

Full Length Research Paper

Analysis of creativity and creative context in oral poetry

Dereje Fufa Bidu

Department of Oromoo Folklore and Literature, Jimma University, Ethiopia. E-mail: bderejefufa@yahoo.com.

Accepted 25 February, 2013

This study aims to analyse creativity in oral poetry. The focal points are mainly three: *the way oral created and for poetry is produced, the purpose it serves and the research methods employed to diagnose these.* It begins with brief introductory analysis of the study of oral poetry in general and proceeds to a descriptive analysis of a sub-genre of Oromoo Oral Poetry. The analysis is a descriptive presentation to show the characteristics of the genre in Oromoo culture. The personality, the scene, the manner and the poems are selected to give better hint about the drawbacks of previous approaches. In fact Ruth Finnegan has initiated it in: *I hope ... this preliminary book ... will serve to introduce others to this rich field and perhaps encourage specialist scholars to take the subject for further through detailed study of particular oral poetries in their own languages* (Finnegan, 1977: xii).

Key words: Oral poetry, creativity, creative scene, creative context, contextual analysis, genre, Oromoo, geararsa, yeelala.

INTRODUCTION

Oral poetry results from mental processes to serve immediate personal, social or cultural purposes, which enforce its creativities. But oral creativity has been undermined and denied attentions. Indeed, the way to deal with and identify it remains unclear. Examining creativity in relation to context, purpose, and production gives new ideas and insights into oral poetry. Unfortunately, these pose difficulties for researchers to explore its creativities, production and dissemination. Natural settings help to disclose poets' inner emotions that enforce creativities, but are not easily available to bring better understanding. Access to creativity is much more than exploring natural settings.

This article analyses creativity in oral poetry from natural contexts, performances, and *their* texts to realise unity of purpose, manner and content with the belief poets create following traditions in reaction to immediate realities. Realities are believed to be peculiar to press them for new self-expressive poems which belong to definite genre in a culture. Here, Oromoo culture is focused.

Contexts, performances, and poems reveal poets' cognitive processes in reaction to realities. Cases demonstrate creativities and performances, classify genres, and access into the processes. Creative performance displays emotions, desires, motives, composing, and singing. These fit to a given social, cultural and historical contexts to realise objectives. Stage, poet,

audiences and their interactions and emotional intensity reveal purpose. Texts possess language patterns and literary features.

Apt methods help to discern creative essence, nature, manners, and roles of oral poetry in societies. Natural setting opens access; flexible methods and techniques detect creativities; instruments, time and critical observation enable to explicate creative realities. Studied in its social and ideological realities and contexts, oral poetry proves its resourcefulness to realise creative power and role to literature, culture, and society (Okpewho, 1992). Enthusiastically studied, oral poetry contributes to other fields of human and social sciences, which are also its resources.

Creativity seems the most important and ignored aspect of oral poetry because of language and culture barriers. Few native Africans have demonstrated their cultures' creativities except modifying concepts (Okpewho, 1992 pp.4-5). This obscures what Johann Gottfried von Herder envisioned as "... *the oral literature of a people was both the highest and truest expression of its authentic national culture and the appropriate foundation of its national literature*" (Bauman, 1986: 1).

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Folklore fieldwork is naturally joyful (Sims and Stephens, 2005:202); but that of oral poetry poses difficulties to

collect, document, and analyse. Methods, techniques and procedures have to seek ways to penetrate to oral poetic creativities and creative mentalities; the nature of creativities of a culture needs thorough analysis to adapt techniques and procedures to it. Natural scenes are helpful to discover creativities from creative contexts and powers. Generative sites and seasons for a genre need exploring as time, place and condition may provoke it. Preliminary survey helps to locate the genre of oral poetry to be researched, to specify its appropriate time, place and conditions, and its relationship with tradition. Creative methods and techniques and intensive explorations of culture, language and the nature of literary creativity can help to acquire adequate data. These lead to performance description and text analysis. Performance involves scenes, contexts and manners of compositions in the culture of a society in relation to specific situations.

Observation in natural contexts differentiates if oral poems are sung, chanted or danced and enable recording. The scene displays moods, energies and emotion governing performances. Instead of 'a direct request for' a performance researchers better 'follow up contacts at local festivals or attend public performances and perhaps make some recordings on the spot' (Finnegan, 1992:73). Getting well along with non-specialists performers and participants beforehand facilitates recording. The poets, their manners of acting in process, the audiences and their reactions, instruments and resources fuel performances, participants, and the setting and need recording.

Recording performances require attentions, skills and systems. Techniques and instruments pose difficulties; studies of verbal arts need adjustment to capture elements of performances, which may tempt ethical validities. Videotape captures many facets of the stage providing more chances of watching and listening to the performance for understanding. It preserves physical movements and their uses, their appearance on the scene, moods and emotions. These can be starters to prepare questions for interviews and group discussions. Audiotaping retains rhythm, rhyme, melody, tone, pitch and other sound imageries. Properly recorded materials can provoke remembrance in researchers once watched during live performances.

