

## Coffee Ceremony of the Macha Oromo in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia

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### Abstract:

*This article deals with coffee ceremony of the Macha Oromo in Jimma zone aiming at investigating its cultural and social significances. Ethnographic methods like observation, focus group discussions and interview were used to collect data. Descriptive and interpretative approach was extensively exploited to analyze and synthesize the data. Barbara Fiese's theoretical underpinnings, which basically focused on the family mealtime, was used to frame and interpret first hand data for coffee ceremony is a similar context. The finding of this study reveals that coffee drinking is deeply ceremonial and serves many social and cultural purposes. It is the stage on which different social issues are discussed, information is exchanged, solidarity is strengthened, children are socialized, norms and values of the society are audited, information is exchanged, peace is lamented and discussions are held. Thus, the latent function of coffee ceremony, bringing people and issues to one stage, is highly valued among the people of the study area. Therefore, coffee ceremony should not be seen merely as a place at which coffee is drunk and people relax; rather, it ought to be regarded as the stage serving many social, cultural and political purposes.*

**Keywords:** Coffee, Ceremony, Jimma, Macha, Oromo.

## 1. Introduction

According to Mohammed (1990) Macha is one of the Oromo moieties who dominantly live in central, western and southwestern part of Ethiopia. Macha established the confederacy of four called *afree*, and the confederacy of three called the *sadacha* during the 16<sup>th</sup> c. The *afree* confederacy includes Hoko, Chaliya, Guduru and Liban whereas the *sadacha* were the Suba, Obbo and Hakako.

According to Abreham (2012), Jimma refers to the area west of the Gibe River and east of the Gojeb River, what is now the Jimma administrative zone of Oromia. 'Jimma' is an eponym originating with a man called Jimma Sirba, who was the first to settle in the area. Although today the name Jimma refers to all of the Oromo of the Gibe, it was said to have originally referred only to five clans (local term: *gosa*), the descendants of Jimma Sirba. These were the Qore, Harsu, Lalo, Bilo, and Badi. These five clans are said to have been consolidated into the kingdom of Jimma Kaka in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, which was later named after its founder, Jimma Abba Jifar. The other four clans, namely Hagalo, Sadacha, Hariro and Batu became the small kingdoms of Gera, Gomma, Guma, and Limmu. These, together with Jimma, constituted the Five Gibe States in the 19<sup>th</sup> C.

Trimingham (1952), Eshete (1993), Mohammed (1994) and Lewis (2001) attest that the Jimma and the Oromo of the former Five Gibe States in general, underwent early changes in three important spheres: they became sedentary agriculturalists, developed a monarchical political system, and subsequently embraced Islam. The transformation from a pastoral mode of production to sedentary agriculture with a coffee-based cash-crop economy was believed to have been one of the decisive agents of change and differentiation experienced by many of the Gibe Oromo beginning from or prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> C.

Coffee is the most influential product influencing social, economical, political and ritual/religious affairs of this area. The relationship between coffee and Oromo in general and Jimma Oromo of Macha clan in particular is deep-rooted. Coffee production and utilization are closely interwoven in the history and custom of the people. Daniel (2011) also portray that in some regions of the world, it continues to be central to cultural and social ceremonies. In Ethiopia, coffee is prepared and consumed in an elaborate ritual that takes place in most households on a daily basis. Yedes et al. (2004) similarly found that coffee is a feature of every ceremony. Coffee is not just about caffeine; it is about craft, culture and community. Accordingly, this article is aimed at investigating coffee ceremony of the Macha Oromo in Jimma zone by focusing on its cultural and social significances.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Daniel (2016) examined how coffee ceremony used to serve as a stage on which information is exchanged and social upheavals were maintained where the government attacked many religious

and cultural institutions by prohibiting gatherings, suppressing religious practices and enforcing a state ban on mourning during the Dergue regime. Anteneh (2011) explored how the Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony serves women around Merkato, Addis Ababa as a forum for participatory communication to resolve child abuse and exploitation and other problems. Bula (2011) investigated the traditional uses of coffee among Oromo by focusing on *Buna qalaa*. Palmer (2010) also explored the relationship between the Ethiopian coffee (*Buna*) ceremony and mental and social well-being among Ethiopian forced migrants in London by using personal narratives. Brinkerhoff (2011) explored female identity formation of Ethiopian women and women of Ethiopian heritage as they participate in a coffee (*buna*) ceremony.

