



The Account of *Mukkeen Seeraa* (Floras of Law) in Oromo of Arsii Customary Knowledge of Natural Resources Utilization

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Abstract

This paper discusses customary knowledge and practices based utilization of natural resources in Arsii through their indigenous notion, mukkeen seeraa (floras of law) and its implications on nature conservation. Like any other indigenous group of people, which is recognized with certain distinct local ecological knowledge, the Oromoo of Arsii have developed special utilities of floras driven classification and codification by the name of mukkeen seeraa. Mukkeen Seeraa refer to culturally identified class of floras species categories which were imputed as distinct from others with a special and specific purposes of utility assigned to fulfill and meet through Arsii sacred and secular laws (seera ambaa and seera wayyuu). To this particular purpose, the study has employed descriptive research methods and qualitative techniques of data collections. Data were obtained through interview, focus group discussions, observations, personal profile, and analysis of cultural heritages values and written literatures. Informants were identified based on their knowledge of the history, culture, belief system, wisdom of the customs of target people. The findings indicated that, the Arsii customary practices has nearly identified 45 floras species divided into ten special utility meeting categories which are characterized with rules set to guide their exploitation, of designated legal personality and the prerogatives of serving only specific functions. Results also showed that species of the class were designated to meet exceptional demands and thereby barred from unspecified functions driven exploitation through indigenous strategy of sustainable resources use. However, the practice declined following the weakening of Gadaa system since the 20th century and as a result some of the species are extinct as this people's knowledge faced discontinuing phase. In revealing this, the researcher recommends the need for enhancing such wisdom which advocates the conservation of floras species and their sustainable utilization.

Key Terms: *Indigenous, Knowhow, Arsii, Seera Amba,*

Axereeraa

Waraqaan qorannoo kun bu'uura beekumsa xabbootiin (indigenous) akkaataatti Arsiin qabeenya uumamaatti dhimma bahan, kallaattii hubannoo muukkeen seeraatiin, hiika inni kunuunsa qabeenya uumamaa keessatti qabu waliin walitti qabee ibsa. Akkuma saboota eenyuummaa ofii ganamaa qabataniin turan birootti, Oromoon Arsiis beekumsa addaa haala naannoo keessa jiraataniin walsimatuu qabuun, akkaataa fayyadama muukkeenii adda ta'e, qoqqooddiifi mallattoo ittiin beekamaniin, bu'uura muukkeen seeraatiin tolfatanii ittiin jiraatu. Mukkeen seeraa jechuun, qoqqooddii akka addaatti akaakuu mukaa jiran maraaf tajaajila addaa qabaniin, ulaagaa seera ambaafi seera wayyuutiin adda bahan agarsiisa. Kaayyoo qorannoo kanaa galmaan gahuuf, mala qulqulleeffataafi saxaxa ibsaa, akkasumas maaleen walitti qabiinsa ragaa qulqulleeffataa gargaarameera. Ragaaleenis afgaaffii, marii garee xiyyeeffannoo, daawwannaa, hubannoo dhuunfaa, qaaccessa duudhaaleefi hambaawwan barreeffamaan jiran irraa walitti qabaman. Hirmaatonni beekumsa seenaa, aadaa, sseraafi muuxannoo waa'ee dhimma mukkeen seeraa ilaalchisee qabaniin filataman. Akka argannoon agarsiisutti, Arsiin akaakuu mukkeen 45 ta'anii, tajaajila addaa qabaniin immoo garee 10tti qooduun sirna aadaatiin itti fayyadamu. Bu'uuruma kanaan, seera ittiin beekamaniifi tajaajila murtaahaa keennuu qabaniin adda bahanii jiru. Akkasumas, gareen qoqqoodama mukkeenii kunneen dhimma ooluu qabaniin alatti akka hinoolleef, tarsiimoo itti fayyadama qabeenyaatiin qajeelfama. Haata'u malee, duudhaan kun jaarraa 20^{ffaa} keessa laafaa deemuu Sirna Gadaa irraa kan ka'e hir'ataa dhufeera. Kanaafuu, akka yaada furmaataatti, beekmsi xaboon akkasii jajjabeeffamee, kunuunsi sanyii mukkeeniiifi haala itti fufiinsaa qabuun itti fayyadamuun akka danda'amuuf hojjechuun gaarii ta'a.