Original creative scenes can be limited, but poems are usually sung or chanted. Collecting previous creative works from and analysing in historical, cultural, and social contexts benefits the research. We can transcribe or listen to the collections repeatedly and evaluate in relation to culture and history. Speculations, assumptions, instinctual feelings and sensations can delineate thoughts about the emotions and purposes of the poets and contexts of their performances at the time. This allows development of concepts and paves ways for surveying background using questions for members of the society to provoke their thoughts. Observations of similar others are supplementary.

Culturally well versed informants piece from their

accumulated knowledge. Systematic searching, especially snowball sampling, provides many of them to acquire rich data for the study. The person from whom a poem has been collected is a starter and we can move from one to another identifying more resourceful ones. The way opens access to many with more vital information not only about what specific poems researchers have collected but also about traditions of oral poetry, culture and history of the society.

Many informants chant early oral poems; some may not remember how they get them, others do when and wherefrom they have heard, but not name the poets and reasons for creativities; still others name the poets but not the contexts and reasons of their creations. Only few could give nearly complete details of such earlier creativities; these are vital informants researchers should choose to examine poetic performance.

Verbatim sound transcription gives us a poetic text enriching meaning, provokes sense organs, and ignites interests to a researcher accustomed to dealing with text. Text is analysed for multitudes of purposes: historical, cultural or literary. Contents can be diversified, so are forms.

Exploratory aspects

It is believed that exploration of creative context, poet's experiences, and text analysis show creative process and creativity. Context adds scene, situation, emotion, tradition, and history and culture, with which the poet is well acquainted and develop personal talent from. Cross-checking of each part avoids oddity and depicts the poem's originality. Oral poet goes through process of resource analysis, coordination, composition, and performance to actualise oral poem. S/he explores and exploits culture, proceeds to performance for purpose and finishes with product. After performance, recorded or overheard sound (turns text in transcription) remains. Recitation cannot reproduce the original artistic creativity. Researchers usually capture the voice to turn to text. It is abstract process to visualise, but not quite different from writing.

Culture provides resources to create oral poetry; it moulds minds, sharpens wits, and initiates creative communications; it determines members' ways of thinking, provides right occasions and scenes, sets rules, orders, and manners of communicating meanings. These press members, generate genres of oral poetry and verify their externalisations. Immediate situations ignite oral poetry, fortify and disclose purposes. Some scenes invite or attract particular genres. Audiences listen and evaluate poets, their skills, talents and creative originalities with their purposes on scenes. They also react to and participate in creativities to enrich. These are grown from the experiences and philosophy of societies and are ways in which their verbal arts have been created, lived and served throughout their traditions.

Creative scenes are dynamic and multi-dimensional; dynamics of performance give poems life (Cancel, 2009:315). These show the role of witnessing actual performance wherein the nature and essence of poems are realised and creativities to address present realities are evaluated.

These are powerful to draw researchers' attentions. Meaningful analyses reconstruct occasions, purposes and personalities in connection with complete contexts and processes to distinguish the degrees of originalities of oral genres; motivating factors demand serious exploration and observation. Outlooks, beliefs, perceptions, fears, hopes, wishes, etc. of the society have direct bearings on individual creativities to need to be related. This originates from the notion that folklore is more a verbal art than a thing (Bauman, 1986:2).

Performance realises oral poetry as a way of communication or externalisation. Many specialties have stressed its significance in meaning communication. Sims and Stephens (2005: 128) define it as "... *an expressive activity that requires participation, heightens our enjoyment of experience, and invites response.*" Finnegan (1992: 91) says "... *fundamental key to human action and to culture, often centred round the concept of 'drama'*". Performance is also a specific "... *mode of human communication and action distinguishing this from 'merely' describing in a 'normal or everyday' manners.*" Cancel (2009: 315) confirms no verbal art exists without performance and he reveals that the techniques performers employ along with the contexts wherein the performances occur are the real dynamics of the poem. Sims and Stephens (2005: 129) further identify that the elements of performance are 'recognized setting' (assuring us it is taking place), 'participants' (including both performers and audiences), 'the details of the setting' and complex and fluid 'relationships between participants'. All these stress its significance.

The role performance has in analysis and interpretation of oral poetry is underscored in its productions as indicated above. It contains essence and functions and adds much more to the text, but most scholars have ignored. Dan Ben-Amos (1982: 27) has put this as "*The simplicity of folklore is in the eyes of the foreign beholder. Culturally, a folktale, a song, and a proverb can have as complex a system of meanings, connotations and significances, as any written work contemplated by a learned author. The lack of sophistication ... is not an inherent attribute of folk-literature.*"

Analyses of oral poetry suffer from erroneous perceptions and poor methods, skills, and experiences. They require proficiency, sensitivity, critical response to interconnect the parts. Performance demands inquisitive personalities and precise tools to catch on spot, as it never give more chances to open ways to oral poetry; the totality of performance events enriches understandings, changes perceptions, and portrays powers and intentions of poets, audiences' reactions, meanings and identities of

the oral poetic genre and the cultures. It reveals emotions and contributions of participants or audiences. Focusing on context and performance benefits the study of oral poetry strongly.

Poetic tradition is another resource to lead and guide creativity. The poet follows it in addressing the idea at hand choosing from available modes. This determines the genre along the mood, the tone, and the manner of performance; scene endorses it. Such analyses concern the way it is adjusted to the existing situations and audiences or general context. Culture and tradition are important resources and features to be analysed to understand (oral) poetry.