Most of the literature on coffee focus on the visible significances by ignoring its latent and culturally embedded meanings and functions. This certainly limits our knowledge of coffee especially when seen from the lens of indigenous cultures. This research therefore focuses on coffee ceremony of the Macha Oromo in Jimma zone by stressing on the cultural and symbolic meanings taking place in the ceremony. To this end, this research aspires to investigate the procedures of coffee ceremony among the Jimma Oromo, the cultural meanings of coffee on coffee ceremony and the significances and symbolisms of coffee on coffee ceremony.

### 3. Materials and Methods

In this research, qualitative methodology with its ensuing methods of data collection was exploited both in data collection and analysis procedures. Accordingly, ethnographic fieldwork was used to address cultural values of coffee and coffee ceremony from the lens of the knowledge of the people. With regard to methods of data collection, observation, interview and focus group discussion were extensively used to collect raw data. By using observation, three coffee ceremonies and *Buna qalaa* ritual were observed. Similarly, *shanan* ritual, post marriage naming ceremony, marriage negotiation and wedding ceremony all of which are accompanied by coffee were observed. Additionally, fertility and productivity related rituals like *sa'a dhaabbannaa* was thoroughly observed. Interview was also used to gain deep knowledge pertinent to coffee ceremony. Accordingly, elders (from both sexes) and women (who are skilful in preparing coffee) were interviewed. In line with this, eight key informants were consulted. In FGD sessions, two groups for knowledgeable elders (one group for men and another for women) and one group from coffee producers were involved.

## 4. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

### 4.1 Theoretical Framework

According to Fiese (2006), a ritual is a symbolic event that has three fundamental parts: preparation for the event, participation in the event, and reminiscence of the event. The symbolic nature and parts of the ritual are consistent with a sociocultural perspective. These three elements of a ritual can, and often do overlap, much like the intersection of planes within a sociocultural framework, with participation being a central feature. For instance, an individual may remember and reflect on past participation while preparing for a future event. Within the context of a ritual,

a group or community defines themselves and demonstrates their values and beliefs through the use of artifacts, symbols, and communication.

Such enduring nature of the event has wonderful generational ties that can reflect the history of the family or group, as they progress over time and through generations. It also reflects a family or group's commitment to the future goals (Fiese, 2006). This history of the group or community can be both ontogenetic and phylogenetic, depending upon the group and context (Rogoff, 2003). Van Gennep (1960) and Viere (2001) furthers Fiese's emphasis on three stages of a ritual by proposing similar stages that also emphasize preparation, participation, and then reentrance to the community.

Many rituals have deep roots that tie a family or person to past generations, much like a historical perspective is used to understand sociocultural, historical exchanges. Though the ritual may evolve to accommodate changes, including technology and accessibility to tools and artifacts, the practices are often steady and consistent. For example, Fiese (2006) studied the routine and ritual of the family mealtime, a practice that can be found throughout the world. When the family meal is explored as an analytic tool, often reflects the values and beliefs that an individual and group have created over time within this context. These repetitive, daily routines reinforce cultural patterns and norms of the group, family, and community and thereby reinforcing behavior (Fiese, 2006).

Ochs (1991) discusses how children are socialized through language from their earliest age. They learn through sensory modes how to mutually constitute acceptable social norms. Ochs and Shohet's (2006) research on the family mealtime as a ritual event provides an example of the narratives of the day that are elicited during the mealtime through the construction of questions and through discussion. In this process, a family is defined not only by the sharing of the meal but by the co-construction of the story of the day.

## **4.2 Literature Review**

### **4.2.1 Social Functions of Coffee**

Coffee, beyond its biological functions, serves many social and cultural purposes. As Daniel (2016) clearly portrays, the coffee ceremony became a means to deflect the repressiveness of the Derg. He explored how the ceremony provided relief to those affected by the regime's atrocities; it was a comforting space for expressing sympathy and had therapeutic properties for being one of the few places people could still share their grievances. The coffee ceremony was also a place to share information at a time where news was controlled.