Jechoota Ijoo: Beekumsa Xabboo, Akaataa Beekumsaa, Arsii, Seera Ambaa

Introduction

1. Background

A role of an indigenous society in environment conservation can be apprehended through studying a particular cultural group's natural resources utilization including floras. Trees are key components in environment and embedded the other most important natural resources of the earth (Abiyou, *et al*, 2015). Flora in the various ecosystems embeds numerous plants used for various purposes (Government of the Federal, 2005) and supporting the environment and ecology. Above all, floras have irreplaceable roles for fulfillment of human demands varying from material to non-material, economic to non-economic and physical to non-physical roles that determined the conservation trend (Workineh, 2005 & 2011; Melaku, 2016; Abiyou, *et al*, 2015). However, this relationship can be balancing whenever the concept and practices of resources sustainability are at a place. According to Abiyou, *et al*, (2015); Demissew *et al*, (2011) forests in Ethiopia has deteriorated due to the increasing anthropogenic activities. This implies that the degree of human dependency is inconsiderate of natural resources perishable conditions and constraint nature. As it is sated in the document, Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2005), besides dependency, decisions about utilization of natural resource are made without consideration of their environmental values. The sources, however, have not denied the presence of indigenous practices with forests management that has resulted to sparsely survived pockets of trees in few areas in various parts of the country. In this regard, Melese (2007) who focused on Ethiopian farmers' trees management has particularly mentioned the contribution of indigenous knowledge in improving human livelihoods even though the area has no extensive literature.

According to Workineh (2005 & 2011) ;(Melaku (2016) ;(Lemessa (2010); Dessalegn *et.al*, (2007), in proper utilization of the resources, the Oromoo have developed the knowledge for the rule of relationships to all natural resources. Gemechu (2005); Melaku, (2016) explained this knowledge is embedded in *seera uumaa* (the laws of God), and *seera duudhaa* (customary law). Both laws entail the laws of relationships between the Oromoo and their natural resources. They mentioned that they are laws of 'Do's' and 'Don't Do's'. Lemessa (2014) further asserts that the Oromoo society has been conscious of its cultural identity, its relation to nature, and the existence of a powerful force that regulates the connection between nature and society.

The knowledge with trees varies because of the orientation and adaptation to the wider environment through cultural institutions and the diverse utility obtained for ecological and non-ecological purposes (Melaku, 2016; Workineh, 2011; Lemessa, 2014). Floras have various utilities: political, economic, material, ritual, religious, legal, social, aesthetic, healing, nature conservation, etc. In different cultures trees represent life and death; nature and culture; adornment and beautification. Apart from economic and material sources, the Oromoo performed various socio-cultural, religious, ritual, legal and political activities at,

around and under trees. Including the all-inclusive system of *gadaa* system is conducted under *odaa* tree which perpetuates the long time practices, attachments and connections with floras. Trees have direct shading and symbolic values, meanings and roles in life; they are sources of life, wisdom and center of key activities (Dereje, 2012; Ginbar, 2018). Hence, the Oromoo of Arsii long time practice with floras is the account of *mukkeen seeraa* which talks about certain means of codification and legalization of species. Floras of law are species of plants varied from wooden trees to grasses and thatches to which rules and codes of management have been promulgated openly in public in their representations of society and wisdom.

Oromoo indigenous wisdom in general and Arsii in particular practices with natural resources conservation has been recently emerging and there is no extensive study in the area. Widely, information on indigenous people's roles in natural resources utilization and nature conservation is a despairing one that looks them as simple dependent lacking an optimistic roles and positive contributions (Lemessa, 2014; Workineh, 2011). This study has rather conveyed one of long traditional practice in Oromoo of Arsii generational wisdom by the name floras of law (*mukkeen seeraa*) and its implication on conservation. *Mukkeen seeraa* is a collective term by and through which the Arsii designated several species categories under a common name for use and non-use values, livelihood and non-livelihood activities. The account of *mukkeen seeraa* is basically associated with the Arsii sacred law (*seera wayyuu*) and secular law (*seera ambaa*). *Seera Ambaa* is a revised version of the ancestral Arsii law enacted at *Odaa Roobaa* during the *Roobalee Gadaa* under the *gadaa* leadership of Ambattoo Dayyoo towards end of the 15th century (c.a. 1490). These two categories of laws were operating at their ancient formulations under the *Arsii gadaa* system which made its centers at *Odaa Roobaa* for secular political-governance and Dalloo, the seat of *Abbaa Muudaa (Qaalluu)* for religious spiritual purposes. Their life and living were submitted to the jurisdictions of these laws (Ginbar, 2018).