Poetic text is a product leftover after performance, but it is enriched with poetic artistry. Analysis of literary elements focuses on ways in which texts make meanings with linguistic beauty. In orality, important subjects, including descriptions of unique experiences undergone and feelings developed in some contexts, are preferred in poetic form. Oral poems provoke remembrance and are quoted for generations, who chant and sing them. They soothe, mitigate, ignite, incite, and reinforce feelings, emotions, and philosophy events or life challenges provoke; they show ways out of problems and locate similitude among instances. Folksingers sing oral poems; poets imitate them in writing. Oral poetry exhibits not only artistic qualities rendering happiness, pleasure, and adequacy to human mind, but also beauty, maturity, and universality showing importance to life and human culture. It's source of knowledge.

Oral poets enjoy the pleasure and satisfaction of creativity; impart experiences and understandings with poetry and its performance to their audiences. Oral poetry promotes cultural continuity and unites community, carries common values and desires and encourages identity to contribute to more creativity.

Text results of utilising and adjusting resources for purposes. Language is immediate tool, expression of ideas, and full of style; it's endowed with metaphors, imagery, allusions and symbols; diction, syntax, and tones are parts. Daily speeches are stylised to fit motives and purposes and arranged to have rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetitions, and metre. Deviation changes familiar forms to background meaning. Analyses of these aspects lead to meaning.

Methods and techniques uncover the natures of oral poetry, and the culture and literary values of the society. Proficient and versatile researchers in language, literature and culture, with aims, cognition, and sensitivity discern creativities. These help to actualise the reality of poetry from oral societies.

Reasons for shortage of descriptive investigations

Scarcity and ineffectiveness in oral poetry research are obvious. This is grave in exploring and showing creativity

and poeticising in oral poetry. It makes it remains secret to date. In proportion to its long age, variety of its genres and width of its distributions across societies, oral poetry is still discrete.

Various reasons can contribute to this fact. Primarily, its difficulty begins with its intangibility. Oral literature in general is not physical entity; its performance bound. It has strong attachment to culture and is associated with social order; this makes it stranger to the world of research and academics. Methods, techniques, and procedures are insufficient to address them and fit to their nature effectively and efficiently.

Language is another barrier; oral poetry is mostly a tradition of oral culture and indigenous societies; languages of these societies are mostly away from academic media. Africa is immense resource of oral poetry. Diversified communities and traditions produce multiple genres of oral poetry. But they are Anglophone, francophone or lusophone; their languages are not used for office work, education or media limiting reasons of studies. This alienates African languages and cultures. Their orality remains unstudied or studied unsuitably to basically erase the idea of savage mind: “*the savage custom of going naked*”, we are told, *‘has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is none.... There is no metre, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings, or arrests the passions* (Finnegan, 1970: 26). Immediate urges are lacking for studying and documenting them; scientific studies show little interests, realities and desirability. Educated members of oral societies have little time and interest; human sciences also deny oral poetry the attention it deserves: “... *oral poetry has often been ignored both in literary study and ... in the sociology of literature, and generally speaking, assumed to be merely marginal interest* (Finnegan, 1977: 2).

Methodology, skills, knowledge, and budget are obstacles. No proper method to explore individual creativities; knowledge about the nature of oral poetry and skills and techniques of exploration also pause difficulties; aspects of researchability become ambiguous. Finnegan (1970, 1977, 1992) confirms speciality, methods, time, languages and techniques are hindrances to African creative traditions to emerge as independent entities with clear roles in their contexts and manners. Culture studies in general and oral poetry in particular receive limited time and financial allocations. Few national and international sponsors are confident to invest. Data collections take long-term fieldwork in the societies to judge natures of creativities and analyse relationships among the varied elements.

CONTEXTUAL STUDIES OF CREATIVITY IN OROMOO ORAL POETRY

Oromoo Oral Poetry is rich in poetic qualities; so is it in culture and tradition and vice versa. Its poetic qualities

and linguistic beauties share a lot with music. Culture and tradition pave grounds for creativities and circulations. Analysing cultural, social, traditional, historical, creative, personal and emotional contexts displays the richness of genres of Oromoo Oral Poetry.

In Oromoo, oral poetry is a valued and highest form of expressions. It enriches social occasions and contexts and they accommodate its genres. Accordingly, various genres fit various social and cultural scenes, occasions, and contexts. Oral poetry is important medium to express emotions and feelings (Mohlig, 2004:2). Members train their minds, sharpen their wits, and develop their skills and abilities to express themselves in it. It is parameter of competition in peers (*hiriyaa/hariyaa*) as social and cultural occasions create competitive platforms for members in poetic expressions. This strengthens the desirability of oral poetry to express emotions and feelings. It creates internal motives for flourishing of the various genres and forms of oral poetry in Oromoo culture.

Performing power, imagination, originality, and beauty are apparent in performance of natural setting. These bear strong impacts on audiences and their feelings. Folkloric elements have strong cultural links. They are enforced by culture and tradition and follow footsteps of early actions and activities. Accordingly, we need to analyse the *immediate* and *ultimate cultural* and *traditional* environments. Oral poetry reveals culture, people, personalities, and their philosophy; texts are creative and literary. A framework with context and text analyses oral poetry more effectively and resourcefully.