In the same move, *Buna qalaa* ritual is meant to maintain individual and social wellbeing since people come to the stage with different issues and agenda. The research conducted on Ethiopian forced migrants in London by Palmer (2014) also have indicated that *buna* ceremony provides opportunities to preserve cultural heritage as a strategy for overcoming forms of social isolation

and disadvantage. The ceremony enables participants to meet, talk, support and especially where mental distress is associated with loss of social support, the *buna* ceremony can be viewed as a mutual self help group, where individuals are involved in the maintenance of well-being. Yedes et al (2004) suggest that coffee is not “drunk” in rural Ethiopia; rather, the beans are “slaughtered” in much the same way as a religious sacrifice. Each household regularly shares their bean slaughter. Coffee is thus private and public food and ritual. It binds people’s bodies, spirits, and memories.

Primarily coffee is used for the treatment of discomfort and illness such as a headache. In this regard, a person suffering from a headache is advised to drink cups of coffee. During long journeys, a traveling person takes with him/herself toasted coffee berries. In case the traveler encounters any illness he/she first smells the coffee berries, placing the berries in his/her nose for the betterment of health. If this does not bring change the berries are chewed and swallowed (Bula, 2011:7).

As clearly shown above, healthwise, chewing slaughtered coffee bean keeps teeth clean, white, healthy and strong. The aging even do not suffer from fracture of teeth for chewing coffee bean and brushing with *rigaa* (teeth brush) is a usual cultural practice among the people of the study area.

Undoubtedly the caffeine helps rejuvenate farmers tired from the fields or merchants retreating from the hubbub of the markets. Yet the coffee sustains more than exhausted bodies: It strengthens relationships, gathers families and neighbors together, and shows hospitality to guests. It tethers households to traditions and ritualizes ancient roots (Yedes et.al, 2004, p. 8) Among the Jimma Oromo too, coffee ceremony is the place where wide array of topics are discussed and conflicting neighbors are reconciled. For instance, individuals in feud do not drink coffee together; they do not invite one another for coffee. Hence, elders simply identify such social anomaly on coffee ceremony and intervene to restore peace. In general, those who have coffee have peace.

#### **4.2.2 Coffee and the Oromo**

Bula (2011) has depicted that coffee is used among Oromo as traditional medicine, food, and beverage. It is also a core part of almost every daily ritual practice in the society. Oromo people have been utilizing coffee from time immemorial, and the art of preparing coffee is a central element in their every-day cultural practices and ritual performances.

Bartels (1983) indicate that people believe whenever the coffee ceremony occurs *Waaqa* comes nearer to them; hence coffee is a crucial component in every ceremony and any occasion associated with coffee is ceremonial.

The coffee ceremony is a forum for social networking and it is where elders pass onto their children the norms and values of the society that sustain social identity of the group members. It

is also referred to as a school of socialization because it is during this occasion that the youths are told proverbs, stories, as well as thoughts, customs, and norms of the community (Bula, 2011:1).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Significances of Coffee among the Oromo: An Overview

Coffee is deep-rooted in the philosophy and rituals of the Oromo. Every ritual in Oromo is accompanied by coffee. Thus, coffee is entrenched in the rituals and oral literature of the Oromo. Its usage is in various forms and it is used in different cultural practices. Coffee holds central significance from different perspectives. In Oromo, coffee is used to cure various diseases. For amoeba, people use the grinded coffee powder by mixing with honey which immediately stop diarrhea. Roasted coffee bean or a boiled coffee is effective remedy of headache. Coffee powder is used to stop bleeding if added on wound. The bud of coffee leaf is an effective treatment of evil eye. Beside this, coffee is among items to be presented on Oromo rituals as a symbol of peace, blessing and fertility. Hence, beside its economic and political significances, the cultural importance of coffee is multifaceted.

### 5.2 Procedures of Coffee Ceremony

Coffee is deep-rooted in cosmology of the Oromo nation. That is why coffee is inevitable in all rituals and cultural practices of the people. Among the Oromo, coffee ceremony, the ritualized form of making and drinking coffee, is a practiced every day. The following is procedures of preparing coffee ceremony among the Macha Oromo of Jimma zone:

