

# The Role of Indigenous Artisan in Socio Cultural Development: The Case of Weavers in Maccaa Oromo of East Wallagga, Ethiopia

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**Abstract:** This research explains the role of weavers in socio cultural development among Maccaa Oromo. It addresses their contribution in day to day life of Maccaa Oromo society. In addition it discussed their role in religious, cultural, social and economic activities of Oromo society. The artisan provide ritual cloths which has especial respect. These cloths have both functional and symbolic significances for Oromo society. Thus without the contribution of artisans people ritual, festival and other social event which are celebrated annually or temporary cannot be performed. During data collection, ethnographic methods such as observation, focus group discussions and semi-structured interview were employed. In data analysis, interpretive method was used to discuss the collected data.

**Keywords:** weavers, sociocultural, maccaa oromo.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Handicraft, also known as craftwork or simply craft is a type of work where useful and decorative devices are made completely by hand or using only simple tools. Usually, the term is applied to traditional means of making goods. The individual artisanship of the items is a principal criterion; such items often have cultural or religious significance. Items made by mass production or machines are not handicrafts. Usually, what distinguishes the term handicraft from the frequently used category art and craft is a matter of intent; handicraft items are intended to be used, worn, etc having a purpose beyond simple decoration. Handicrafts are generally considered more traditional work, created as a necessary part of daily life. It implies more of a hobby pursuit and a demonstration or perfection of a creative technique. Handicrafts are generally considered more traditionally created as a necessary part of daily life, while arts and crafts imply more of a hobby pursuit and a demonstration of a creative technique. (Asongu, 2013, Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2008 and Wright, 2006)

A handicraft is an item which is created by hand or using simple, often traditional tools, which serves a purpose beyond decoration. The artisan often uses tradition knowledge and her/his direct manual contribution. Handicrafts are traditionally used for everyday purposes, such as baskets for storage or transportation of goods, clothing for everyday wear, or furniture for household use. The producers of handicrafts, those responsible for finding a market for the products, and handicraft consumers comprise the handicraft industry (Rachael 2008).

The traditional handicrafts work is one of the most important economic activities in addition to agriculture. It has long history of producing the most vital utilities associated with the daily lives of both the rural and urban community. It is this sector, which supplies agricultural utilities such as ploughshares and its accessories, cotton dresses of all sorts, and leather utilities (dresses, grain container and sleeping mats). The distinctive nature of handicraft comes from the fact that these goods or services can be identified with certain tradition (Craft Council of India 2011).

In African society, handicraft work has great significance in daily lives of society. According to Bezabih (2009) and Taylor (1996) handicrafts are source of income for rural inhabitants and serves as alternative source of employment. It requires low start-up cost and local skill possessed by rural society. Furthermore, the product plays key roles in tourism development which for the country.

Similarly in Ethiopia scholars like Dubois (1996) discussed the importance of indigenous handicraft. Handicrafts are part of tangible heritage of the specific ethnic group where it produced. Thus, the products are serving as living museum of specific ethnic group. Likewise among Oromo society, indigenous handicrafts play positive role in daily lives of community. There are studies on Oromo indigenous handicraft work. Scholars like Bula (2006), Bartles (1983), Hasen (1990) and Nageso (1984) have touched indigenous Oromo handicraft. None of these researches discussed about socio cultural contribution of weavers except Bartles (1983) who touched up on it. But he did not provide its detail and real picture. Thus, social, economic and cultural roles of weavers in sustainable livelihood are not studied in detail. Hence, this research will try to bridge the gap by discussing and analysing socio-cultural and economic roles of weavers from social perspective.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on Macha Oromo of east College zone of Oromia regional state; Ethiopia. The study principally focused on qualitative research method. Data were gathered different kinds of qualitative data collection techniques like interview, observation, focus Group discussion, personal profile and document analysis were used. Key informants were identified through purposive sampling.

In this research, both unstructured and semi-structured interview were used. Through unstructured interview, different informants who know about the topic were interviewed at market place, public meeting, work place, drinking house and different ritual places. Through this technique, information about social attitude towards weavers and their social, cultural and economic significance cultural cloths were gathered.

The other interview type used in this research was semi-structured interview. It was conducted with both artisans who engage in the work and non-artisan who benefit from artisan products. From artisan information related to their skill, economy, raw materials, and their interaction was collected. On this semi-structured interview 18 key informants were selected based on time and saturation point of data. Among these, ten of them were weavers and the remaining eight informants were non-weavers who benefited from their products.

