researchers, and students of the folklore and literature as reference material and point of departure for further study.

Methodology:--

2.1. Methods of Data Collection
The data has been collected by using primary as well as secondary sources. In order to compile out data for this research, different methods and procedures have been used as briefly discussed below. The heroic recitals employed in the study are collected using interviews, participant observation, recordings, and documents.

2.2. Field Research
To gather data in the field research in Salaale, interviews, observations, and recorded documents have been used. For the interview, the purposive selection is made to select elderly people who have rich knowledge of the local history and the study area. This is because a historical song is not every man’s practice. It demands a gift to compose, memorize, and perform it on certain occasions with the right manner of acting. The interview is done to learn the prominent occasions and functions of heroic the song in the area.

1.4. Observation
Observation is made to see how people react during historical songs and to have the whole picture of the environment. These in a way help to the understanding of the meaning of the songs easily. Though the researcher did not get the chance to attend any heroic songs recited in a real context, in his four months stay in the field, he uses his experiences, and audio and video records taken in the real contexts for observation. That is to say, the researcher is from that area. He had the opportunity to see heroic songs performed at various special events. In fact, two years ago he had made his own records of heroic recitals in the real context.

1.5. Documents
Published and unpolished sources (books, articles, journals, theses, and others) have been utilized for the research. Most of these sources were obtained from Addis Ababa University (AAU) (Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES).

Oral Songs in Resistance of Salaale Oromo (1870s-1900s)
There is ample evidence that the influx of Amhara into the region of Salaale brought about frequent wars and clashes, which were expressed by the widespread emergence of several rebellions. Conflict over the economy particularly between the early settlers and those who came later was one of the main reasons that contributed to the rise of Bulloo Galgal, Ashée Ruufoo, and Goshuu Gissillaa. The local community for his resistance against Ras Daargee has remembered Bulloo Galgal. The conflict was said to have occurred when Ras Daargee ordered his servants to cut down the waddessa (juniper) of Bullo Galgal from his ritual place to construct Fiche Gannat Georgis Church. According to Wakene Frew, until 1900, there were more than 374 churches established between 1800-1900 in Korra – Merabite, Kyuyyu-Aboute, Midda, Insaro, Wuchale, Girar Jaarso, Debralibanos, Darra and Gullale. The neighboring Oromo also strongly challenged the establishment of these early churches because the churches were built near or at the Oromo ritual and political center. Their firm resistance and strength remembered well in tradition as follows:

| Afaan Oromoo | Gloss |
|--------------|-------|
| Baddessan Bulloo Galgal | ritual and political site of baddeesaa Bulloo Galgal |
| Lola Daargee dhalchee | brought the war against Ras Darge |
| Gafa Goshuun | when Goshuu |
| Hin Gabbaruu jedhee lole | denied the order of Daargee |
| Daargeen Ashkaree | Daargee who born |
| Nurratti dhalche | slaves on the land of Salaale. |

5Informants: Kabbe Yaadee Abarraa Gammadaa, Gimjaa Gonfa Abebe Bayu and Kabbee Gissilaa.
6 Informants: Shitaaye Kabbee, Ejaaraa Damee and Iseeyii Taddassaa.
7 Wakene Frew, “The Family of Ras Darge and Church in Salale”, (BA.Thesis, History, Adds Abbaba University, 1973), p.28.
8 Informants: Kabbee and Mammo.
In some instances, the Oromo around Salaale did actually chase priests and threatened them in several times. That is why it came to be said *essaarraan araara butfi gaaesiin garaadhat daaui*. Literally means priest cannot bring peace rather than dying for food. It was during the expansion of *kiristinaa* (baptism) in Salaale, the local populations of the area sang a warning song against Ras Daarjee as follows:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Gattiraan baalaa | Juniper is a leaf |
| Baalatu muka | leaves can be a tree |
| Kiristinnaa maalii | what is the meaning of being Christian? |
| Yaa Daarjee dubbahdu dhugaa | you Daarjee speak truth. ⁹ |

As oral tradition indicates when Ras Daarjee encountered with Goshuu Gissila (the local chief of Salaale) in 1870s, Daarjee came up with ‘*negarit*’ (literally, drum) and said to Goshuu *ገ ብረኝ*). Then Goshuu responded in his mother tongue: “*hin gabbaru; hin gabbaru*”. This literally means, “I never pay any kind of tribute to you” neither in cash nor in-kind.

Following his refusal, Daarjee ordered him to construct the *gibbii* (palace) at Fiche. When Goshu presented the issue for the public, they responded better to die than to cut trees and construct the palace. Hence, these factors made Goshuu Gissila to be fugitive, particularly in the area covered with dense forest and surrounded by foothill so-called Darroo Birbisa Goshuu. ¹⁰ In Line with this, Alemseged asserts that Goshu took refuge in a cave to live with wild animals than submit to enemies. ¹¹ Their conflict came to end when Daarjee’s armed forces exiled to Hawaxo to capture Goshu’s force. Goshuu died at Botor and buried at Faalloo Mikael in Gindabarat. ¹² It was during the course of struggle; Goshuu Gissillaa produced the following poem:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Jabana koo fardaa lafaa lolee tanan | during my reign I fought with infantry and cavalry |
| Dadhuma dhugee garuma bulee | I drink honey wine and I lived luxurious life |
| Jabanni kee gandaan na labe yaa Birruu | You Birru, your reign filled me with instability, chaos. |