First of all the woman who is entitled to prepare coffee clean her house and prepare all necessary equipments needed for the ceremony. The materials needed for coffee ceremony are *jabanaa* (clay coffee pot), grass, pestle, wooden mortar, incense, water and coffee cups. After that, she bath her body especially if she is married.. Next to that, coffee beans are sorted. For making coffee the dried coffee berries are beaten to separate its coat from the beans. Litting fire and putting coffee pot on fire follows. The coffee beans used for coffee ceremony are always avidly washed by hand three, five or seven times like blessing which follows odd numbers; it is often washed seven times before roasting. This is done for the taste of coffee depend on the extent to which it is washed. Women roast the coffee beans over a flat pan on fire. This brings rich aroma coupled with the fragrance of incense and myrrh that is always burned during the ceremony. When the coffee beans are turned into deep brown and shining, they are passed around the rooms so that the attendants smell. The host woman shakes the roasting pan back and forth so that the beans would not burn. One of the most important parts of coffee ceremony is when the aroma of roasted coffee fills the air and attendants smell freshly. When the smokes of roasted coffee infuse in the air, the attendants say *nagaa nuu kenni* literally meaning 'give us peace' all together. Roasting continues until it becomes a deep brown. After careful pounding using a wooden mortar and pestle, the powder are added into boiled water to be brewed in a *jabanaa* (clay coffee pot). The pounded coffee is then put into a *Jabanaa* with the help of leaf of enset to

keep coffee powder directly poured into it. *Jabanaa* is usually made of pottery and has a spherical base, a neck, pouring spout and a handle where the neck connects with the base. When the coffee boils up, it is taken from the fire and put for minutes until it cool down. One of the best ways to know how coffee is boiled is looking its evaporation and odor; this time, it gives a pleasing aroma.

An invitation to attend a coffee ceremony is considered a mark of friendship and respect and is an excellent example of social generosity and neighborhood. Performing the ceremony is almost obligatory in the presence of neighbors. When all the expected attendants arrive, senior elders bless to herald the ceremony and make communication with their creator. Children attending the ceremony kiss the hands of elders who are considered as sacred in the society to receive their blessing. Next to that, breakfast is offered to the participants and the first cup of coffee is libated in search of fertility and abundance. It is also performed to thank their creator who helped them leading their life. Snack, which is always *qixxaa* (bread from maize), *akaayii* (roasted grains or pulse), *danfisaa/Mulluu* (grains put in hot water to boil), *soottoo* and other kinds of available food, is presented to all the attendants. Snack on coffee ceremony especially for morning coffee is mandatory because it is used as breakfast. The society believes that if one reaches at a coffee ceremony with good snack, it is a sign of good luck. To show the significance of snack on coffee ceremony, the society says “*bunni qursii hin qabne dubbii qurxii hin qabne*” meaning “coffee without snack is similar with a dialogue without conclusion”. After that, coffee is poured into cup and distributed to the attendants by children following seniority. The remnant is used for the second round coffee by adding water. Second round coffee is not filled into cup like the first cup of coffee. It serves as remain for late comers. The society says “*rajaa dhugan haajaan baati*” to mean “one succeeds in his/her deed if he/she drink residue/dregs of coffee”. The route of dregs are also seen by experts to foresee the fate of individuals. The attendants say “*bunaafi nagaa hin dhabinaa; akka bunaa urgaa’aa; akka dammaa mi’aawaa*” meaning “may you not lack coffee and peace”, “be aromatic like coffee and “be sweet like honey” respectively. The participants wish the best day and go to their daily chores.

### 5.3 Settings of Coffee Drinking among the Jimma Oromo

In Jimma Oromo culture coffee is served three times a day. There are morning coffee (*buna ganamaa*), midday coffee (*buna guyyaa*) and evening coffee (*buna galgalaa*) all of which have their own significances. However, the people host their visitors by making coffee in addition to these regular coffee ceremonies.

The first one is called *buna ganamaa*, morning coffee. Morning coffee is one of the most known social stages in Oromo culture. Making coffee in the morning is used for various purposes. One of the most important purposes is that Oromo give thanks to their *Waaqa* (God) who helps them pass black night in peace. The other important intention of coffee of this time is its association with good omen. Oromo believe if someone passes over prepared coffee or leave his home without having coffee he /she may face bad things on his way. For instance, persons when

feeling failure in market say “*utuu buna hin danfifanne bayee gabaan naa hin taane*” to mean “I am unsuccessful in buying and selling today for I did not prepare coffee in my home today’s morning”. The other important function with regard to morning coffee is asking each other about the last night. This is an important event on which people share ideas among themselves.