The need to meeting the multidimensional desires and the wide-ranging aspects of these demands in continuity for survival has motivated the classification apparent. Enunciation of Arsii secular law among other things have contained some premier trees by the name 'the eight trees of law' (*saddeettaan mukkeen seeraa*) which include Harooressaa (*Grewa bicolor*), Heexoo, Waddeessaa (*Cordial africana*), Hidheessaa (*Juniperus procera*), Garabmaa (*hypericum revolutum*), Daannisaa, Shifaa and Bulchaanaa. These species were identified for making insignias of power and authority in *Gadaa* (Ginbar, 2018). The classes of *mukkeen seeraa* have, however, extended beyond these species and comprised other varieties enumerated to meet different demands at diverse areas of life. As wider as the demands, multifarious are the needs and desires the reasons for approaching and utilizing floras are multidimensional. However, the wisdom prompting resources wise use and special means of utilization under the guise of legal jurisdiction has declined following Menelek's conquest of Arsii land in the 20th century.

2. Materials and Methods

Like most social science researches, this research has dealt with culture that involved claims of values and rights. This study employed qualitative research methods. Both primary and secondary data sources were used to compile the data for the study. Interviews, non-participant observation, focus group discussions, and document analysis (both published and unpublished) were the instruments used to obtain reliable data for the study.

Interviews were held with different community members based on their mastery of the knowledge of the history, culture and *gadaa* values of the society. The interview was mainly held with custodian commoners (Gada leaders, the *Qaalluu/tti*, head of the *Saddeetaa* assembly,) civil servants and administrators. Interviews, parallel with other techniques, were all conducted in February, March, April, and May 2014. The interviewee included individuals of different backgrounds such as sex, age, social status, religious faiths, occupation, and literacy background, such as elders, government officials, farmers, and teachers of different levels.

Key informants were selected using purposive sampling technique by the districts culture and tourism office based on their prior knowledge in relation to the objective of this study. Interviews were conducted in five districts while four of them are in West Arsi Zone and one is located in Arsi Zone. These included Kokosa, Dodola, Kofale, Arsi Robe and Munessa districts of the two Zones. In the aforementioned districts, the story of *Mukkeen Seeraa* has been relatively retained and the primacy of *seera ambaa* was recalled, particularly during conflict resolutions, marriage relationships and during the *saddeetaa* (*gadaa*) assembly.

In the entire field stay twelve in-depth interviews, which took an average of one and half hour with each interviewee, were conducted. The responses of the interviewee were documented by note taking and tape-recording. This tool was used to get detailed data for the entire frame of this study. In the entire field stays, the researcher conducted non-participant observations in the selected places of study area. The non-participant observations were used to observe the environmental facts such as the natural resources composition of the area, their insignias and emblems used for *Gadaa* system, assembly center (*ya'aa saddeetaa*) and protected shrine used as sacred sites of the Oromoo of the study area. The study also employing relevant official documents, unpublished and published documents as source of data. Some important official documents were obtained from the districts' Culture, Forest and Wild life and Natural Resources Conservations Agency. Data from these sources were used for the entire frame of the study. Collected data were presented in descriptive and narrative approach.

3. Result and Discussion

Trees are key components in environment and they embedded the other most important

natural resources of the earth and for various human demands fulfillment (Demissew, *et al*, 2011; Abiyou, *et al*, 2015). Trees sources of livelihood and non-livelihood activities witnessed varying forms of utilization and knowledge of exploitation which provides clues on conservation and management experiences. The Oromoo natural environment is fundamental units of their life and they are bounded on mutual use relationships paying emphasis and care for their ecology. The extents people in different cultural setting did with floras in one way or another means justifying utility and hence, sustainability will convey some environmental concern embedded in that culture. This ecological intimacy helps the people in various ways to form a reciprocal relationship. Utilization will not always underscore resources sustainability which is determined by other factors including human consciousness about resources perishable conditions (Melaku, 2016; Workineh, 2011; Lemessa, 2014).

Based on oral information, the Arsii like any other groups of human beings, have long historical dependency interactions and interrelatedness with wild floras (trees, shrubs and grasses) which have resulted in both negative and positive conservation outcomes on resources and environment. Today, the study area ecology is highly deteriorated and species varieties (biodiversity) severely lost due to imbalance dependencies relationships between use and sustainability. However, human use of resources was never been one-sided and emanated out of utilization perspectives alone without the concern and efforts to maintaining continuous supply and thereby achieving sustainability. The Arsii knowledge understood floras varying from one another through their wisdom of natural and cultural ecology. This long established cultural ecological wisdom of the Arsii recalled itself distinct in doing and dealing with adaptation, in recognizing floras at their local environment. One of the experiences in broadening adaptation possibility while in use of resources and sustainability is codification of floras in their own way level.