The other data gathering technique the researchers used in this research was observation. Through this method, the researchers were observed the process and procedure of producing the cloth and its design. Likewise, the researchers were observed different material that weavers used to make cloth. In addition, the researchers were observed issue like type of the cloth they produce, how they prepare the raw materials, type of person engage in the work and their workshop. This was done while weavers producing material at workplace.

Depending on time and saturation point of data, Focus Group Discussions was carried out with 24 informants who are divided into three groups. One group contains eight weavers, youth and eight non-weaver individual participants. Artisan men who are known by the skill both in the past and current time were involved in the discussion. Non weavers both women and men were also involved in the discussion. During the session of the discussion, the researchers recorded their sound and take field note. In this research, the interpretative approach from both emic and etic perspective were utilized. All important information are transcribed and interpreted in descriptive and narrative form.

Before getting in to field, a written letter was secured from Jimma University for concerned body in study area. Oral or written agreement were made with research participants. The researcher considered ethical value and socio-cultural norms of the host community. The researchers ensured privacy and confidentiality. The research participants are involved in this research by their will.

## 3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 3.1. Brief description of indigenous handicraft:

Handicraft is an ancient practice which is as old as the human civilization. What archaeologists over the years have excavated and discovered in different parts of the world is the remnants of handmade objects. These materials reflect the culture, tradition and history of a user and place which lived long after the culture has undergone modern transformations Luque (2006).

According to Robertson (1961) historically, the earliest stage of every creation was a piece of handicraft since every object was made with hands, using physical human skills. This is due to the absence of automation or technology available to make anything mechanically. The writer argues that, after development of technology handicrafts improved and adapted according to environmental conditions, eventually becoming customary and accepted as an art that reflects the artistic sense, feelings and cultural characteristics of a society.

Originally craft was an art that began out of need and necessity of man for his own use (Robertson 1961; 29). But steadily, it evolved into a decorative art. According to this writer, the transformation was introduced due to industrial revolution in the nineteenth century fulfilled the functional and utilitarian needs of man. On the other hand Kumar (2010) discussed that people pursue handicraft as a hobby and as a form of art to please their senses and as an expression of their creative facilities.

For World Intellectual Property Organization (2003), handicrafts are products which encompass a vast variety of goods made of diverse materials. This diversity makes it incredibly difficult to give a satisfactory definition of the material content, technique of production and/or functional use of craft products. For Barber and Marina (2006) traditional handicrafts are products significant to the country where they are made, due to skill, tradition, culture, and local materials used. This indicates that handicraft is evocative and get acceptance among producers and users who share one culture. It indicates identity and creative skill of one ethnic group those use it in their daily lives.

As UNESCO (1997), clearly put the definition and significance of handicrafts is differ from country to country. This is due to raw material and cultural variations exist from one place to another place. Their special nature derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic and creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, and religiously and socially symbolic and significant.

### **3.2. The handicraft as cultural and socio-economic development:**

Handicrafts play important role in representing and preserving culture and traditions of a country or region of producer and consumer. According to Muller (2011) indigenous handicrafts are a substantial medium to preserve traditional art, heritage and culture, traditional skills and talents which are associated with people's lifestyle and history. According to this explanation handicrafts are unique expressions of both tangible and intangible cultural heritages. The writer also clearly explained that the handicraft marks identity of specific groups.

According to UNESCO (2007), handicrafts are a part of the culture of a nation or ethnic group and represent a key component of socio-economic life. According to this account, beyond their aesthetic and cultural dimensions, handicrafts present several interesting socio-economic characteristics. In addition the UNESCO explained that indigenous handicraft is used to reflect basic ideas, mental images and culturally prescribed ways to do things. Similarly regular occurring patterns of different material items represent ethnic groups which formed the interpretative basis for assigning meaning to material culture and the archaeological record.

As Jena (2010), stated that symbolic representations of handmade object has existed throughout modern human history and among peoples of the world. According to his research objects have both tangible and intangible manifestations of cultures. Comparative studies of cultures and event chronological studies within the same culture, have informed researchers of the complex cultural interactions that have yielded creations that express, on the one hand, a permanence of skill in vernacular arts and, on the other, the dynamism and re interpretative ability of artisans have adapted handicraft skill and forms to match their developing socio-cultural realities.