Jimma Oromo has an extended blessing on this coffee ceremony. These blessings touch every aspect of the society. Issues of fertility, productivity and peace are wished. Similarly, difficulties in the form of diseases, conflicts and hunger are averted via coffee blessing. The following is a typical Jimma Oromo blessing on morning coffee:

## Afaan Oromo Version

Jabanaan jalli cufaadhaa  
Waan hamaa isinirraa haa cufu  
Jabanaan gubbaan banaadhaa  
Keeyrii isinii haa banu  
Barakatee fi bara gadhee oolaa  
Akka bunaa isinaa dhaabu  
Bunaa fi nagaa hin dhabinaa  
Harka jabanaa qabdeen ilma qabi

## English Version

Base of coffee pot is closed  
May trouble closed from you  
Upper part of coffee pot is open  
Be filled with peace  
Be saved from dearth of coffee and difficulties  
Be established like coffee tree  
Be abundant in coffee and peace  
Let the women pouring coffee hold son  
by her hands holding coffee pot  
As you prepared coffee  
Let *Waaqa* guarantee your life  
Be relieved from serious famine and destitution  
Let *Waaqa* give us peaceful day  
Let bulls be in peace  
Let hands of farmers be strong enough  
Let crops be sharpened and weeds be blunt  
Let all these prayer be pertained  
This is what we can say  
The blessing from God is twofold of this

## Tumtanii dhaabdani

Rabbi tuma isinii haa dhaabatu  
Jabaa beelaa jabaa deegaarraa isin haa baraaruu  
Waaqni nagaan nu bulche nagaan nu haa oolchu  
Sangaan qotee harqootarratti nagaa haa ta’u  
Qottuun harkisii hordaa wajjin nagaa haa ta’u  
Biqilli faaqee haramaan baajii haa ta’u  
Kan jenne haa qabatu  
Kan nu jenne hamma kana  
Kan Rabbi jedhe hagana lama

From the above blessing, it is plain that coffee ceremony serves as a channel through which the people communicate with their creator. Content of the blessing is not limited to a single area of focus. It extends peace to cattle, water well, pasture land, rain, health, family and children.

The attendants, after enjoying the ceremony, bless the family who prepared coffee wishing them happy, peace and fertility. The following is blessing of this sort:

Akka dammaa mi’aawaa

Be sweet as honey

Akka bunaa urgaawaa

Be aromatic as coffee

Lafa bunni dhaabate nageenyi haa dhaabatu

Let peace be established at the place where this coffee pot is placed

The second setting of coffee ceremony is called *buna guyyaa*, midday coffee. A midday coffee is always served after having lunch and while people come back to home from work place. It is not mandatory to drink coffee of this time with neighbors for people may go to distant places for agricultural activities which impede their gathering at this time. It is used to overcome tiredness



resulting from physical works and help the people to renew their mind and power for after lunch works.

The third and final setting of coffee ceremony is called *buna galgalaa*, evening coffee. Evening coffee is mandatory to be drunk together. It is designed to give thank to *Waaqa* who helped them in all their ways. It is also an event on which neighbors ask each other what happened in the day. It is the event on which people discuss different issues of the society as well. It is therefore made to serve as break after long and tiresome daily labor. There is also blessing and thanks giving on evening coffee.

The One who Bless (Afaan Oromo Version)	English Version	The Attendants
Qaawaa jabaa	Take this coffee! It is yours	let it be
Kan nagaan nu oolche nagaan nu haa bulchu	Who gave us peace in a day, may you give us peace this night	”
Dhukkubsataa keenya haa fayyisu	May our patient be cured	”
Rabbi loon bade nuuf haa galchu	May God help us to get the lost cattle	”
Dhukkuba baraa nurraa haa qabu	May <i>Waaqa</i> protect us from endemic diseases	”
Ulfi nagaan nuuf haa hiikamtu	May our pregnant deliver peacefully	”
Kan dhalate nuuf haa guddatu	May our children grow	”
Guddaan nuuf haa bulu	May our elders live long	”
Kan bobba'e nagaan haa galu	Let those who are deployed return to home in peace	”
Kan foolate nagaan haa dhalu	Let conveyed cows deliver in peace	”
Dhaltiin balbala haa beeku	Let milking cows know their home	”
Bariin ro'oo haa beeku	Let milk is churned every morning	”
Bakka bunni kun ba'e barakaan haa bu'u	May God give you more instead of the coffee you prepared for us	”
Abjuu nu tolchi	Help us seeing comfortable dream	”
Nu rafnee bullaa	We are going to sleep	”
Kan rafee hin bulle nurraa qabi	Keep us from (ward off) those who does not sleep	”
Akka nu jenne rabbi haa jedhu	Let God recognize what we have prayed	”