Similarly, Assefa Teffara collected sang a song that commemorates Goshu for his heroic endurance as a bandit:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Gosshuu Gissillaa | Goshu Gissillaa, the fearless |
| Tabataa qawweedhaa | who played games with gun, |
| Hin gabbaru jedhee | repelled subjugation, |
| Waashaatti gale | andtook refuge in the cave |
| Dabbaallii jawweedhaa! ¹³ | share a room with a python!. |

3.1. Some Historical Oral Song of the Salaale from (1935-1941)

According to many studies, the occupation of Italy regarded as liberation when compared with the former exploitation of the people by feudal lords. This might be true for the poor Oromo tenants and *gabbars* because the Italians were abolished free labor service. ¹⁴Because of this, the Italians appreciated among the Oromo as *tola faraanji balleesse* (the feranj eliminated free service). ¹⁵ Sources indicate that many Oromos’ did not resist the occupation of Italy between the years 1935-1941). However, in Salaale the situation is reverse. This might be true in Tekletsadiq Mekuria work that Shewa was a double of Gojjam and Gondar in the aspect of the patriotic

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⁹Informants: Sanbatuu Iraasu, Dachaasa Waari, Asaffaa Nugusee, and Gonfaa.

¹⁰Informants: Kabbee, Dassee Kabaaba and Kabbee Gissila.

¹¹Alemseged Debele; “A History of Kuyyu, 1936-1991”, (MA. Thesis, History, Addis Ababa University, 2010),p.24.

¹²Informants: *Ibid.*

¹³Assefa, p.333.

¹⁴Taddesse Berrisso, “The Pride of The Guji-Ommo:An Essay On Cultural Contact And Self-Esteem”, in *The Journal of Oromo Studies* Volume 11, Numbers 1 And 2, (2004),p.19; See also Biratu Kenei, “A History of Oromo in and Around Finfinne (Addis Ababa)From Ca 1860-1974”,M.A. Thesis, History ,Addis Ababa University, 2010, p.77.

¹⁵Biratu,p.88.
That is why Salaale people hand over through reminiscence by means of the following song in Afaan Oromo word:

Maqale yaa maqalee biyya shawaan itti qalame-- Oh Mekele Mekele the city where the Shawns’ were murdered
Kan du’e du’e ee kan hafe gale -- while many were killed, the remaining came back to their homeland.

Like other portion of Ethiopia, in Salaale, many heroes have been struggled against the fascist occupation from different corners of the region under study. The well-known personalities during the five years of Italian occupation who bravely fought in Salaale were Dejjach Geleta Koricho, Fitwerari Mulu Asanu, Kegnasmach Belachow Asanu and Lammi Hata’u (the father of Assefa Sharoo Lammii). In the course of their resistance against Italian invasion (1936-1941), Mulu Asanu in collaboration with other patriotic “organized the Salaalee Oromo [under a warrior name] Mata Goraa. They fought several battles. To mention a few of them, Kararu, Bondi, Dugda Dhera, Wajju, Midda, Maranya Abbo, Danguuree, Gafichi Abbo, Qabena, Faxira, Meskel Sefar, Morat, Adare, Mosibit Amba and Gobil were the well-known battlefield. In their occupation, the Italians found a few collaborators from some woradas of Salaale. The one well-known initial collaborator in Salaale was Dajachmach Demise Ingida who was born in Gojjam particularly at a place called Merto-lemariyam. The coming of Italians helped Demise Ingida to stay on his position. He joined the Italians in 1936 and remained loyal to them throughout their occupation.

It was during that time, the local residents of Wajju narrate the following poem, which implies a critique of Wajju people against collaborators as follows:

In Afaan Oromo word:
Mogor Keessatin argee gootaa jirbii gootaa jirbii
Wajjuanan lola jedhet Ejersati dhume wanumti Girmii
Yaa Damissee Ingidaa sumatu fide idaa
Siiin jetti ijoolleen midaa

When translated to English
I saw the granary of cotton in Mogor
The Girmi people were executed at Ejersa while confronting with Wajju
Oh, Demise Dngida you yourself brought the risk
Said the clan of Midaa (the subclan of Wajju)

Yeroo Waajju bu’ani While marching towards Waajju
Yaa cirracha isaa (2 xs) there are a number of sands
Yeroo Damisseen du’ee if Demissie died his ribs be the food of birds
Nyaadhu yaa allaacha cinaacha isaa.

Karaa Shaggar the high way of Shagar
Yaa karaa sallaattoon barreessite the road which constructed by Italians
Dhageechee yaa Abarraa have you heard Abarraa
Biyya kee sallaattoon (Italians) balleesite Italians destroyed your country.

3.2. Salaalee Oral Songs After 1941

According to tradition we have collected from Salaale, after the evacuation of Italians, some people had received maderia land and continued to use it until the revolution in 1974. On the other hand, there were individuals who had taken part in the war of liberation but remained without being reward maderya land. Similarly, Alemseged states that like other ordinary men, most of them have remained with the title of Obbo (mister). Unlike other patriots of

Informants: Ababa, Birananuu Tassamama, Caaltu Baloo and Caaltuu Baloo
Informant: Kabbe Gissila and Kabbe Yadee
Ibid
Informant: Iseeyi Taddassa, Gonfaa Kabbabaa and Galaan Yeshaanaw
Informants: Birananuu Tasamamaa and Zawudee Gonfaa.