### **3.3. Handicraft and employment:**

Handicraft is an ideal employment option in the rural area. For Rachael (1999) indigenous handicraft work is small scale and is most often home-based job. In addition, the writer discussed that the raw materials used to produce handicrafts are usually found locally and the methods of production are often simple. Thus it is ultimate for entrepreneurs who lack start-up capital for other occupational. Similarly Erande (2007), supports the above idea, as he stated indigenous handicrafts do not require huge amount of money to start the work, since most of the work relies on human skills and a basic set of tools. The other capital investments required (labour, raw material or infrastructure) are also low. The low capital investment requirement of this work presents a very attractive proposition to the developing economies.

By their very basic virtue, the traditional crafts industry has a high demand of labour, thus contributing to a high employment. This may be a very important factor to consider, especially in developing countries with high unemployment rates. The potential for high employment of traditional crafts not only helps reducing unemployment, but it also helps to reduce the mass migration to urban areas by creating sustainable jobs in the rural areas (Erande, 2007).

According to Bula (2000), the indigenous handicrafts work is a home-based industry, which requires minimum expenditure and infrastructure to establish. He added that jobs need minimal cost and the producer uses existing skills and locally available raw materials. On the other hand sadykova (2012) discussed that indigenous handicraft is more important activity in rural societies especially for poor. In addition he explained the sustainability of handicraft work in socio economic development. Income generation through producing handicrafts does not disturb the cultural and social balance of the home or the community as well as biodiversity. According to Erande (2007), the indigenous handicraft has not only low initial investment requirements, but they also have the potential of a high returns. Furthermore, he explains the role of handicraft in tourist attraction, and via the potential for export to other countries.

However, according to Sood (2002), the traditional values inherited in artisan work is neither properly appreciated by policy makers in the social and economic development process nor by craft producers in developing countries. Likewise Sadykova (2012) discussed that indigenous handicrafts are poses a great development potential, the true value has not been fully exploited. Instead, it has been lost due to expansion and promotion of industrial good.

#### 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

##### 4.1 Contribution of Artisans:

Artisan people among the Oromo in general and weavers in particular play great role in day to day life of Maccaa Oromo society. They play decisive role in religious, cultural, social and economic activities of Oromo society. The artisan provide ritual materials (cloths, ornament). These materials have both functional and symbolic significances for Oromo society.



Pic.4.1 Weaver weaving cloth

pic,4.2 product ready for use

pic 4.3 elders wear cloth on social event

##### 4.2 Religious Contribution:

Weaving activity contributes a lot in the religious life of Maccaa Oromo community. Cloth made for religious purposes range from those that are used in the *qaalluu* house to those used for Oromo religions *waaqeffannaa* and other ritual ceremonies. Followers of *waaqeffannaa* religion and different individual or group who participate in different social event wear cultural cloths for the purpose of worship. Besides, Limmu, Ebantu and Giddaa ayyaana Oromo people wear traditional fabrics and jewelries to go to ritual event. This aspect of enculturation has encouraged people of the study area to be more involved in ritual activities. In Maccaa Oromo in general and study area in particular, it is a common practice to find people singing and dancing in the ritual event by wearing different design of cultural cloths. Galdi,

samaxe and other cloths are also keep in *qaalluu* and various homes for protection against evil spirits. The other are keep for peace, health and swearing of oaths. Products of weavers are therefore very important in the religious life of Oromo people live in east wallaggaa zone.

Among Oromo society in general there are various institutions. These institutions are generalized under Gadaa and *Qaalluu* institutions. Even though they are working to gather, *Gadaa* institution mainly works issue related to political activities where as *Qaalluu* institution mainly works issue related to religion. Among the Oromo these institution support each other, work to gather, they complement each other in socio-cultural and economic activity of Oromo society in general and Limmu, Ebantu and Giddaa Ayyanaa Oromo in specifically.

In these institutions, the Oromo artisans in general and weavers in particular play principal roles. They provide ritual cloth like *galdi*, *qoloo/dubbuqqoo*, *samaxee*, *wandaboo* and *sabbata* for the leader and participants.

*Galdi* is sometimes called *qomee qomaa*. It is a big cloth which wore by men. This cloth is wore on upper part of the body. The wearing style of the *galdi* is known as *olгаа*. Mainly the *galdi* is wore by Oromo religious leader/ *qaalluu*/ and Oromo political leader / *Abbaa Gadaa*/. While conflict resolution, blessing, cursing and other ritual event, *Abbaa Gadaa* wears this cloth. Similar to this *qaalluu* also wore *galdi* while performing ritual activity like blessing, naming child/ *ammachiisaa*/, *muuduu*, (daub), praying for peace and fertility. On the other hand Oromo elder also wear *galdi* during *jaarsumma*, ritual, funeral, and marriage ceremony. In addition to this the elder wear this cloth while they bless their child.