One of the key alternative forms of knowledge with trees are significances and values driven means of utilization between economic and non-economic, material and non-material and physical and non-physical ones. This is a means achieving sustainability on the basis of demand feature disparity, for instance, between palatable and non-palatable appetites. Accordingly, floras assigned for palatable sources (ex. economic, material advantage) were orderly utilizable and consumable unlike those guarantee of non-palatable (ex. spiritual/religious, nature, aesthetic/non-consumptive) services. Culturally, non-palatable values were not/ little exposed to incontrollable utilization by their higher significance and so that they were given precedence conservation over palatable values. The category has received greater protections as the more these aspects dominated life (Workineh, 2005). Sources interrogated that whatever means of doing and dealing with maintaining demands and supply sort of balance relationships is environmentally viable (Lemessa, 2010).

Based on this cultural code of the Arsii, there was a manner discriminating demands versus species of floras in utilities. With this customary practices some major flora species were prohibited from being used for undefined and indefinite demands better and/ lesser than

others. Particularly, the needs to protect reverent and highly valuable floras, which are assumed as decisive and determinant for their survival assertion, from regular contact were beyond any individual demands and interests. The need to identifying and enticing between those highly desirable demands and their source are unbeaten and proactive in their cultural thought. Hence, the Arsii ancestors' wisdom made distinctions between some highly elevated key demands and their corresponding source floras species to their essential degrees of value highness by setting rules of utilization. However, within the floras of law class while some demands are reverent the otherwise are characterized with consumable conditions.

According to oral informants, the rationale to maintain floras and their resources continuous provision and supply to meet long standing demands had impelled their ancestors to devise such codification. The wisdom with *mukkeen seeraa* is a manifestation for the Arsii indigenous taxonomy referring to floras of peculiar use and non-use values class highness on whose behalf rules guiding their utilization and management set in public. Based on information from the study area, the class of floras of law nearly constituted about 45 species and divided into 10 categories that each has comprised few species varieties. As it will be seen in the forthcoming part discussion, each category made from certain species formed a class of codified specific utility and bounded to rules for their utilization. Each class is legible to specific demand and everyone is ought to know the rules set before approaching them for any purposes. They strongly claimed that the need to maintain human endless demands and avoiding unselective dependency from vanishing resources have necessitated a manner of placing and bringing human in its totality views, behaviors and actions to the jurisdiction of law. As the impending part of the discussion illustrates, the relative question of sustainable use was addressed taking the issues to their members' attentions and accountable to rules set in *seera wayyuu* and *seera ambaa*.

Floras of law are a group of plant species made to constitute a particular class of utility and services provision under conditions set in their customary practices. As to their taxonomy species composed of wooden trees, shrubs, thatches and grasses formed 10 corresponding use and non-use values groups. As data indicate, most of them were highly worth of socio-cultural, religious, ritual, political services and nature meditating roles. When their composition is seen, the habitats include wooden trees, shrubs, thatches and grasses.

3.1 The Categories of Floras of law

This demand versus functions correlations type of arrangement based account obtained from key informants includes some of the following:

1. Perfuming plants (*Mukkeen seera qayyaa*): *baddeessaa* (*syzygium guineense*), *burquqqee** (*acacia lahai*), *gunaa* (*olinea rochetiana*), *baddannoo* (*balanites aegotiaca*), *birdheessa**, *walaatii**, *ittacha**
2. Steaming/ smoking milk containers trees (*Mukkeen seea qorsaasumaa*): *ejersa* (*Olea europea*) *harooressa* (*bicoler*), *sukaayee**, *qoraasuma**, *yoobdoo**, *garii**

3. Medicinal plants (*Mukkeen seera da'ummaa/qorichaa*): *heexoo*, *dhoqonuu* (*grewia ferruginea*), *eebicha* (*Veronica amygdalina*)
4. Pasturing Grasses (*Biqilaa seera dheedichaa*): *leensaa*, *kaloo**, *dareemoo*, *sambaleexa*, *coqorsa* (*eleusine jaegeri*), *qorxoo**, *yaballoo**
5. Marriage Custom plants (*Mukkeen seera murtii fuudhaafi heerumaa*): *woddeessa* (*Cordia Africana*), *harooressa* (*grewa -bicolor*), *ulumaayii**,
6. Promulgating plants (*Mukkeen murtii heeraa*): *odaa* (*sycamore*), *qilxuu* (*fig trees*), *waddeessa* (*Cordial africana*), *dhanonuu**, *dambii**, *ulaagaa**, *dhaddachaa**, *birbirsa* (*Podocarpus falcatus*)
7. Ritual Floras (*Mukkeen falaa*): *kombolcha* (*maytenus senegalensis*), *qaraaruu*, *kaaroo*, *hudhaa*,
8. Reproductive Services Plants (*Mukkeen ateetaa/hormaataa*): *anshaa*, *garambaa* (*Hypericum revoltum*)
9. Grave Site plants (*Mukkeen bakka awwaalaa/hujubaa*): *waleensuu* (*Erythrina bruce*), *hadaamii* (*Euphorbia Candelabrum*), *aannannoo**,
10. Reconciliation Plants (*Mukkeen seera araaraa*): *garambaa* (*Cordia africana*), *shifaa**, *adabannaa**

* Starred species are those plants whose scientific nomenclature is not recognized in floras scientific dictionaries or which the researcher could not access.