16 Tekletsadiq Mekuria, yee Ethiopia Tarik Kaa Atse Tewodros eska…p. 307-310;Pawlos Nogno yaityopya-na yaxalya torenat (Addis ababa 1980 e.c)p.240-256.
17 Informant: Ijaaraa Damee and Gergisoo Damee
18 Informants: Ababa, Birananuu Tassamama, Caaltu Baloo and Caaltuu Baloo
19 Informant: Kabbe Gissila and Kabbe Yadee
20 Ibid
21 Informants: Iseeyi Taddassa, Gonfaa Kabbabaa and Galaan Yeshaanaw
22 Informants: Birananuu Tasamamaa and Zawudee Gonfaa.
Ethiopia, many of Oromo in Salaale did not get the necessary recognition for their contribution. This situation led to the rise of many shiftas’ (bandits’) throughout the 1940s for the reason that they were participated in the war of liberation but remained without acquiring maderia land. During this time, the local governor of Salaale was Dajjach Demise Segu, son-in-law of Ras Kassa.

As is evident from the next song, the local people became victims of government violence than the bandits’ male violence. This is because the Waajju peoples never condemned social banditries for the reason that they were well aware as it was for economic and political emancipation. They condemned Demise Segu as follows:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Afaan Oromoo                                      | Gloss                      |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Damissee Sagguu                                   | you Demise Segu            |
| Soddaa warra iraasi                               | the son in law of Ras Kasa |
| Iraastu ajejee                                    | he was Ras Kasa            |
| nu dhaame jarjaree                                | who ordered him to assault or beat us |
| Gullalie immo maaltu ajejee                        | And what ordered the Gullalie |
| Nu saame barbaaree                                | to rob our pepper?         |
| Yaa Damissie Sagguu                               | You Demise Segu            |
| Gurraacha qoma leellee                            | the very black man         |
| Otoo Balee Abbaa Giddii jiraatee                   | if Balachew Abbaa Giddii was alive |
| Muzgeerin si haleele.24                           | you would be attacked by muziger.  |

During the imperial regime, the gabbar cultivated the Kudad (hudad) and delivered the entire crop to landlord. It was tetari or Zagi who collected one third of the produce from gabbar’s land as a tribute for landlord, and another tenth to the state as tithe. The peasants of the area worked one day for ploughs, one day for sowing, and two days for weeding and two days for gathering the harvest per year. Informants unanimously agreed that the major source of this problem was zagii or tetari. The tetari or zagii elected from gabbars to serve as intermediaries between balabat and the gabbar. Zagii or tetari either guess the crops standing on the field or collected before threshing based on their relationship with gabbar. Most importantly, it was during that time, the local people of Salaale produced poems to disapprove zagii or Tetatri as follows:

**Afaan oromo**

| Afaan oromo                                      | Gloss                      |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Abbaan Lafaa maal nu ballesse                     | landlord didn’t harm us    |
| Kan nu ballese taxaridha                          | but it was the viceroy of the landlord who harmed us |
| Yaa taxari mila kaboota                           | You the viceroy, a man with sprawled leg |
| Kanarra maaluma nu gootaa                         | you could not do anything than this |
| Bishaan qarssaara gadi yaa’u                      | the river flows on the surface of the rock |
| Yaa taxaari                                       | you the viceroy             |
| Yaa ilma haadha gadi raawuu.26                    | you an idiot man.           |

The torturing rude word “ilma haadha raawu”, sadly demonstrates some deep-rooted hateful social order in Salaale. In addition to this, Dachasa also collected oral songs concerning to the maladministration of the people under the agent of zagii (the mediator of landlord).

| Afaan oromo                                      | Gloss                      |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Biyya taa’uuf zagituu hammatee                    | to live in my village the agent is wicked |
| Lagga Gibee busaatu hamatee                        | to cross the Gibe River malaria is hostile |
| Biyya kafaal karaatu fagaatee                      | to go to Kafa it is too far |
| Kan Iyyessaal raakinuma taatee.27                  | for the poor it is too problematic. |

From the above proverbs, it seems that the peasant feared disease resulted from malaria in the Gibe region. In Salaale, more than others, Amdee Abarraa evicted the people from their land to Arssi and Baale. One of our informants evicted from his land tell us: “we are displaced soon, our grazing land and farming land has been taken

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23 Alemsegad, p.33.
24 Informants: Kabbee, Mamnoo, Dachaasa, Melaku Tafarraa
25 Informants: Gonfaa, Habtamuu Sanbataa, Mamnoo and Ijaara.
26 Informants: Dachaasa, Damise Mokkonnon and Hundee Tulluu.
27 Dechaasa Abebe, “A Socio-Economic History of North Shewa, Ethiopia (1880s-1935)”, (PhD. Dissertation, History, University of South Africa, 2015), p.251.
by Amde Abara for rearing domestic animals and it seems that the animals are more important than us.” When the Shewan Amhara rulers appropriated their land, the Salaale sang as follows:

Ati yaa Amdee Abarraa  
Maaf qotte maasaa lagarraa  
Silaa hiiyeessa fixxee lafarraa  
Si haa gaafatu ayyaanii warraa!  
Abbaa lafaaf yaa barra beekaa  
Gatiin kaloo barana meqaa  
Kan durrati Birrii sadeeti  
Barana immo dhibba sadeeti  
Hintane kaa ulee waliirra keenyaa  
Kan bahu Birrin Keenyaa.