**Pict, 4.4 Elders wear cultural cloth on Jaarsumma (Picture taken by Waktole Hailu)**

*Galdi* is considered as sacred cloth, it is symbol of decontamination, as Oromo view the God or creator is holy. Thus, somebody who pray the Waaqa (God) should be purify before he/she appear in front of him. It is believed that, unless he/she purifies his/her self the Waaqa does not hear his/her pray. The *galdi* is considered spiritually as holy cloth. Thus is why people wear *galdi* during pray or ritual event. It is sacred cloth which is mandatory for *Qaalluu* or Oromo religious leader during ritual celebration. Unless, it is believed that the ritual does not be full without wearing *galdii*; the Waaqa cannot hear the voice of priest and participant.

The other ritual cloths provided by weavers is *samaxee*. It is one of the cloths wore by *qaalluu* /Oromo religious leader/. The *qaalluu* wear /rounds his hair with samaxee on his head.the hair of the *Qaalluu* should not expose to human eye; it is always covered by samaxee. *Qaalluu* does not shave his hair before anointment. Therefore, he hides his hair by *samaxee*. Thus in the beginning *samaxee* was used to cover unshaven hair of *qaalluu*. But latter on or through gradual process it becomes symbol of *Qaalluu*. On the other hand, the *qaalluu* wear white long cloths made by weavers which is known as *dubbuqqoo*. This cloth is sometimes called *kittaa*. It is wide and long cloths. In wearing *kittaa*, they tie their back by thin long piece of cloth known as *sabbataa* (belt).



**Pic 4.5 Qalluu wear galdi on aseennaa ritual (picture by Waktole Hailu)**

#### **4.3 Colors of Cultural Dressing Made by Weavers and Its Symbolic Meaning:**

Cultural Cloths provided by weavers have various colors. Among these the well known colors are called *ximbirii* 'which means 'mixture of various colors'. Most of the time, the colors are mixed from *jaanoo* (red), *gurraattii* (black), *adii* (white) and sometime yellow colors.

Beyond its physical beauty, the colors of the cloth and cloths themselves have symbolic meanings among the Maqaa Oromo society. The colors of the cloths are highly related to Oromo socio-cultural and religious philosophy. In Oromo culture, black color symbolizes creator or *Waaqa*. In blessing, Oromo says:

*gurraacha garaa garbaa, black God huge as ocean*

*Leemmoo garaa talilaa,... benevolent holy heart*

*nu gargaari ... help us ...*

Similarly in prayer Oromo says "guddicha giddii hin qabne gurraacha moggoo hin qabne nu gargaari ..... " which means 'omnipotent who cannot be abused, black who have no any equivalent, please help us, keep us, give us peace rain and prosperity.'

On ritual event, Oromo society slaughter or sacrifice black animals like sheep, goat and bull. Similarly, for *ateetee* ritual, Oromo offer black cows as gift for Qaalluu. Animals of black colors are preferred than other. Therefore for black colors has high position, respectful since it is related to Oromo God. Black symbolizes issue related to creator. *Qaalluu* are considered as sent from *Waaqa* and he is holy or sacred. In this way his cloth related to him and the cloth symbolize holiness. On the other hand, *qaalluu*'s cloth is also mixed with red color. It symbolizes sware, hopefulness, it also symbolizes fire; something by which Oromo live, something by which Oromo cook food, on the other hand it shows strength, bravery and power. Likewise the white color shows life, living together in peace and love on this earth. Using in common what God gave for human being like water and milk.

The producers of the cloths are called *shammaanee* /weavers/. The artisan people among Oromo prepare it from cotton and colored yarn. Local artisan / weavers produce by local knowledge they got from their father through observation and

face to face interaction. The production material like arbi, *kolloo* and *safafi* are also local materials which are produced by local expert

Since ancient time the weavers has been producing cloths and benefit themselves and local people. It is origin trace back to the origin of *qaalluu*. Weaving, iron smiting, tanning and pottery making are started from *qaalluu* house. Their origin is qaalluu center. Thus whole Oromo cultural cloths are originated from *qaalluu* and through gradual process it modernized and produced by modern industry.