The analysis of Oromoo Oral Poetry revolves mainly around a poem by *Fayyisaa Xanqii*.

Poem and analyses

Afaan Oromoo

Eessuma Dhaqu?

Xanqi, abbaa Fayyisaa,
Gurracha Osee Baabboo,
Jarri eessuma qabuu,
Ani eessuma dhaqu?
Firri koo marguu didee,
Alagaan na arguu didee,
Barri naa darbuu didee!

English

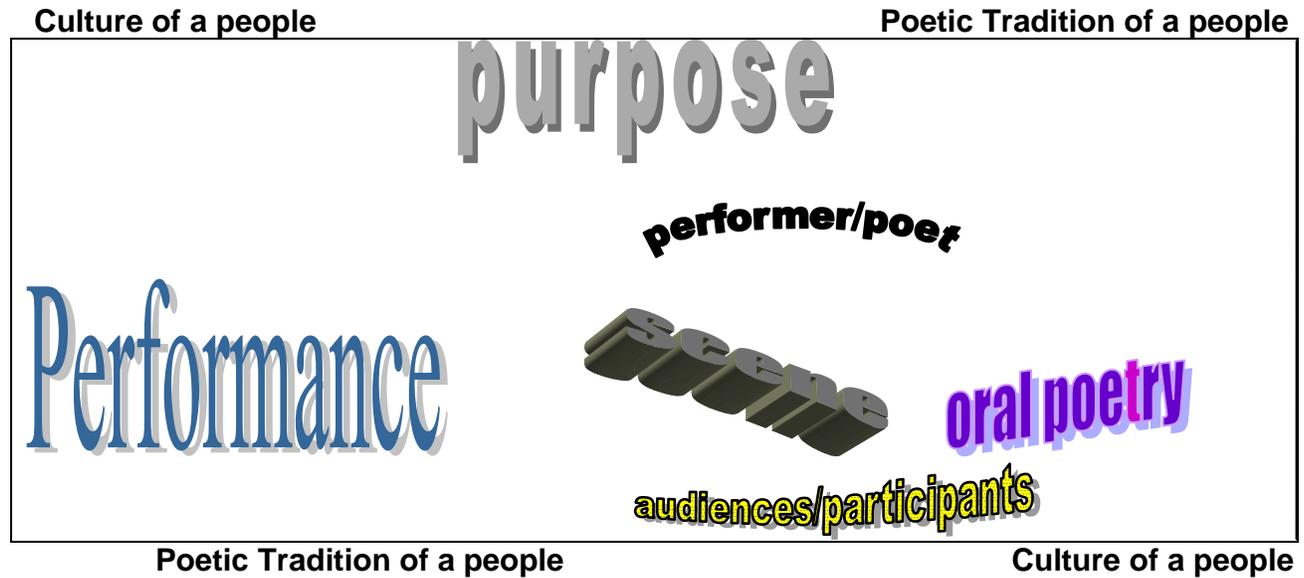
Where Shall I Go?

Xanqi, Fayyisaa’s father,
You black of Osee Baabboo,
The guys have uncle to go to,
Where shall I go to,
My kin refused to sprout,
Others refused me attentions
My time refused to come.

Framework and applications

Sketch 1 illustrates the basic framework of analysis of oral literature.

Oral poetry is deliberated on a scene for purpose and endorsed by poetic tradition and culture. It is invited by the stage/scene, whereupon performer/poet and audiences/participants meet to actualise it in some way. This is performance. At times, the poet plays the role of audiences to enjoy listening to oneself. The poem under discussion is an example as the poet performed assuming



Sketch 1. Framework of analysis of oral literature.

he was alone. The grammar or the rules of poeticizing is the immediate surrounding – poetic tradition. This comprises the genres, their features, their purposes and contents, their creators, their rightful places and stages, audiences and participants, personalities of those who are allowed to start, etc. On specific stage, poets and participants are invited; rules and procedures are fixed; orders are set allowing poeticising. Social rule and law surround and foster this from outside. Historical factors may affect these due to cultural change discrediting the former changing the creative traditions of the society negatively or positively. The totality of the culture and tradition surrounding these elements (dis-) allow the expressions of ideas. The analyses of these are contextual studies.

Poetic creativity comes from another angle. Textual framework helps to reconstruct the meaning of a literary text from its stylistic features and elements. These include critical and efficient analysis of discourse structures, language patterns, imageries, symbolic and allusive features. They can emanate from modern literary analysis to bring contents of a literary text to the fore.

Poetic context and creativity

Historical context helps to understand *Fayyisaa Xanqii's* reasons of poeticising. 1936 to 1941 was Italian occupation of Ethiopia collapsing forty years of imperial conquest and allowing Oromoo and other peoples to express themselves and exercise self-rule; revival of lost freedom allowed people to effect governance, use their languages in court and for public communications.