3.2. Species and their Assigned Functions

Perfuming plants are used for human steaming and bathing purposes, particularly practiced by girls and women. This is currently practiced in some urban centers of the country for cleanness the users' body and refereshment as well as good scent and aroma. In addition, trees are used for steaming/ smoking milk containers made of sewn reeds and gourds. Steaming gives the container good scent, fresh, flavor, keeping neat and disinfects from germs and bacteria. This method is also still in use currently. Medicinal plants leaves and branches are taken in the form of juice, powder and other forms for various health problems for curative purposes.

Plants used for marriage custom and rituals are kinds of plants that its branches are removed and shaped into sticks and hold by both the bride and the bridegroom, as a compulsory for the fulfillment of the matrimonial ceremony for marriage relationships executions. The matrimonial ritual stick (*siinqee*) is made from *harooressa* for the bride and the matrimonial (ritual stick) is made from *waddeessaa* trees for the bridegroom. *Siinqee* is symbol of feminine used to assure their rights and used to empower the women to fight against injustice such as the masculine mistreatment in the marriage and other social relations (Ibsa, 2000; Eshetu, 2008; Jeylan, 2005, Gemtechu, 2005). Grazing land for pasture is designated for their cattle through common customary means of utilization. Dessalegn et.al (2007) stated that the presence of common customary grazing land is rife among the Oromoo in general and the Borana Oromoo area in particular in the south.

Mukeen seeraa (trees for rule making) are flora species never removed in any means and forms, but they are only used for communal ritual and shading purposes where they sit under and declare laws to the society. They are trees used as sacred and sources of truth and tranquility and their surrounding are kept clean, neat and made free from any spoiling state of affairs such as uttering louder, speaking annoying words like anger, lie, dishonesty, corruption, etc. These are the most cardinal classes of *mukkeen seeraa* due to their eminent positions as ultimate sources of major socio-political and religious functions. Some of these trees were used for making insignias of power and authority. Ritual floras are cut in pieces and bits only and taken home for ritual ceremonies and for spiritual purposes. The fresh timbers and leaves from these trees were erected around home and used for prayer for humans, cattle and for agricultural abundance and richness; protective remedy for human against natural calamity and catastrophe. There are also plants used for productive services in which their leaves and branches were cut and taken to homes as a means to certify human fertility and reproduction.

Grave site plants are plants used to grow on graveyards for remembrance of the dead. Graveyards are sacred places which are prohibited from any anthropogenic contacts and activities like picking fruits from the graveyard areas for eating. They are areas where the spirits of the deceased dwell and the concept of sacredness are used as one means to reinforce nature conservation (Workineh, 2005 & 2011). Plants for reconciliation ceremonies comprises trees which are used to settle dispute and conflict in the society and only their parts are cut and handled in a bundle during reconciliation ceremonies known as '*gumaa*'.

The customary law defined and established inviolable line of use between floras and their utility such as the way to consume and exploit and use of these trees were bounded by rules.. This rule was passed to limit the type of utility and to legitimize demands from the society members to each specific species category underlying the essentiality of these resources in the community. The following deals with the strategies through which the categorization effectuated.

3.3. The Prerogatives of Floras of Law

A. The prerogatives for Assigned Use Values alone and Against Other Types

Based on the data, trees for law became highest recipients of major prerogatives in the society. The class of floras of law has comprised a separate group which is commended for specific use value orientation alone that a prerogative against other demand type was set to this purpose. The prime roles of utility rules were set to reinforce propriety of each group with the type of demand that fits and to evade unrecognized functions and any wrong exploitation as mistreatment in general. Non-referred demands were unauthorized and any use of it was banned with clear legal and moral punishment. A person has only the legitimacy to use each category only in lines with the arrangement formed for the intended purposes, manners and amount allowed for proper utilization. They were part of classes of

granted prerogatives and immunity rights against non-referred use and any mistreatment. On the other hand, the users of these trees are loaded with accountability to only carry out the uses from the trees in established manner including avoiding indifferent needs, prohibitions of undetermined quantity to be taken for one time. This enabled everybody to have the required knowledge about their natural ecology.

These prerogatives offered the local people sanctions against use of any unauthorized, vilifying and degrading activities. This utility and demand of the use of the trees can ease particular burden of demands (uses) from the floras of law. This process had brought the user (humans), the providers (the resources) and uses (demands) into a common point of interactions and interdependence without costing/benefiting either side alone and causing imbalance of beneficiary. The various mechanisms enforcing the prerogatives of floras of law are discussed here under.