#### 4.4 Relation between Weavers and Qaalluu:

Weavers and Qaalluu have great link. Before the coming of modern cloth from foreign culture, Oromo wear *qomee*, *qoloo*, *kittaa*, *galdi*, *dubboqoo*, *sabbat*, *wandaboo* and *gomboo*. These cloths are called *harkan fo'aa* (manual production). These cloths are prepared by local weavers; both the leaders and participant wear these cloth on different social events. In addition, like other ordinary cloth it helps to cover the body and protect cold from the body.

Weavers produce the cloth from cotton by using local material and indigenous knowledge they inherited from their ancestors. Women spine cotton and brought to the weavers. The weavers wove it and give back to them by taking his labor fee. The Limmu Oromo society wear the cloth both during day time and night time while sleep. Oromo also wear the cultural cloth during ritual ceremony, the *qaalluu* wears it while performs ritual activity. Thus the cloth viewed as sacred.

All cloth wear at *qaalluu* house, cloth of *qaalluu*, cloth of *shanee* and *salgee* are supplied by local weavers. These people and their cloth are high position among the Oromo society; they have respect and considered as consecrated. It is taboo to touch by everybody, it is only permitted for those people who do not have *makataa* (sin). It is allowed for unmarried boy and virgin girl to touch, arrange and wash the ritual dressings of *Qaalluu*. These ritual cloths have their own place in *qaalluu* house. Cloths reserved at sacred places prepared for them.

The sacred cloth used in *qaalluu* house are come out and washed twice a year. They used only on two known ritual ceremony performed in spring and winter. During these ritual celebration the *qaalluu* wears and, bless the community, pray for peace and fertility and curse evil spirit.

As it is taboo to touch the same is true for wash, whole people are not allowed to wash. It permitted for those who are free from *makataa* (sin). Man or women who have done sexual intercourse never allowed touching or washing. In addition, the person who ate food taboo like egg, hen and among crop talba at least after one month could not touch the cloths. This means, man or women should be free from these food at least for one month. On the other hand, women or girl who have (*daraaraa maaram*) ministration, do not permitted to touch or wash the cloth.

After the ritual event ended, the cloth wash and put back to their usual place prepared for them in *qaalluu* house. People who are free from *makataa* take and wash it. It is washed by milk of cow. If there no enough milk of cow, it can be washed by *hora* (natural salty water) and milk of cow by mixing each other. After it washed, it stay outside up to 14 days. Until it dry it delay sacred place. Till then, it kept. After it dry well they put back to its original place by rounding to small size.

If the security of the cloth do not kept (if the *makataa* touch the cloth) it is believed that misfortune will meet the one who wears the cloth. It hurts the *qaalluu* himself. It may couse disease, lucks peace, fertility and other problem on the body of the leaders. On the other hand, if it is touched by sinful people the god do not hear the pray and begging of the leaders. Not only the one who wears the cloth, but also it hurts the one who touches knowingly that it is taboo to him/her. He or she may lacks peace and fertility; his family may meat challenges, but if somebody touch without knowing that it is taboo to touch is not harm him. Since it unknowingly act it is the god will forgive for him or her.

Maccaa Oromo society respect and fear the sacred cloths produced and supplied by weavers. Among the study area, the cloth by itself is viewed as *qaalluu* himself. First while it brought it is baptized by the blood of five animals. Blood of ox, cow, young cow both male and female and one animal which have taboo is also added. Baptism of the cloth by the blood of these animals by itself make it powerful and respected. Thus it has high respect among Maccaa Oromo society. These sacred and respected cloth is provided by weavers.

#### 4.5 Symbolic Meanings of Blood, Milk and Hora in Relation to the Dresses:

Baptizing by blood: baptizing the cloth by the blood has great symbolic meaning in Maccaa Oromo society. One it protect people from bleeding some body. The one touch or wash the cloth should not kill and pour blood. The other and major symbolic meaning of baptizing the cloth by blood is that making the cloth powerful. It helps that the speech of the leaders can be heard to Waaqa. It enable Qaalluu to receive from Waaqa (God) what he prayed and discard what he cursed. It believed that if somebody pray, beg, give thank for god by wearing these cloth, the Waaqa will hear and do accordingly for themselves, society, for peace and fertility.

On the other hand washing with milk and hora has also its own symbolic meaning. Hora (salty water) is one of the precious things among Maccaa Oromo. It has special test which is different from ordinary water. It is considered as gift of Waaqa for Oromo. It is not artificial, but natural gift of Waaqa that helps to keep peace of society, bring fertility, and also help as medicine to save animals and human being. These has great position in *qaalluu's* work. In *qaalluu* house *eebicha*, *baala hoomi* and hora are used as medicine. Mixing together by striking three of them the Qaalluu curse *gomattuu*, *morfattuu*, *tolchituu*, *addoomattuu* who wish the loss of human being, family and fertility. Thus the hora is by itself is medicine. If the *makattuu* or evil spirit touch the cloth it protect the user from evil spirit. Thus, way the sacred cloths are washed by hora (salty water).