Fayyisaa's sons joined their uncle (*eessuma*) named *Dhugumaa Jaldeessoo*, a leaders entitled '*Kaabboo*'

(probably Italian 'Capo' to mean 'head?'). *Dhugumaa* armed people with gun, which was valued and envied, as a symbol of bravery. It had been forbidden the last forty years and remained a symbol for the elite '*naftegna*¹,' before that it was unavailable and believed to enforce the surrender of Oromoo, which many still agonize. *Dhugumaa* was trying to reverse the conquest arming Oromoo.

Many from western *Maccaa*, northwest *Oromiya*, joined the army abandoning subsistence agriculture. Clearing, ploughing, growing, weeding, taking care of crops, harvesting and others were laborious activities to be undertaken to support families and pay lords. But *Fayyisaa* was forced to undertake these activities at old age. Otherwise, he would be starved to death. He had to work somewhere during the day and look after crops somewhere else during the night. The two places were distant apart to walk and the night wait was miserable; no proper place to rest. This intensified his thoughts and provoked his memories further.

Dhugumaa's effort of empowering people was positive and beneficial; but ironically left *Fayyisaa* to misery during the last part of his life when he needed care and treatment as custom. Adults raise the young and care for elders; the young depend on parents to grow up but repay after grown up likewise. Parents are well aware their social security is entrusted to their offspring. The saying: "*Qorichi du'aafi dullumaa dhala*," is to mean "The solution to old age and death is bearing and rearing children," is meaning natural problems have natural solutions; old age and death are natural and unavoidable; but bearing and rearing children overcome them. It

¹ Newcomers with machine guns to enforce the local community to submit themselves to their system of administrations.

implies not only that the offspring takes care of older parents, but also overtake responsibilities to continue life and perpetuate homestead.

Begetting children and rearing them is considered blessing giving hope and bright future. Children reward parents, prosper homesteads, ascertain sustainability stressing innocence, honest, and light-heartedness of the lineage. If one's children help him, it is said, 'he has prospered.' Oromoo define blessing and prosperity in children; one who has many is said to be '*ayyaantuu ayyaana dhibbaa*,' 'of a multitude of luck' and in praise of such a man girls sing the following:

Afaan Oromoo	English
Qeensa ilkaaniin qoruu	Nail is cut with teeth
Maal lallaaftuun kunii	How delicate is this,
Leenca ilmaaniin lolu	A lion fighting with sons,
Maal ayyaantuun kunii!	How lucky is he!

The number of his sons being a full squad enables him to fight a battle, win enemies or avoid problems by himself. The group succeed under the efficient and effective command of their father to attain his objectives. Love and unity are implied adding up dedication and determination for the sake of others. The concept of '*ayyaantuu*,' 'lucky,' 'fortunate,' emanates from it and only few individuals are blessed with such luck. This is prosperity.

This idea backs *Fayyisaa Xanqii's* frustration. He enjoyed fatherhood caring and nurturing children, but unexpectedly denied payback. His sons' deserting him is curse, misfortune or ill fate leaving him to become hopeless; this frustration inspires creativity.

Poetic tradition and creativity

Geerarsa is one of many poetic genres of Oromoo Oral Poetry. It is popular, highly regarded, and most valued genre to persist across generations. Addisu (1999:169) confirms its persistent for three subsequent historical periods: heroic, colonial and resistance, it is 'created and recreated as the symbol of cultural identity [and] form of political protest.' This makes it a 'viable medium of artistic, verbal and musical expression firmly embedded in Oromoo social life'. The poet is called *geerara*.

Originated in heroic period, it deals with heroism, uses heroic language, recounts brave deeds and achievements, expresses and appreciates brave deeds of lineages, peers and kinship, and portrays diligence and determination through which individuals pass to succeed. It seems to grow gradually to express failed efforts as life mixes success and failure; they alternate as one succeeds and other fails. The two come to the same scene. When one recounts brave deeds and successful stories, a failed peer, whose continuous efforts deny him in luck despairs and glows with anger; he bemoans his anguish or portray his efforts or intentions. Otherwise he could die of suffocations or attract attentions of audiences

who judge him of cowardice. *Geerarsa* in this case develops into expression of anguish. Even though unsolvable it lets others understand and minimises suffocation and gives sighs of relief. Poems often reveal emotional status. These help the flourishing of oral poetry in Oromoo tradition.

The following poem is an example of a poem expressing the mental state of poets:

AFAAN OROMOO	ENGLISH
Rakkinni yeroo ammaa,	Problem of this time,
Dhibeen jabana kanaa,	Shortages of present day,
Baga ana qofaa hin ta'iin;	I am lucky not to be alone,
Utuu ana qofaa ta'ee,	Had I been alone,
Anatu kan kolfaa ta'e.	I were a laughing stock.

This is an expression of difficult circumstances. No one could trace the age and antecedents of this poem. Informants only say 'it was sung long time ago,' no eyewitness account, they heard it from those who lived before them; no one could identify the stated problems disclosed on the scene. To the question, "*Have they not told you about the problem prevalent at the time?*" their answer was "No." "*What was the social occasion on which it was poeticised?*" common answer was sharp and definite: '*daboo*,' where people work in unison.