B. The Prerogatives Against Palatable Cause and Anthropogenic Motivation

According to the data, the prerogative strategy distinguished and assigned different sources of floras to dissimilar demands prioritized based on economic and non-economic, material and non-material purposes. In line with the finding, the listed plants were sources of non-palatable activities which appear sensitive to the focus of the customary law. This was made a deliberate act to highlight precedence over those palatable sources as their strategy to restraint resources from rising appetites of anthropogenic centered uses and exploitations. To this effect, taboos and temporal rules were established to hold back consumerism, commodification and commercialization of them. This method was one major mechanize dealt with to develop a reciprocal relationship between human and natural resources.

The findings revealed that the strategies practiced around the use of trees impart different approaches of management in utilizations of natural resources as follows. First, this indigenious knowledge type prohibited any random exploitations and uses of floras. Second, the strategy of banning economic and material uses of anthropogenic activities like palatable use against this natural resources class and the limited use of a non-material and non-physical utility values of them is adhered to set rules. The above prerogatives have been reinforced though the following frameworks: setting rules, watching institution and temporal reinforcement. These were on the decisions of Arsii sacred law (*seera wayyuu*) and secular/profane (*seera ambaa*).

3.4 Rules Set to Bound Every Activities in Lines With their Prerogatives

The entire process delineates which floras ought to be used for what purposes, mechanisms of exploitation to bring to referred utility and to defend their prerogatives. The rule defined unbreakable line of use between floras and their utility, demands, use, exploitation and the type of caution used in terms of each plant. The rules set targeted to reinforce the above prerogatives of floras of law and watch its effectiveness through institution established to defend and take measure against violations. . Rules set based on the type of management

system appropriate to them and their administration subjected to common customary rules that are considered as public resources. Their prerogatives were defendable in rules which are reinforced further with the institutions established to monitor its effectiveness and take legal corrective measures against violations.

A. Institutional Apparatus to Reinforce the Rules

According to elderly informants, floras of law administration were liable and subjected to customary rules of use. One major aspect regarding the administration was about use justifiability to those established socio-cultural institutions. Demand must be referred to the type of use values to which each particular group was stated. Besides, rule was passed based on the manner of putting into use under recommended conditions. Prior to any action, consultation should be made with the institutions that watch the exploitation for the allowed demand and shall underlie the amount that particular floras can supply and strictly examine for the norms established in the customary law.

The data indicated that floras of law were referred to as public resources, non-amenable to individual's decision and wrong exploitation and demands. Individual member should know each class and its use value categories and services that can be demanded from the plants ahead of taking any decisions and actions. According to informants, social rules based administration effectuated through various socio-cultural and customary institutions such as village leaders and elders, *Gadaa* assembly, *Qaalluu*, the *Wayyuu*, etc (Mamo, 2006). They were accountable to oversee their administration to bring effective implementations. The authority was established in the highest council of *gadaa* administration. Its type and effective administration was made in consultation with village elders, leaders and every piece of information such as actions and deeds of a person demand the utilizations of the floras of law prior to any action. The *abbaa gadaa* is the highest level of organs in the institutions of natural resources management that coincided with that case of the of the Borana Oromoo (Dessalgen et.al, 2007).

The concept of utilization of higher classes of floras to respective desire and demands were come to full force yield to the established institutions accountable for overseeing all matters. Listing higher class of floras to its equivalent use values has been motivated by the need to bring both the sources and utility under strong customary rules of administrations against non-referred purposes.

B. Forms of Violations Banned and Verdict to Penalize Violator

According to elders from the area, the reason to set rules of use was to save essential sources from depilation by restricting use against unspecified demands. Rule of use secured any violation against the autonomous customary law and institutions established to oversee its effectiveness. Violations could be manifested in several ways through the prime uses for unidentified and non-recognized purposes which is the most guilt act. Any failure to stick to established manner of utilization and exploitation is also accepted as infringement of of the

law that leads to destruction of the sources. Besides, abuse and misuse manifested in behavior, views, jester, words, etc are all working against the established positions of legal floras. It also defys autonomy of the law, vilifies and cheapens their status. Hence, the range of violations comprised of physical damage, ‘psychological’ attack, gossip, and uttering bad words about them, etc.

Violations of the customary laws while putting the floras into use like utilization due to ignorance, negligence and carelessness are all intolerable. Anything not strict to the established ethos was violations that can mark the degrees of curiosity, sensitivity and management. However, the modus of utilization itself was varied among different species and groups established in their utilities. Based on the type of functions, the ways and modus of utilization include acts of cutting of wooden branches and leaves and removing their barks, and pasturing grasses. Still, few were only utilized for shading roles at their natural physical sites. Thus, any cutting and removing their branches was prohibited. Cutting wooden timber had underlain taboos observed as operation of safety and desirable amount without harming the parental plant and removing parts as well.