Informants claim that the lives of slaves were better than that of Salaale gabbar because the slaves work for his landlord who at least feeds him whereas gabbar vice versa. 29 It was during that time the local Oromo of the area expressed the change that happened to them. The song is expressed in the following way:

Afaan Oromoo                                          Gloss
Atoo bisin Baale ilaalee                               the car will travel to Bale
Ana jiruun natti hin taatee                            I unable to bear any more burdens
Nagaati yaa biyya abbaa koo                           Good by my father’s land
Jette ijoollen Salaale                                  said the youth tenants of Salaale
Siif ba’e biyyaa sif ba’ee                            you the landlord, I left my land for you, here it is
Yoo sardidni irboo sif hire                            if foxes share a quarter for you
Yoo hadaan olla siif ta’e                              If the plants being your neighbors
Yoo Jaldeessi ciisi sif tahe                            if the monkeys become tenants for you
Yoo mujjaan midhaan siif ta’e                         if grass family renders grains for you
Siif ka’ee biyyaa siif ka’ee. 32                      I have left my estates to you.

Informants: Iraasuu Garaasu and 32  
Ibid.                                                 32

In case of the tenants abandoned their farmlands and went to another place, they were not in the position to ask the landlord for compensation for whatever they had left behind. 33 It was during the eviction of Salaale Oromo to Baalee, Arssi and to some degree Wollaga specifically Horroo Guduruu and Jimmaa from their ancestral land, the Salaale sang a song in order to express their quuqaa (grievance) to the Shewan Amhara while praising Arssi, Baalee and probably others. When they were ready to migrate, they sang as follows:

Birraa daraara hadaanii                                   a flower is flowering during the spring

28 Informant: Iraasuu; see also Assefa, p.299.
29 Mebrete, p.29.
30 Informants: Iraasuu, Nagaash, Shitaa’ee and Abarraa Tolaa.
31 Informants: Galaanee Daadhii, Warqituu Dubaroo and Shawuu Boggalaa.
32 Informants: Iraasuu Garaasu and 32  
Ibid.                                                 32
33 Informants: Ibid.
Nagaatti yaa biyya abbaa koo                      good by our father’s land
Osoo na bo’uu garaanii                          while I was crying from the bottom of my heart
Amdee yaa ilma moottii                         You Amde, the son of prince
Harkaa dhabni dawwee nama gooti                being poor makes a man fool
Boroborii qotuu akka midhaan ta’ufi           cultivating the land is to a get good harvest
Hiyyessa daddarbun akka biyya ba’ufi           exploiting poor is to leave his homeland
Yaa birillee safara daadhii                    oh Birillee the measure of local beer (mead)
Lammiin ormaa gaafa rakko                     aliens in time of trouble is
Wagala taati                                   very uncompassionate
Lammiin ofii gaafa rakko                      one’s own people is
Kafana taati                                  one’s safe haven in time of trouble
Baale fi Arssiin gosuma kooti. 34             Arssi and Baalee are my own relatives.

To be sure, their internal migration to Arssi and Baalee has been repeatedly described in their songs. The above song indicates that the land hunger because of its being seized by Shewan Amhara and maladministration were the most decisive push factors for the massive movement of the Tulama Oromo to Arssi and Baalee. It was during that time that the Salaale articulated their grievances (quuqaa) as follows:

Warri badda Salaale                            those in the highland of Salaale
Qanbari isa gaarrachaa                        their yoke is black
Mofarii isa xaaexeedsadha                      while their beam of plow is xaaexessa (tree)
Yaa damma too beenu Arssii Bunaan              you my honey let us go to Arssi
Biyi kuni ratessadha. 35                      this country would make a foul out of people.
Kuulle dhale,                                  my cow, bore a calf
iyya-andaqqoo                                  she bore a calf at daybreak on the road
iyya-andaqqoo gara boodaa                      toward late in the morning
siifan dhabe!                                  I left my Father Land
Lafa Abbaa koo                                 because of you, neftagna!
Lafa Abbaa koo kan dhalootaa. 36              my homeland where I was born.

1.6. The place of Agarii Tullu in oral songs

Agarii remembered a lot from his young age how the Salaale peoples were evicted. To the feudalists, Agarii was a man who had bad character, an elegant bandit, and a grave danger to their power and well-being. That is the reason Haile Selassie’s security commands attempted to arrest him. Later, the government put a reward of vast farmland and firearms to anyone who could capture or kill Agarii. 37 In order to arrest Agarii Tullu, Fitawrari Muluu Asanuu presented a request that if he and his followers got a firearm known as Dimotfor; they would capture him. 38 At that time, the people of the area sang the following warning song to Muluu Asanuu:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Agarii Tulluu dalga kaachisaa  | Agarii is galloping the horse in horizontal way |
| Hin dhaqin yaa Muluu           | don’t confront, you Mulu |
| Agarii udaan nama nyaachisa     | Agarii will defeceate you |
| Eelen kan sibiilaati           | the best oven is metal oven (2) |
| Yeroon gali yaa muluu          | go to your home on time, you Mulu |
| Agarii Tulluu dhirsa dhiriati. 39 | Agarii is the heroes of hero. |