The second category of cultural cloth mainly known among Maccaa Oromo is cloth that the community wear on different social occasion. Different social event that carried out annually, monthly, or weakly have their own cloths to be wear. The participant involve in the event by wearing cloth which is appropriate for the ritual. In the area ateete ritual ceremony which is celebrated weakly on Thursday very common. As Oromo worldview, the Thursday is the day of women. On this day the women do not eat regular food. They eat crop which is uncrushed. They eat grain like maize wheat, barley, bean and peace. On this day the women wear bale, *harkaan fo'aa*, and *dubbuqoo* and worship Waaqa in the form of praying and thanks giving till san set.

On the other hand, men also wear different cultural cloth on different ritual ceremonies and other social events. Since cultural cloths are believed as sacred cloth on worship, ritual activity and rite passage the participants wear it.

#### 4.6 Weaving and Poverty Alleviation:

Weaving has great contribution in poverty reduction in Maccaa Oromo community. Weavers for example produce *bullukko*, *wandaboo*, *galdi*, *samaxee* and *sabata* and sell to meet their own financial needs and those of their families. The cloths produced by weavers are sold in almost all rural and urban towns of Limmu, Ebantu and Gidda districts. Especially during different ritual ceremony, the products of weavers are highly needed by the community.

Traders and widow women travel long distance from town to village where weavers are there and buy different cultural cloth providing weavers with means to care of their children's educational needs, feed their families as well as meets their healthy needs of themselves and their family. Furthermore other traders including youth men and women engage in trading of raw materials used in weaving. They brings raw materials from other neighboring district and region and sell to weavers and other people who are shaping raw materials for weavers by getting profit. Raw materials like color yarn and silk brought from Gidda Ayyaanaa. The local weavers buy from them and weave cloth and sell to consumer the final products.

On the other hand cotton which is the major raw material for weaving activities is mainly brought from Beneshangul Gumuz region which bounded Limmu district to the west direction. Gumuz are known by cotton production at Abbay River Valley. But they do not have the skill of changing it to the final production cloth. Thus they bring their products to the neighboring district to; Limmu and Ebantu which part of Oromia regional state. Specifically *Qeelloo* market which is found in Ebantu district but close to Limmu and Gumuz region where cotton mainly produced is well known by cotton trade. Traders of both districts /Limmu and Ebantu/go to *Qeelloo* market either for trade or home utilization. The traders resell it in their local market by gaining profit.

It went on that many times the demand for these objects always superseded their supply because fewer people are engaged in this activity when compared to the past. This is due to the fact that many young men prefer to get involved in formal education, while others who do not go to school migrate to the urban areas in search of greener pastures or wider opportunities. For such traders it is the major income source by which they survive. The other people who do not resell



the cotton they brought from *Qeelloo* market spine and take it to weavers in order to weave for them by taking their labor fee. The owner take the cloth by taking labor fee for weavers and either use in home consumption or sell it to market. In this way weavers and number of non-weavers get benefits from the weaving industries by which they supports themselves and their children basic needs.

On the other hand, non-weavers who have skill of making raw material by which weaving activity is performed like arb (loom or traditional machine) *calii*, *ribuu*, *bubuttuu*, *daajoo* and *kolloo* make and provide to weavers. These skillful people make these materials from local materials by using their local skill. The weavers buy this material from these people by balanced fee. These artisans also supports their life, their children and family by income they earns from selling these materials.

It benefits not only the providers and sellers of the material but also the purchaser (weavers). The weavers get the materials by low price and weave the cloth on which their life depends. The weavers sell their final products to consumer at their workshop or at local market. By this activity their supports their life, local people and their family. Thus the weavers serve helps themselves on one hand and supports the local people on the other hand. They are the source of the employment for many people live in Limmu, Gidda and Ebantu Oromo especial jobless and poor people which has no funds to create their own work. In this, the weavers among the study area Oromo contributes a lot for socio cultural and economic development of Oromo community.