Experts from the area explained that some floras were exceptional sources, so particularly an irreplaceable use values and sacred attributes bestowed on them that the prerogatives prohibit from any direct use contact. One of the worst consequences of human activities that the institution was conscious of was cutting life-taking nature (unless for environmental purposes). Most of the time human limitless demands and utility were maniferest in unregulated and undetermined degrees. Lemessa (2014) noted that the Oromoo cultural value has some relevant contextual data about forests/trees protections under common customary rules emphasized on the demerits of cutting associated to negative consequences.

C. Penalty Variety Established to Protect the Prerogatives

According to my informants, several sanctioning mechanisms related to the autonomy and decision on trees was enforced and the prerogatives of floras of law effectuated. The practices have come to full effect on the ground that strong legal, moral, physical and material means of regulating and sanctioning forms exist. They are accountable to maintain anything vilifying and denigrating the positions of the floras; to oversee failure and defect which are considered as violating the inner boundary of established values and executing the necessary punishment on the doers.

Punishment varies in types, kinds and amounts based on the weights of the action that include material and physical fines, spiritual, moral blemish that can cause curse, social alienation and segregation etc. Local institutions were accountable to oversee giving advice and oral warning for minor cases minimally. Serious cases were handled in punishment ranging from material punishment to the most severe measures taken namely social segregation, cursed and deportation from the land. A repeated mistake was particularly a serious crime which might lead to physical corporal punishment and eviction from the land.

The most common form of material punishment against violators of the rules for trees of law was payment in cattle. Accordingly, an individual who has either challenged and/or violated the promulgation (*murtii*) on the use of *mukkeen seeraa* would automatically face verdict and receive punishment for its acts material punishment varying from 5 to 100 heads of cattle. Higher amount of punishment in cattle was led by the compensation made to cutting sycamore *Odaa*, the most of all grand crimes and unexcused acts. *Odaa* is the reverent (*wayyuu*) of all floras species and its *wayyoomaa* (sacredness) protects it from any sort and form of physical exploitation. The damage on this particular tree was grand as harm on human being and its cutting was sentencing equal amount of compensation made to loss of human life i.e. 100 heads of cattle (*gumaa*). Cutting *odaa* is the most immoral and sinful act demanded high reparation payment and conducted purification ritual ceremonies to be refined from sin. As Dereje (2012); Alemayehu, *et.al*, (2009) partly shared this view, the ranges of crimes against *odaa* include speaking bad words, insulting the tree, verbal gossip, blame, cursing, any acts spoiling its environs, and any mistreatment. Mistreatment on public gathering sites were strictly protected with the associated resources and the punishment may rise to 9 heads of cattle. Including the break of emblems was penalizing from one to 7/9 heads of cattle.

Utilizing trees of law as well as forage grass for a different purpose would be punishing 5 heads of cattle. But, if the doer was repeatedly mistaken, he would receive more amount of punishment in cattle payment. This means of payment in item was against resources misuse and abuse caused the doer accountable to his/her act and learnt in future.

3.5. Environmental Analysis of the Knowhow

The knowhow bears distinct from the conventional scientific knowledge of floras classifications in applied sciences field that it has brought indigenous information on trees. As indigenous knowledge is everywhere and in all culture of the human being, this shows what people have been doing in their local ecology and from the other side of the river of modern/exogenous practices. Whatever its motives are and irrespective of other things, a concern for wise use of resources and their conservation has been rooted in indigenous society.

As to the knowledgeable elders from the area, floras irrevocable roles in providing what are desirable for life has been underlined setting rules of their management system is compulsory to sustain both. Understanding floras natural circumstances, resources constraint perishable conditions versus negative impacts of human activities are underlain to avoid imbalances in their long established values. This has been a deliberated act to avoid exploitation of every flora for many purposes and demands simultaneously to ease multiple burdens from the species. The customization avoided exploitation of any flora without prior knowledge about the species and its use value types/categories and the manner it should brought t to use. This understood to them more when misuse and abuse on floras are regulated through some established rules as discussed in thte study..

Regulations have also been put on the services variety/type, use values, degrees and extents of exploitation, harvesting season and period at which cutting is being conducted. Cutting or chopping allowable tree of law is absolutely purposive and justifiable. Anybody cannot cut trees of law and put them into use in any means than the one stated in the customary laws.. The law called on restraining otherwise appetites, particularly banning economic and material demands, setting rules for use that specify the exceptional utility, limiting the species to particular purpose, etc. This eased the demerits of human exploitation that shorten the environmental utility.