Like the above song shows, heroes are celebrated and their deeds retold as a role model through songs and folklore. Along with ashkaris like Burruusee, DabaleeTasammaa and others, Muluu started to search him in different districts

34 Informants: Geergisoo and Kololaa Kabbe
35 Biratu, p.101.
36 Aseffaa, p.311; see also Mohammed Ademo, “Agarii Tullu: From Serfdom to Revered Oromo Hero”, October 2, 2013, no page is given.
37 Mohammed Ademo.
38 Informants: Habtamuu Sanbataa, Tolasaa Irranaa and Abarra Tolaa.
39 Informants: *Ibid.*
of Kuyyuu, Hidhabu Abootee, Giraar Jaarsoo, Degam, Yaayyaa Gullallee and probably other. Some days later Shaalaqa Agari Tullu and Fitawrari Muluu Asanuu encountered in Lemman Sillaas ee district and began to fire one other. At this, some of the Fitawrari Muluu Asanu’s partisans were killed and others were wounded while the rests were exhausted.\footnote{Informants: \textit{Ibid}.} In that regard, the Salaale peasant sang a song to the force of Muluu Asanuu as follows:

\textbf{Afaan Oromoo} \hspace{5cm} \textbf{Gloss}

| Muluu rabbitu baasee | God saved the life of Muluu |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Dabalee Gurrarran yaasee | Dabalee narrowly survived from Agarii’s bullet |
| Burrusee dheeffatu baasee | Burruusee run away |
| Qawwwee Awraaja gachisiise | throwing the rifle of Awraja |
| Yaa Agarii yaa abba bubbee | Agarii, you are like wind speed |
| Situ albaase Muluu mataa shurrubbee. | It was you threatened the long-haired Muluu. |

From the above song, one can simply see that Agarii openly resisted the landlords in Salaale particularly in the areas like Dagam, and Kuyyuu. Agarii could not continue his resistance in Salaale and escaped to Wallaga. The song below, attributed to Agarii, as soon as he marched to Wallaga, Naqamtee.

\textbf{Afaan Oromoo} \hspace{5cm} \textbf{Gloss}

| Tushaa fooyi | how it could be possible to spine rope |
| Wal argaa | while you are in danger |
| Lubun nama techiistu | to save his life |
| Agarii Tulluu bu’e Wallaga | Agari escaped to Wollega |
| Agariin ta’et tokkosaa | Agari technique of gunfire is sitting |
| Ergan biyaa koo dhabee | for I lost my homeland |
| Naqaamte taa’een ol tokkosa | Naqamtee is now my launching base to fight back |
| Mogee keessa naanna’tii | you Agarii, wander throughout Mogor |
| Koo yaa Agarii koo yaa Agarii | come, come Agarii |
| Silaa of harkaa qabdaa | you have armed M1 rifle |
| Immahonidhan (M1) itti waqarii | and make assault on your enemy |
| Adaammin hin qaxxalu | Adaamii cannot be regenerated one’s cut |
| Yoo damee dameen qaxxale malee | unless its offshoot is regenerated |
| Agariin hin qabamu | Agarii could not be captured |
| Wallaga bu’eet qabame malee | if he did not escape to Wollega, |
| Tumaaleessi holaadha nan dhala jedhet | Sheep makes an attempt to have offspring |
| dhala dadhabee | but it cannot. |
| Agarii ilmi Tulluu Wallaga bu’eet | Agarii, the son of Tulluu went to Wollega, |
| gala dadhabee. | but was captured. |

As Ethiopian News Agence (Addis Zemen) preserved in the IES and oral sources confirmed that Agarii who instigated the Salaale farmers to stand up for their rights and challenge the feudal lords eventually hanged in 1970. He was hanged in a broad day light in the town of Dagam along with his two brothers.\footnote{Informants: Habtamu, Asaffaa Shaaroo Lammii and Damisee.} Assefa Tefara has collected songs regarding one of the brothers of Agarii, whose name was Jimaa Tullu. The song below, accredited to Agarii, shows that Jima was executed without any serious involvement in violent banditry like Agarii, and to some extent, like Hirko:

\textbf{Afaan Oromoo} \hspace{5cm} \textbf{Gloss}

| Salaale calleessanii | Salaale people give the yield to wind |
| Qamadii Salaale calleessanii | threshed and winnowed Salaale wheat. |
| Kan anaan Hirkoo tolee | they might as well hang Hirko and me |
| Koodee koo Jimaa maaf balleessani | but what wrong did Jima do?and hanged |

\footnote{Informants: Habtamu and Adinoo Gaarradoo}
The three brothers were hanged on the same day in Hambiso, Dagam, in Salaale.

1.7. The place of Assefa Shaaroo Lammii in Oral Songs

Like Agarii Tulluu, Assafa was the well-known hero from Salaale who became Shifta at the age of 25 years. Like Agarii Tulluu, he grew up as the son of gabbir giving labor service for the lords with his father Lammii Hata’uu. He knows the oppression and exploitation of the regime because he grew up under such conditions. Initially, in the year of 1955, Assafa fled away from Nyoke or Laga Harbuu, his original homeland to a place called Bakkalchoo and later to Holqa Shakakkee (Shakakkee cave) to escape and save his life from enemies that is landlord. Assafa had strong relations with the majority of Salaale people particularly with the people of Warra Jaarsoo and Kuyyu districts, who loved and supported him.