The role of weaving activity in poverty alleviation is shown in the Oromo oral poetry; *geerarsa* as the following:

Deega koo yaa farrisaa  
 Turi amman si fannisaa  
 Mukarbaa daraaretti  
 Ima abbaan abaaretti  
 Dubartii jirbii hin foonetti  
 Dhirsaa niitii hin moonetti  
 Oh my hazardous poverty  
 I will crucify you soon  
 On bloomed tree  
 On son who cursed by his father  
 On woman who does not weave cotton  
 On husband who could not lead his family

From the above oral poetry, from the first and fifth lines, we can understand that weaving cotton is one of the way to alleviate poverty. It is culturally divided that weaving is the work of women. As the oral poetry explains, the women who could not weave cotton is under hazardous poverty. Even, it is pride for women to weave cotton. The women who could not weave cotton are despised in community as unwise, indolent and disrepute to her husband.

In general weavers play great roles in alleviation of poverty. Weaving that had existed for long time contributed to the dressing needs of Oromo people. In artist work different non weavers are beneficiary from the proceeds of the activity. While some workers gather raw material, whereas others are involved in tertiary stage of production. Those who gather raw materials like arb, cotton *bubuttuu*, *ribuu*, silk *kolloo* and who spine, separate seeds from cotton, arrange material for weaver, while the weavers changes the cloth in the desired shape for final products.

Weaving and trading raw materials and final products generate a lot of money for weavers and Oromo society. The cloths are used in ritual, worshipping event. These cultural cloths are not only used to protect body but also it has cultural value. Among Maccaa Oromo society, some cultural cloths are considered as sacred. Such cloths are used in ritual ceremony like worshipping, thanks giving, praying, cursing, blessing ceremony and other religious celebration. On the other hand, products of weavers, are bought for their aesthetic beauty. Some other are bought because of the status they have in society.

#### 4.7 Social Contribution:

Beyond being a source of life for local traders, weaving industry helps to link Oromo and Gumuz. The two nations have different language, culture, history, way of life and social background. The Gumuz call their customers by the name *michuu*. The pack of cotton carrying by one person is called *ciilgee*. They sell one *ciilgee* to their *michuu*. They love, respect and give their food which they brought from their house at market to their *michuu*. They do not sell cotton to other buyer except to their *michuu* once become *michuu*. Thus every Oromo traders those travel from Limmu and Ebantu district to *Qeelloo* market have their own from whom they buy cotton. Thus the cotton trading interlinks the two ethnic groups for long time in history.

The weaving activity plays a great role in interlinking different nations, those have different culture, language, color and environment. It helps that Oromo and Gumuz live together in peace by respecting the diversity exist between them.

#### 4.8 Weaving as Surviving Strategies:

In Maccaa Oromo cloths are produced to meet the needs of the people. Even though, some cloths are produced for their aesthetic beauty, some go beyond beauty but rather are symbolic, while others carry with them the history of the people. The artistic work weavers reflects their everyday activities and in order to meet their needs, they look around their environment and get the materials which are used for their artistic productions.

On the other hand, weavers are creative enough to be able to fashion simple and complex items in order to meet their basic needs. Before the introduction of the "So called" modern cloths like the blanket, jeans, coat, overcoat and headscarves the weavers already produced these items from cotton. Worth noting is the fact that these objects did not only effectively serve the purpose for which they were made at that time, but are continuously being used today. They are produced without support of modern technology and shows weavers skill and ability to produce those necessities of life that enhance their general wellbeing. This can be viewed as a basic needs framework as an approach through which the indigenous people make use of the resources they have to fashion complex things that help to improve their general welfare and contribute to sustainable development.

Weaving industry plays a basic role to the survival of Oromo society in general and Maccaa Oromo in particular. Given that it is an enclave area with poor road and communication networks; the people are aware of their difficulties and have resorted to their environment for survival. However with the increase in changes in the community, new and cheaper goods are being introduced in the area with the younger generation neglecting the local or traditional goods in preference to the imported goods. When compared to the modern one, the cloth produced by weavers are often more durable than the imported goods and for that reason those objects are still being used today. The urban settlers from Limmu, Giddaa Ayyaana and Ebantu still buy locally made objects and take them to urban areas for home use. The picture below is that of some cloths which are made by weavers and are highly used in day to day life of community of study area.

#### 4.9 The Role of Weavers in the Preservation of Cultural Heritage:

The Limmu, Ebantu and Giddaa Ayyaana Oromo community appreciate a cultural message, resulting from their multiple ancestral origins. They meet to offer sacrifices to the ancestors, feast, and play their decorations and also to discuss matters of the community.