Individuals request peers and kin to help them with works preparing food and drinks for '*daboo*'. After the day's work the benefactor takes them home to give feast. Poetic competitions occur readily, creatively, and generatively; the situation compels participants internally to express themselves and recount self and lineage's deeds. Members are motivated; failure to take part incurs shame, enticement and ridicule. Creativity has to demonstrate relevance, authenticity, imagination, and skills on the scene; no pretence or recitation here. Turns and sequences have internal laws and orders; achievements and age are criteria. Achievement is counted in brave deeds like killing (of enemy or beasts), prosperity, or other success. *Daboo's* silence departure after the feast implies a problem either with it or in the society. The scene of *daboo* is one among many to generate *geerarsa*, among the genres of oral poetry and boosts Oromoo literary traditions.

But this *geerarsa* deviates depicting a period of lamentation. He takes over from others who have poeticised and expressed problems they experience. He shares the problem but has felt shame and disguised for sometimes. Now he learns it is common, he is relieved and revealed his version in summary form. He appears fine realising his experiencing of common problem with kin and peers; if possible they seek solution or soothe it together; he does not worry whichever, as the saying: "*badiin biyya wajjinii godaansa*," (approximately translated as "Communal vanishing is considered migration,") reveals the situation.

Geerarsa follows defined style to match the purpose and feeling. It's saddening but *geerarsa* is not emotional;

no immediate solution. The poet is neither energetic nor weak, but medium tone type, mild feeling to show inability/shortage of doing/having something. Analysed textually, the first two lines begin and end with synonymous word: *Rakkina* and *dhibee* (translatable as 'problem' and 'shortage' or 'not having') depict poverty or state of lack; common problem. On line three, he says he *is lucky not to be alone*, implying the magnitude of the problem. One person would not be able to tolerate it; only when a problem is widespread, it becomes tolerable.

The last phrases of the two first lines stress the recent emergence of the problem. They are temporal referent: '*yeroo ammaa*' (*this time*)/'*jabana kanaa*' (*present day*), strange to the poet and his people; but they obscure forcing us to speculate that they fear to express openly. Fear and suspicion prevail to enforce silence. '*Utuu ana qofaa ta'ee/Anatu kan kolfaa ta'e*'- *Had I been alone/ I were a laughing stick*, showing the degree of harshness, which they conceal and live in embarrassment as they had no options. They poeticise implying its persistent and reverberating nature. The people faced during a turning point in their history to do it so time and again.

Yeelala is an Oromoo term given to such a *geerarsa* expressing feelings of deep feeling and crises. It emanates from memories of past experiences – good old days. The poet forgets here-and-now, takes leave back to the process of incidence leading him to failure, and unconsciously and emotionally expresses his thoughts with broken hearts. Sharing such feelings to others is not easy. One lives his feelings and his attitudes about issues whether success or failure. The identification of the subgenre and its nature brings us back to the main poem.

Stage of performance

Fayyisaa Xanqii lives in rural and makes living from agriculture. The activities are difficult for his age. His mind being occupied with this, he is away from home looking after crops in the middle of a night. He feels free to think aloud what has been strongly revolving in his mind for long. *He* takes the opportunity to express his grief (*yeelala*) sitting at fireside concealing himself down in the forest. This keeps confidential his criticism of the system which opens ways for his abandonment. He fears this would cause punishment for which he cannot take risk. He does not want others to hear him, but feels poeticising minimizes his tension and boredom as he stays awake during the long night.

This context inflames *Fayyisaa* to follow lyricising tradition, which originates from expeditions for hunting, trading, warfare, and others where people experience hardship and determine to overcome biological desires like thirst, hunger, sickness, tiredness, homesick and hazard. Success or failure flows from these contexts inviting happiness or grievance. Both incur powerful emotions pressing for creative expressions. Hunters

make harsh long journey to kill; successful ones express their perseverance, bravery and happiness; unfortunate ones express their indignation. Merchants carry goods and walk long distances; one profits, another loses; both express profits and losses, provokes and intensify emotions and press for expressions. Here, poetry mitigates feelings and encourages teams to have more determinations. *Fayyisaa* has experienced these as part of the expeditions. Expressions of sadness and grievances may have their roots in such situations. They have definite styles, unique language and voice qualities from which those of *Fayyisaa Xanqii* has sprouted to express frustration.

However he feels safe, *Fayyisaa* is overheard, possibly by a person hidden himself in the surrounding forest to disseminate the poem. Once the poem disseminated, it would not be a matter to verify that it is his. This shows how oral poetry disseminates and oral poets are detected publicly and uncontrollably. Oral poetry is powerful to be recited and disseminated and reiterated. It continues passing over for generations to live long. This is the way the poem under discussion has come to extend its lifespan. At the time, *Dhugumaa Jaldeessoo* heard and invited *Fayyisaa* for award. This stage paves ways for extension of its history.

Textual analyses

Textual analysis examines the ways diction, imagery and grammatical units are interwoven to form text to communicate meaning. It takes the pattern of literary analysis with which students of literature are familiar. This accepts it as work of creativity and rich in literary qualities, of which pattern the analysis follows suspending the exposure gained from the context thus far to treat it as independent text. When obligatory to exploit, contextual knowledge will be identified.