These people assisted him by providing essential information to him secretly. They also provided food and drinks for them at their both home and cave. The local people of the area recommended Agarii and Asaffaa Shaaroo Lammii not to loot, the property of innocent people in the whole Salaale with the exception of those who expropriated the Oromo land and subjugated the masses. Here is a word of warning from peoples:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Afaan Oromoo                                      | Gloss               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Agarii yaa Abbbaa tiksaa                         | Agarii, the defender of his territory |
| Agarii Tullu yaa abbaa tiksaa                    | Agarii Tulluu, the defender of his border |
| Abba Jobir hin xuqin                             | do not fight Abba Jobir, |
| Innin hoolatuma isaa tiksaa.                     | for he is very innocent. |

Similarly, Lammii Hata’u, father of Assafa warns his son as follows:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Afaan Oromoo                                      | Gloss               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Atobisiin laga hin buluu                          | the station of the bus is not at river |
| Asee yaa korma koo                               | you, Aseffaa my hero |
| Yoo magaalaa taate malee                          | unless it is in the town |
| Gosti ofii nama hin kennuu                        | ones tribe cannot betray his kin for bad |
| Asee yaa korma koo                               | you Asee my brave |
| Yoo alagaa taate malee                            | unless he is being alien |
| Minishiriin Baale bu’aa                           | the car travels to Baalee |
| Asee yaa korma koo                               | you Asee, my hero |
| Gama ormaa dhisi hin xuqnuu                       | don’t robe the property of aliens |
| Asee yaa korma koo                               | you Asee my hero |
| Hojjetanneetuma bulla.                            | we eat only the fruit of sweat. |

Along with being successful in some goals of his struggle against oppressive rules, he faced many challenges and problems. This challenge mainly resulted from local landlords who considered his struggle often as the main obstacle to their land lord policies. For instance, the problem he encountered was while he spent as a bandit. During that time, the local landlords of the area whose name was Sibaat Tuuraa tried to assassinate him by shooting a gun bullet against him and caused damage on his right leg. Another challenge that faced Asaffaa was while he was in prison.

While he was in prison, his family highly suffered from inadequate food and threatened by the landlord. It was during that time his father sang a song as follows:

**Afaan Oromoo**

| Afaan Oromoo                                      | Gloss               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Asee Shaaroo Lammii                              | you Ase Shaaroo lammii |
| Nan qotamoo nan haramaa                           | I either plough or weeding? |
| Yookan gotii qallabadhuu                          | you had better plough to feed your offspring |
| Yookan gosattiin galadhuu                         | or else divides your offspring among your clans |
| Ani tiiyaayyyu dadhabe.                          | I am unable to feed mine. |

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44 Assefa, p. 377.
45 Informant: Asaffaa Shaaroo Lammii.
46 Informant: Biraaanuu Tesammaa and Caaltuu Baloo.
47 Informants: Dachaasaa and Ijaara.
48 Informants: Assaffaa Shaaroo Lammii and Galaan.
49 Ibid.
During that time, the governor of Salaale was Dajjach Galataa Qorichoo. According to local informants, the major crimes punishable through Afarfaataa were animal theft, robbery, house burning, assault and sometimes murder. Likewise, the shanacha (shanee) were responsible to have the sense of hearing, argue, legally examine cases and finally gave judgments. However, social institutions, afarfaataa and shanee were not just a judicial procedure and became great obstacles to Assafa Shaaro Lammi. Whenever officials of the emperor loot bull and sheep, the mislane erroneously prosecute him as thief. Mostly afarfaataa held on either Sunday or Saturday. The Salaale rulers appointed mellkanya, chikashum and mislane to their administration. They were responsible for keeping peace and order in village.

Dejjach Gelata Qorichoo who was appointed as governor of Selale later became unpopular, considered like blood sucking man and never gets satisfied. And he accused by the peoples of Selaalee for doing the act of corruption. In line with this, the peoples of Salale sang a song to show their dissatisfactions to him as follows:

Afaan Oromoo

| Afaan Oromoo                                      | Gloss                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Hin taane yaa Dajjaach Galataaa                  | you, Dajjach Galataa, your system of governing is not right |
| Guyyaa guyyaa                                     | during day light                           |
| Shaneen sobeet kakataa                            | Shanee falsely swears                      |
| Halkan hoolata namaal galataa                     | the Shanee slaughters sheep throughout the night |
| Hin tanee yaa Dajjaach Galataa                    | you Dajjach Galataa, your system of governing is not right |
| Har’as hin taane                                  | your system of governing is not right      |
| Yaa Dajjaach Galataa                              | you Dajjach Galataa                        |
| Barreengaddaa qaacee fo’atta                      | last year, you fairly treated the people   |
| Barana immoo                                      | but, this year,                            |
| Boorsaa hodhattaa                                 | yourself involved in embezzlement          |
| Isin yaa shanii                                   | you shanii                                 |
| Gaaddisa qoree teessanii                         | who seats under the shadow of tree         |
| Maliff sobdani namarra keessanii                 | why you accused falsely the innocent people|
| Kan hatu silaa ijollee kessanii                  | while your children are involving in theft activities. |

The purpose of this song is being to portray the extent and form of the economic subjugation of peasants and shows the peasant poets song of protest and social critique about local official’s confiscation of land, corruption, and wished the change or policy of the administration.