As we can simply infer from the above blessing and prayer which is presented on the stage of evening coffee, coffee drinking is the stage on which information is exchanged and peace is lamented. Prosperity is wished and calamities are averted on this stage. Any difficult situation facing the community is brought to the stage and *Waaqa* is implored to stabilize the situation. Blessing is spread in a similar way to the smoke of coffee which reaches every corner of the house in which it is prepared.

Coffee can also be prepared beyond above mentioned coffee ceremony stages (types). For instance, when one person is back from journey, coffee is prepared and neighbors are invited. All about his successes, challenges and anything new is asked. They narrate all about their stay. On the other hand, since every member of the society moves to different directions for daily chores,

the information that comes from all these routes is important for the life of the community. Similarly, households returning from distant places and guests are served with coffee. Above all, when herding livestock at distant places where pasture is available, herders put slaughtered coffee bean in their jaw and keep it throughout the day. This keeps them alert and helps them to overcome the depression in an environment where something to consume is not around. Guests are also served coffee as a symbol of respect and affinity. Not only this, social events are also accompanied with coffee ceremony.



Figure 1: Photos illustrating procedures of coffee preparation from left to right: Washing, Roasting, Pounding, Serving and Enjoying

Neighbors enjoy coffee drinking together. It is a means of social cohesion and networking for every matter is discussed there. Information is exchanged and news is spread to the entire members of the society. Everything regarding conflict, death, sickness, pasture, livestock and the like are talked at length. Rather than consumption of coffee itself, social aspect of the ceremony is highly emphasized. Hence, coffee is not enjoyed alone.

Rumors are raised and criticisms about deviation from societal norms are talked at length. It is trauma and distressful to be mentioned on such occasion in unwanted manner. Thus, every member of the society strives to avoid such deed in his walks of life. This is vital to punish anyone who transgresses established norms and values. Hearing gossip about other person is also helpful source of awareness about ourselves for we immediately evaluate ourselves with the person we hear about.

## 6. Discussion

In many cultures, trees/plants are adored and considered sacred because of their religious significances. Shakti M. Gupta (1991) confirms this reality in the context of India. According to him, unripe coconut fruit is an essential part of all Hindu religious ceremonies. Even in areas where the coconut palm does not grow, no puja or offering is complete till a coconut is offered. If a son, a brother or a husband is going on a long journey, the mother, the sister or the wife

applies tilak on his forehead, wishing him well and offers him a coconut. The cultural and social significances of coffee among the Oromo too are generated from its religious underpinning. Brinkerhoff (2011) furthers that consumption of coffee has been recognized as an important social event in various cultures and contexts. The same is true for Ethiopia where gathering for *buna* is a time of socialization, a time to be together and to talk. This is a context in which people speak openly about their life, their children and relationships. It is a time where problems are solved.

All segments of the society meet on coffee ceremony. Children are given the responsibility of calling/inviting neighbors to the stage. Girls learn how to prepare coffee. Elders bless, discuss and exchange information.

Daniel (2016) as well asserts the therapeutic effects of the coffee ceremony during derg regime. The trauma that Ethiopians experienced throughout the regime could not be remedied by any formal counseling or psychiatric services since there were limited facilities available at the time. Having coffee, then, was in itself a form of therapy as it allowed for family, friends, and neighbors to share their problems.

In short, what brings people round together has an issue. People come together in the name of coffee. The pan of coffee too is round. Coming together to discuss and bless are important. For example, people sit around *saddeeqa* (an important cultural game having a nature of arithmetic progression). One who cheats/cuts/breaks its playing board cuts the rounding of people. Thus, coffee ceremony is not just a simple stage on which trivial ideas are chatted. The social function of coffee is clearly apparent. It plays pivotal role in more or less every aspect of the society's social life. In general, daily activity of the Oromo whether it is happiness or sadness is accompanied by coffee.