Rituals of various kinds are also practiced in study area Oromo community. They include not only the various worship rites but also the rites of passage, atonements, purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication ceremonies, coronations and others. Rituals in Limmu, Giddaa and Ebantu Oromo usually have a symbolic value and are usually prescribed by the traditional religion or by the tradition of the community. It should be noted here that all these secret societies and rituals are only possible with the use of arts and handicrafts objects cultural cloth in particular.

Weaving industry is an activity through which Maccaa Oromo community excelled themselves for long years. It is the domain of a variety of traditional dances exhibited during cultural manifestations. Some of these prominent dances are *sirba* (song), *geerarsa* and other oral narration. Though some of them are under a little bit modernized they serve as the documented history. For this, performers the weavers have been able to produce costumes and other dancing instruments which are used for these traditional dances. Some of these costumes are: *wancaree*, *wandaboo*, *balee*, *kittaa*, *marata*, *sabbata*, and other instruments like drums which is made of goat skin and carved wood. Other instruments include traditional fabrics, *den guns* and different kinds of masks. These instruments add much fervor to the dances and make the Oromo culture very unique.

According to respondents productions are used to differentiate people's status in Oromo. During social occasions, they cloths of different design and color. Such cloth used show social status of individual participants. For example the cloth wore by *qaalluu*, (which) is usually the biggest, is carved with special design which anyone will recognize once in a social gathering and only the *qaalluu* has the right to wear. This means that the traditional status attached to that cloth is not based on one's academic or social background.

Again, among the Oromo Abba Gadaa has his own cloths which is used to herald the position he has in society. In addition to special cloth he wear on his body Abba Gadaa wears *ruufa* on his head which is the symbol of power. The cloth shows the greatness and royalty he has in society. These messages are usually understood by the Oromo society and other who knows Oromo culture and history.

Though there is no properly organized museum in the study area, where cultural cloths are collected, some of informants told me that the products of weavers can be tourist attraction. Over the years some tourists have been attracted by the various artistic collections kept in palaces and in the homes of some notable men. This touristic activity brings in income to the area there by boosting the economy. The presence of tourists also boosts other businesses like restaurants, inns, bars, etc. It is regrettable to note that this area loses most of its valuable artistic works to foreigners who buy and take away.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the study area, weavers contribute greatly in the social, cultural, economic and even political development of community. In spite, of the international conventions and declarations on the protection of cultural property, most of the Limmu, Ebantu and Gidda Oromo valuable and expensive works of artisans are presently found. However, much still needs to be done, to improve and valorize these skills if the much desired sustainable development has to be achieved.

Firstly, one of the most effective ways will be to guarantee that the bearers of art and handicraft skills continue to further develop their knowledge and skills and transmit them to younger generations. Therefore, artists have to be identified and given official recognition. Besides, appropriate training whether in formal educational institutions or through direct and traditional master/pupil apprenticeship is essential in order to ensure that the knowledge and skills are transmitted from the artists to the younger generations. In this light, community centers should be established in different area of the districts. In addition to this workshops offering to teach basic art and craft skills in a short period of time is also needed to promote it.

Secondly, development planners, policy makers and professionals should consider integrating cultural values in the development process. That is, each local African industry should be allowed and motivated to develop and expand. In relation to indigenous arts and handicraft industries, our schemes of work in schools should be developed to integrate our local skills. This will make our educational system to reflect our local realities and experiences.

The government and Non-Governmental Organizations should fund artistic activities to enable the sector grow and create employment opportunities. This will improve living standards and skills will easily be transmitted to future generations. Again, there is need to construct a museum where art objects could be collected and kept. In addition, research and documentation is also necessary as through it will be possible to know the art and handicraft skills that had existed many years ago, those that are extinct and those that need to be valorised.

NGOs working in the area of conservation of wild life and forest should design programmes for training artists, and also how to nurse and plant tree species that are good for artistic work since they are getting extinct as a result of deforestation. This will guarantee a continuous supply of materials for the production of art and handicraft objects. A network of artists should be created to ensure that artists respect the norms of their profession and equally determine the prices of the objects produced. This will help the sector to function well and in an orderly and responsible manner. Besides, a network of that nature will help identify the real artists and those who are mere adventurers in the field. Through this network, objects produced could be advertised so that there will be a constant market for the finished products.

Finally, the artistic productions of Oromo people need to be valorized to permit youths in this region to stop their inclination towards western mode of education and strive to acquire skills that will access them to socio-economic insertion and active life.

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