When the opposition became intense against the imperial rule, the local people sang as follows Afaan Oromoo

Gloss

| Afaan Oromoo                                      | Gloss                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Hin qotta moo                                     | you the peasants do you plough your land   |
| Hin loota a yaa gabaree                          | or fight your enemy?                       |
| Algawaraash lafa hiruu jammaree                   | the heir began to allot land to the peasant |

This shows how much the people of Salaale wished to see the downfall of the feudal system. It seems that conditions were ripe in the region under study to receive the revolution of 1974. Likewise, in Salaale, the students, who knew the realities of unequal economic growth, loudly repeated peasant anxieties about land dispossession and the problem of the peasant. It is said that the student of Fiiachee high school motivated the demonstration of Salaale peasant in 1962 to the front of the Amde court. The unforgettable measurement taken by the student of Fiiachee was the demonstration made in front of Amde court. At that time, the student crushed government car and killed the son of Amde Abara whose name was Mulgeta Amde.

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Informants: *Ibid.*
Alemaayehu Hailee, *Gadaa System: The Politics of Tulama Oromo*…p.200.
Informants: Iraasuu and Olaanaa.
Informant: Melaku Tefara
Adinow Beyene, “Yetkeberu ye Dajjachmach Galata Qorichoo Achir Hiwot Tarik”. no folder number and file number
Informants: Birhanu Tasammana and Galaan Yeshanew.
Informants: Dachaasaa Waarii and Birhanu.
Informants: Biraaanuu and Warqituu Dubaroo.
Karchaamallen qabaamu didee and the bus cannot be controlled
Yaa barataa it is you, student
Situ mala kana fidee who brought this sort of opposition.

The monopolization of land by landlords, during the imperial era was not radically challenged until the year 1965. The state thereby effectively abolished the feudal traditional institutions of rist and gult, and took over the control to distribute access to land through Peasant Associations (PA). It was during that time in Salaale to show how the 1975 revolution considerably influenced the livelihood condition of landlords, peasant shows their past grievance through sang a song against them and praised the Derg regime as follows:

Afaan Oromoo         Gloss
Darguu qoobiiin saleenii you Darguu who hat crown plate
Abbaa Lafaa nyaatte sareenii the dog scoff the landlord
Darguu yaa daraggamaa you Darguu who squeeze the landlord
Loolan malee unless revolt
Lafti hin argamaa how it could be possible to control to access to land.

Similarly, Alemseged Debele collected similar song that shows the living condition of landlords and their families in Salaale Awraja as follows:

Afaan Oromoo         Gloss
Yaa galabaa shamaamee oh! the straw of wheat
Situ gamaa addaataa is white from distant
Yaa intala balabaataa you the daughter of landlord,
Situ daaraa fakkaataa you seems like ash.

After Darg came to power, all things were changed due to land proclamation of 1975. Some few Balabats turned in to shiftas (local outlaws) and fought for a time being. Regardless of their resistance, landlords were demolished. Muluu Asanuu who was the representative of Salaale Oromoo tirelessly fought against the Derg regime. This was because before the Derg regime came to power, Mulu had a political power position. For instance, according to oral informants and various archival sources, Mulu elected as a member of parliament to represent the Salaale peoples with a candidate symbol of tiger representation.

What is important to note here is that Muluu had been playing an important role since he elected as a parliament member. This makes him struggle against the military regime (Derg). Initially, the Worada governor peacefully asked him by sending the elders like Warquu Dabale, Dabale Korma, Zawde Arado, Waqtola Balcha and Adugna Robi together with seventeen milishas as arbitrator. The failure to surrender Muluu Asanuu peacefully prompted the Derg to use forces. It is said that the frequent violence in Darro goes back to the time of Gooshuu Gissilla, the great grandson of Muluu. He and his ancestor’s firm resistance and strength remembered well in tradition as follows:

Afaan Oromoo         Gloss
Ya mishingaa gammoojjii oh, the lowland sorghum,
Maali midhaanni hin biililee what a grain that never buds!
Warri Muluu Asanuu Muluu Asanuu’s folks,
Jamaran waan isaanii they began once again (banditry)
Maali zariin hin jiillee. what a folk that never pauses!.

The Ilamu clan played a vital role in capturing and giving essential information about Mulu because he killed them and confiscated their properties during and after Italian occupation for they participated in giving essential

Informants: Geergisoo and Fayyisaa.

Wibke Crewett, Ayalew Bogale and Benedikt Korf, “Land Tenure in Ethiopia: Continuity and Change, Shifting Rulers and The Quest for State Control”, in CAPRI Working Paper”, No. 91, (Washington, 2008), p.14.

Informants: Galaanee Daadhii and Shawu Boggala.

Informant: Kabbe Gissila and Mammo Balachoo.

Informant: Mammo Balacho; see also archive accessed from National Library and Archive agency (NALA), folder number 17.1.3.20, file number 17.1.3.21.06.