The coffee ceremony is done on many occasions, including as part of the rituals of the various rites of passage (birth, naming, marriage etc. one never has coffee/coffee ceremony alone, it is always shared with others. Otherwise it is, as they say *falfala* (bad omen). It is said *buni nagaya; nageenni nama hin dhabu* (coffee is something of peace; for peace there is always somebody) (Leus, 2006, p. 88).

Daniel (2016) also assert that the preparation and consumption of coffee is deliberately never rushed, as the process is understood and valued as a time to relax, gossip, discuss politics and exchange news and ideas among family members, friends and the community. It forges a strong bond between neighbors as it conveys a sense of ritualism and hospitality since it is performed in a particular fashion that needs to be satisfied each time.

*Siinii ilaaluu* (looking at the lees of a cup of coffee and predicting the future) is also common among the Jimma Oromo. Those who foresee can tell something. They forecast about the future, see problems and disasters ahead. There are also experts who know the message of the smoke of

coffee by reading its shape and direction. After drinking, they turn coffee cups upside down. This symbolizes their wish of failure of their enemy.

As Sereke-Brhan (2010) vividly puts, the practice of drinking coffee has been alternately banned and accepted by both Christianity and Islam. In 1511 orthodox imams at a theological court in Mecca banned coffee though the popularity of the drink led to an overturn by Ottoman Turkish Sultan Selim I in 1524. In Ethiopia, the strong association of coffee with Islam and indigenous religious practices initially made its consumption taboo among the Christian population. For instance, the following extract, which is taken from Sereke-Brhan (2010) evidently portray the strong relationship between coffee and indigenous religions as follows:

Coffee serves as a key element in sacred ceremonies and rituals associated with indigenous religions. In Oromo traditional belief systems, coffee is assigned a ceremonial role and its consumption as part of a ritual meal is thought to bring blessings through invocations and prayers.

However, Pendergrast (2010) and Brinkerhoff (2011) present as if northern region of Ethiopia is origin of coffee. Nonetheless, Geremew (2013) nullifies this assertion by providing the following historical facts:

Kaffa had been a strong Christian kingdom even during the medieval period and the Orthodox Christian Church did not allow coffee drink until the 17th century. As Kaffa had remained part of this Christian doctrine, it might have not used coffee until the 17th century. Moreover, there is no source which exhibits that Kaffa had rejected this doctrine and used coffee exclusively (Geremew, 2013, p. 280-281).

Topik (2009) also affirm that the Coptic Christians of Abyssinia locked in a war with Muslim enemies, outlawed coffee on religious grounds whereas Muslims in neighboring Harar were more taken by coffee and probably spread it to their fellow Muslims in Arabia.

In fact, coffee that is boiled and drank everywhere has no long history in the Oromo. Even these days when boiled coffee is becoming prevalent, many Oromo clans drink it with milk, and butter which are the symbol of fertility. They call it *buna gurraacha* roughly meaning black coffee which is seen as indicator of impoverishment. Hence boiled coffee became common for economic reasons. This form of coffee does not require presence of much quantity of coffee beans when compared to *buna qalaa*, which is the commonest among the Oromo. Due to this reason, the Oromo from all corners use *buna qalaa* for events of ritual importance instead of boiled coffee. Gole et al. (2013) too confirm this claim by stating that the earlier use of coffee was as food, rather than as beverage. For instance, there are evidences which show that Oromos started using coffee as energy food long before its current popular use a beverage. The traditional foods from coffee include coffee ball, *buna qalaa* and *qorii*.

Coffee is rooted in all genres of Oromo culture. Cultural practices are native to one society if and only if they are found in all genres of culture. Hence, the exact birthplace of coffee is evident unless the issue is used for different interests. The Ethiopian government and NGOs should also use research findings rather than producing contesting and misleading information which denies the original source of coffee.

### **7. Conclusion**

Coffee serves many purposes among the Oromo. All the cultural, social and political significances of coffee are deep, time tested and interdependent. Coffee ceremony, which accommodates many customary practices of the people, serve as a communication channel, discussion stage, time of relief and blessing, setting of norm auditing and the moment of social cohesion. Thus, it is designed to serve biological, social, psychological, cultural and political functions concurrently. In general coffee ceremony, among the Macha Oromo of Jimma zone, is a multipurpose stage which serves couples of functions all at once.

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