As the whole, the classes of legal trees have been prohibited from wholesale demands fulfillment except the particular ones referred, the allowed degrees of exploitation were minimized to reduce their burdens and conversely increased their conservation and use status. The need to limit use values of these floras was to free from other functions and purposes to avoid insufficiencies. The purposes to specify their utility bounded to rules set is to address the problems of natural resource sustainability in their customarily practices. Whatever the motivations and justifications are different from scientific approach, this strategy restrained human open access to the exploitation of the floras and anthropogenic reasons and its unreliability in environment conservation. The target was to discourage trees of law to mere economic and material sources (commoditized) and palatable appetite from wilderness to propriety of culture, which is from mere economic and material sources to its use as a symbol of political power, sources of authority, and human rights.

However, the knowhow has increased the degrees of dependences and intensified exploitation on unidentified floras and unstated demands. As the result, resources were never freed from expropriation as dependence is inevitable and the other class lacked legal protections that received increased degrees of burden to meet human economic and material utility. As part of ecological adaptation, people living in a locality of Kokosa shifted their demands for house constructions and others purposes to bamboo trees, so that the extents of human exploitation and dependence on legal trees seemed to be reduced. Bamboo is heavily and fast growing plant on a limited plot of land near to their village (Mamo, 2006).

This practice, however, lost its autonomy and momentum with the conquest of Arsii land by *neftenya* system in the 20th century. As the result, Gadaa and its ancillary institutions have diminished to grass root level and scarcely survived in few parts of the Arsii such as Kokosa, Nansabo, Dodola and Kofale. Even in these areas, the amount of knowledge on the topic is varying and their practices are declining as some of the species are lost and unknown to them. This act contravenes enduring needs of natural resources conservation at all places and levels of humanity. Be that may, a sparsely survived pocket of the species around river banks and their cultural landscapes, the populace optimistic attempt to reinstate such nature friendly values through the *Saddeetaa* Gadaa assembly are not a present intervened for restoration. Above all, the increasing forces of commoditization, commercialization, education, the expansion of Wahibism and Protestantism sects of in both Islam and Christian religions are limiting its worth values. The major factor contributed to its lethargic

is the absence of local empowerment as the county's cultural policy is not enforced down at a grass root level through rules and regulations. Again, the country's environmental conservation policy does not have a structure that integrates customary natural resources management as its agents and promote their sustainability. With other several things, but particularly seeing from environmental point of view, this has negatively affected culture-nature reciprocal relationships, the knowledge, bearers of the wisdom and their ecology

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1. Conclusion

The Arsii customary practice is brought to discussion through trees of law. The classification sorts out which trees is being exploited for what and which purpose, including the parts allowed to be chopped and mechanisms of its extraction. In doing so, the customary rule has instilled common knowledge of use and accountability in natural resources utilization among their members.

The enactment of legal personality endowment and protection to the floras of law from further burdens has directly evaded other means of exploitation and demands that can cheapen and degrade their status. The notions that liberate from unidentified and different purposes have also strongly established against palatable economic and other multifaceted use type servitude. Accordingly, with other major components of customary life floras have received special prerogatives of legal endorsement with appropriated rights and privileged in public.

However, the knowledge has declined among the wider members of the society who are characterized with lack of uniformity and consistency in various districts of Arsii. Beyond their historical roots of representation in their customary law, contemporarily some of the species particularly shrubs are extinct and even not known to many of the local populace. The decline of cultural autonomy in the past and the increased forced of changes in the present can limit their viability to few districts. Mainly, the increased forces of globalization, commoditization, commercialization, education, and changes in belief system, etc have reduced its use values.

4.2 Recommendation

The paper recommends the need to study further and design holistic approach to such value which conserved and maintained natural resources. There need to make its values reinstated in local Gadaa practices, disseminating the experiences to other areas, identifying the lost species and forming indigenous trees polls integrated to biodiversity center and collecting their specimen to center of heritage conservation. Institute of Oromoo Study can establish cultural valuable tree species center of conservation for research, scientific exploration (ex. the medicinal and steaming). The holy sycamore, *Odaa* tree could be studied for its national and nation symbolic roles, historical, cultural, tourism and ecological purposes. Particularly, the Cultural and Heritage Conservation Policy as well as Environment Conservation Policy

of the country need to considerate of local wisdom, bearers of the knowledge ‘first born right’ (indigenous rights), empower the locals on their assets by setting rules and regulations. To reinforce this, forming cultural valuable floras species center of conservation for this number (not fewer than 45 species) is not lesser than raising a pocket of forest.

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