Preliminary interpretation: The poem entitled '*Xanqi, Abbaa Fayyisaa*' seems to express pain of loneliness or helplessness. Inability to have ways out of current problem is realised; no confidence of the speaker to manage; neither does he have sprouted kin to lend him hands. Others deny him attentions. He has been undergoing misery and poverty.

Linguistic stylistics analysis: With language and style a text carries meaning forward; form contributes to content, and vice versa. Analysis deals with the way it works underscoring the meaning of one in the other.

The discourse structure: *who is saying what to whom?* pave the way. The topic gives clues: *Xanqi, Abbaa Fayyisaa*. Shortened vowel comes at the end of the first word, which geminates changing position. *Afaan* Oromoo speaker understands names in addressing end in short vowel which geminates in others. So, *Xanqi* is the

addressee; addressor is a related person, implied by the addressor's seeking solutions from him. Another clue is after comma: *Abbaa* ('father'). It is addressing father of *Fayyisaa, Xanqi*, for the purpose aforementioned.

The poet is the poetic personae; his addressing of an absent person gives it power moving away from usual structure of interlocutions. This is apostrophe, a rhetorical figure, addressing someone who is absent and therefore cannot hear and help. Apostrophe gives the personae chance to think aloud and to express thoughts in a formal tone. This does with alienation in the affairs of the living; no one shares his problem, backdrops what he is expressing, his complaint of having no one to help.

The question: '*eessuma dhaqu?*' indicates confusion and entrapment and is seeking asylum out of misery. As the phrase directly paralleling and rhyming it: '*eessuma qabu*' indicates, such solution is from kin. He has already tried and failed all ways to get out and realised he cannot do unless he gets help from strong person, but his kin are not ones, others are inconsiderate. The implication seems one is helped only by prospered kin. *That is why he is forgotten.*

The poet craftily expresses his grief without overtly referring to the identities of the subjects of his criticism, saying '*Jarri*', '*the guys*' in: '*Jarri eessuma qabu/Ani eessuma dhaqu?*' which can be translated to "*The guys have uncle to go to/Where shall I go to?*" The use of vague noun '*the guys*' show escape from responsibility, to escape penalty, the inference is nearly clear.

The rhyming scheme, metre, and alliterative elements underscore theme. Repetitions stress meaning; '*refused*' ('*dide*') comes three times at expected interval, ends verses and the poem. This shows the toughening of the poet's problem, having no answer to his call for help on verse 4. He is refused ('*dide*') from all he expects: *marguu dide, na arguu dide, darbuu dide*. Parallelism also draws attentions strongly. Along with metric equality and full rhyme, it emphatically compares 'his having not' in opposition to 'others having'. This enforces the question: '*Ani eessuma dhaqu?*' This empowers the semantic significance of the poem. Addressing absentee implies have no response to the call of help from those who are here. This portrays denial of expectation that prevails throughout the poem. This realises and develops the concept of alienation and tension and provokes creativity aimed at minimising suffocations. This is what the creativity discloses.

Fayyisaa Xanqii seems to be free off guilt rightly discharging his responsibilities to his father and to his sons. Though unhappy, he has no regret; he is rather a victim of the shortage of other generation. Understanding this, he has convinced himself; his creative power and mood of *geerarsa*, implies moral level.

General interpretation

Oromoo have cultural solutions for natural problems. Old

age has been problem for childless, to which '*Ateetee*' (fertility rites), '*guddifachaa*', (adoption) and others are seen as solutions. Failures of these are considered ill-fated or curse. Parents do not experience similar problems to *Fayyisaa Xanqii*; he disproves the idea of curse as he feels he has treated his father fairly and raised children, too. At the same time he is worried about what others think of him. He is denied rewards of fatherhood that tradition states; *he* is fated to be on the wrong position of age: neither bear nor speak his feelings out. This calls back the idea of curse. *Fayyisaa's* assumption of fair treatment of his father contributes to his ways of addressing him. It implies his confidence about it and expectations of positive responses. Contrarily, he is denied the culturally constructed services elders are granted. This reverses tradition and hurts him badly and pressed him for creativity to mitigate despair. He seems to have little rooms for the progress. They dissolve established structure without substitutes. He is weak and part of previous generation and victim of contemporary system.

Whatever good intentions they can have, systems hurt people. Transitions disrupt systems, loosen structures, create vacuums, victimise people, especially, weaker members who expect supports and abruptly denied suffer trauma and get frustrated. If elders' daily lives deteriorate, their living comes to an abrupt end as they are psychologically fragile.

Fayyisaa Xanqii's addressing his father in the form of apostrophe underscores the significance of the spirit of the dead for the wellbeing of the living. In African tradition and African literature this plays important role and is usually referred to. The dead are celebrated and remembered for their contributions for the existence of the living; they are assumed to help the living with their lives; they help in seeking solutions to problems in daily lives. What might irritate them is avoided at any cost.