Assefa, p.343.
information to the Italians. Finally, the Darg’s force was able to reach the destination where Muluu Asanuu was living together with his daughter, Kababush. In relation to this, Mulu Asanu produced the following song of regret;

### Afaan Oromoo

| Line | Gloss |
|------|-------|
| Illaammuu illee nan ajjeesee | Even I killed the Ilamu [clan] |
| Haco ammoo maalan balleessee | Also what I made a crime to Haco[clan] |
| Domoftorii gadi guuree | Collected the rifles to me |
| Abbaa fi ilmaan natti duulee | Poured to me with father and son |
| Hin agarree poolsiitee | do you saw what I made your police officers |
| Warxaba keessan cicciibsee | I killed them at the field |
| Shimala keessattan dihise | I absconded in shimala[a kind of trees] |
| Ana dibbeetu na kiyeessee 2x | It is Dibe [place] which exposed me |
| Intala too yaa kabbabush | you Kababush my daughter 2x |
| Harki mirgaa dhahamnaan | If the right hand wounded |
| Harki bitaa mirga hin taatu | the left hand never be the right one |
| Beenuu gali yaa Mariidoo koo | you Marido the son of kababush go to your home |
| Ilim intalaa ilma hin taatu | the son of daughter never be once son |
| Yaa barbareeyaa bimaaniiy | Oh barbare Oh binanyi, a pepper flour dust |
| Qe’een kan Getoo Gichootti | should we abandon Geto Gicho’s home, |
| Abdaarii keenya hin gadhifiinu | we never leave our abdaarri, sacred site, |
| Jedhe Mulu Abba Giraanyi | Said Mulu Abba Giraanyi |
| Baxana yaa Shifarraa koo | Sorry, Shifera, the son of my brother |
| Ossoo wal bira Jiraanmee | it was better if we were together |
| Midhaan boqoo tokko waliin nyaaannee. 65 | And fed small spot of food. |

In addition to the Illamu clan, Alamayyoo was responsible for the capturing of Muluu Asanuu. It was during that time Muluu Asanu cursed Alamayyoo as follows:

### Afaan Oromoo

| Line | Gloss |
|------|-------|
| Yaa Alamaayoo yaa baara | You Alamayo the black man |
| Barat goodhee maalan aaraa | I do not angry what times made |
| Ya Alamaayitee | Oh, Alamaayo |
| Ya Alamaayyoo Komaando, | you Alamaayyoo of Komaando, |
| Darro Goshu nama hin baasu | Darro Goshu will not let you |
| Quba shaniin hari faandoo. 66 | make it clear cow dung in your five fingers. |
| Ani harkaa dhahamnaani | while I was shouted on my arms |
| Tufaa Urjee maacca ilaalee | Tufaa Urjee forwards to Maccab |
| Marid Aboote ilaalee | And Marid forwards to Aboote |
| Jedhe rumiichi joollee Salaale. 67 | said the great man of Salaale. |

Finally, he was brought to Garba Guracha town and was hanged publically. Thus on August 26, 1977, he was executed in front of the police station of Garba Guracha town.

Including Mulu Asanu, the Derg Regime killed high officials like Damissee Sagguu and Amdee Abarraa. Even though, Amdee Abarraa had been killed, the people still recall him in their songs as follows:

### Afaan Oromoo

| Line | Gloss |
|------|-------|
| Jororo qalla dheedee | the bull has feed |
| Qamaaxxe laggaaraa | the grass lying on the waterway |
| Marmaraimi ciisii yaa Amdee Abarraa. 68 | You Amde Abara a cruel man, you got your final consequences |

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65 Informants: Masqala Naggasaa, Abarraa, Biraanuu, Chenalow Asaffaa
66Informants: Ijaaraa, Dachaasaa and Dobocee Tuuraa.
67Informants: Ibid.
68Informants: Kololaa and Dobocee.
Here it is better to note that the Ethiopian “revolution” abolished the chauvinistic land holding system of Abyssinian feudal lords in the region under study.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:**

4.1. Conclusion

The preceding discussion attempted to present historical oral songs and poems in the cultural resistance of Salaale Oromo in response to the economic exploitation and political subjugation of peasant by past regimes. The peasant-song expresses the Salaale grievance (quuqaa) against the local state representatives or officials of babalat, who “confiscated” his land after measuring it with a “Qaalad.” By employing various genres of Oromoo oral poetry, the peasants of Salaale voice either impressions, grievances, protest, or support towards the state’s agrarian policies, the local officials, and peasants. Songs of anger, opposition and suffering are common today in Salaale work songs, religious songs, and other songs implicitly communicating grief, dissatisfaction, and grievance. Currently, people in the rural area are become modernized and youngsters are getting access to modern education. Because of this, the new generations in their quest of knowledge and entertainment would be more inclined to reading books than listening to oral tradition. This trend has its own setback in limiting the number of people who possess oral songs and poetry. Therefore, to understand this national wealth and contribute towards its preservation, these kinds of studies are very important. By conducting research every time, one could contribute to retaining the wits, beliefs, and artistic works of a given community.

4.2. Recommendations

A society cannot be fully understood without its song. The very important point worth consideration is the fear that this oral antique would one day in the future probably cease to exist. Unless these oral treasures are preserved (recorded along with their present collective feelings, they may be unnoticed, or may totally be lost in the near future. Oral historical song and the “Weelluu” poetry reflect the style life of the traditional man, order of the day. In order to treat Salaale Oromo oral songs in its own right, our focus of attention should be on the established cultural traditions and historical experiences, together with those aspects of the social and political life of the Oromo that are the most helpful sources of our inspiration and techniques. The peasants’ poetic responses to diverse past politics and to an often-abusive local administration should be studied and be appropriately considered in the state’s future.

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