Summary

The poem entitled "*Eessuma Dhaqu?*" is taken as an example and studied to show the nature of creativity and creative tradition in oral poetry. The history of more than seventy years is explored through a poem by a person named *Fayyisaa Xanqii* showing life. The methods, techniques, critical enquiry and the framework allow its contexts, tradition, stage and performance to illuminate with true essence. These need to be supported by patience and perseverance of the researcher to dig out and reveal. Resourceful informants display cultural, social, historical, and literary contexts. They depict emotion, the mood, the energy, the urgency for creativity and manners of performance. The contextual and textual analyses depict cultural, historical, social and literary backgrounds of the oral poetic form. External pressure forced the poet not to express his agony publicly. The

system frightens him to go public with his feelings. The question, “*Am I cursed?*” is powerful inside, but he has no clear answer in his mind. The dilemma forces him to soothe it privately. He is too old to reverse the situation; this results in the feeling. It is difficult to discuss his feelings with unfeeling others forcing the swallowing of pain. This provokes poeticising. It also determines the style of poeticising. Internal emotions press oral poets for creativity in reaction to life (Asafa, 2004).

The prevalence of poetic tradition enforces and stimulates creativity. In Oromoo, *Geerarsa* as oral poetic genre expresses oneself and one’s feelings and is creative in nature imposing the desirability of creativity. It is respected and normally expresses strength, achievement, brave deeds, perseverance and determination. It describes the prides of self and lineage and portrays good old days.

Yeelala branches from *geerarsa* during a certain historical period to express agony and grief with which people soothe pains instead of publicly speaking prides as before. Quite away from the usual features of the main genre, *yeelala* expresses frustration, misfortune, discomfort, or shame. The poet not only complains about the existing social and political system but also about his own feelings of being cursed, unfortunate, or destined to be so, which he fears to express to others.

Conclusion

Geerarsa is performed on social stages to ascertain authenticity, relevance, creativity and originality to audiences. With it, individuals portray their lives or lives of their lineages, here creativity and achievement are equally appreciated. Competitive social occasions control and check; audience members are witnesses of the deeds and achievements proudly described; they judge and evaluate pretence, or exaggerations (Asmarom, 2006). One which passes the test of authenticity for achievement and creativity for forms and styles gets admirations and are remembered and reiterated by audiences and the community and their poets are accredited for their originality in most cases. Personalities and creative contexts go along the chances of longevity. They are references in teaching identity, history, culture and traditions.

Tradition enforces the production and enrichment of quality oral poems and genres of oral poetry. To test quality we need to apply criteria through which it should be evaluated. For this, linguistic toolkits from literary analysis portray important features and elements which build up the poem and how it communicates meaning to audiences. This allows us to understand oral poetry and its enrichment with poetic beauties and qualities. The poetic and creative traditions of the specific genre and the way it works is essential; the text alone cannot bring us to successful understanding as it is aimed at communicating ideas through live events. Groenewald

(2003) says, “... *context remains a powerful determinant for oral tradition.*”

Cultural studies need extensive surveying and intensive analyses of cultural activities. Activities occur in social, cultural, economic, political and historical milieus. Creativity is one among them to take place competitively. Oral poetry is among competitively occurring activities of culture to be influenced and promoted by various aspects of culture. It has multidimensional facets calling for diachronic and synchronic analyses. It is the way in which oral societies energise and reinforce poetry and creativity. They also create, record, and retain their history in memory for generations for which poetry is favourable. This makes it plausible to use oral poetry in study of human sciences.

Literature focuses on individuals. Feelings and emotions win human sympathies. Authors have been concerned about individuals as their central discussion. Even though societies are communal and prioritise common benefits such cases remain tempting to the societal wellbeing. What is good for general public might not be for individuals calling for careful devising of ways to minimise side-effects in an effort to benefit communities as the former can disrupt the later and put it back. This poem concerns such a matter. It might be the case that written literature has inherited this nature from oral literature.

REFERENCES

- Addisu T (1999). *Geerarsa folksong as the oromoo national literature— A study of ethnography, folklore, and folklife in the context of ethiopian colonization of oromia*. New York: the Edwin Mellen press.
- Asafa T (2004). *Theorising the present towards a sociology of oromoo literature: jaarsoo waaqoo’s poetry*. Addis Ababa: Branna P.E.
- Asmarom L (2006). *Oromoo Democracy: Indigenous African Political System*.
- Bauman R (1986). *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ben-Amos D (1982). *Folklore in Context: Essays*. New Delhi: South Asian Publishers.
- Cancel R (2009). Oral performance dynamics in AFRICAN FOLKLORE: An Encyclopaedia edited by Philip M. Peek and Kwesi Yankah pp.315-316.
- Ceruli E (1922). *The Folk Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia*. Harvard African Studies III: Cambridge Massachusetts.
- Finnegan R (1992). *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*. London: Routledge.
- Finnegan R (1977). *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significances and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finnegan R (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Mohlig WJG (2004). An Introduction. In: Catherine Griefenow-Mewis and Tamene Bitima (eds.) *Oromoo Oral Poetry Seen from Within*. Koln: Rudiger Koppe Verlag.
- Okpewho I (1992). *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Characters, and Continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Groenewald HC (2003). *Zulu Oral Art in Oral Tradition*, 18(1):87-90.
- Sims MC, Stephens M (2005). *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and their Traditions*. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Sumner C (1997). *Oromoo Wisdom Literature Vol. Ii Songs: Collections and Analysis*. Addis Ababa: Gudina Tumsa Foundation.