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Full Length Research Paper

## Resistance Movement and the Radio Broadcasting: A History of Afaan Oromoo Politics in the Horn, 1962 -1974

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### Abstract

*Afaan Oromoo is a widely spoken language as both a vernacular and lingua Franca in Ethiopia, Kenya and in Somalia. Despite this, the governments of these countries have become less interested at this language to use it in the form of print media industry in general and for radio broadcasting in particular for nearly one century. However, with the rise of nationalism and identity politics that was consolidated in the Horn after 1960, it became a paradox that the radio station of the three countries started to broadcast in Afaan Oromoo. Unfortunately, this issue of linguistic-identity politics has not been addressed in the studies of Oromoo history. Therefore, the paper explores how Afaan Oromoo became the language of broadcastings in these countries amid the struggle over identity politics in the region. It also examines the reactions of the Oromoo to these the broadcastings. This paper argues there is direct relationship between vernacular language and ethnic identity of its speakers. For this study, pertinent data were collected and the findings were presented qualitatively based on historical research methods using mainly narrative, descriptive, analysis and interpretation. The research findings reveal that Afaan Oromoo broadcasting for which only five minutes allowed was began by a few exiled Oromoo at Mogadishu in 1962 became one of those important languages that were transmitted from radio stations at Mogadishu, Nairobi and Harar. The exiled Oromoo wanted to reveal the Oromoo grievances and their rejection, and to call on the Oromoo masses in Ethiopia to rise up against the severe oppression they were subjected to. The Somali government increased the broadcasting time by allocating one hour duration on daily basis in order to conduct propaganda campaigns against Ethiopia. The Kenyan government also launched similar program in 1963 by allocating four hours transmission daily in order to counterattack the broadcasting from Mogadishu and to get the Oromoo support in Kenya against the Shifta War in the Northern Kenya. It was this situation that forced the Ethiopian government to launch the first radio broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo in 1972 at Harar to impress on the large Oromoo masses in Ethiopia. Through this process Afaan Oromoo became the contested language in the identity politics of the Horn of Africa and laid the foundation stone for the linguistic politics that followed the 1974 Ethiopian revolution. In fact, the linguistic politics not only brought Afaan Oromoo to become the language of radio broadcastings but also contributed to the consolidation of Oromoo Nationalism.*

**Key Terms:** Afaan Oromoo, broadcasting, marginalization, radio, suppression

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## Sochii Hacuuccaa Mormuufi Siyyasa Afaanii Gaanfa Afriikaa: Seenaa Raadiyoonii Tamsasaa Afaan Oromootiin, 1962-1974

### Axareeraa

*Afaan Oromoo akka Afaan dhalootattis ta'e akka Afaan walootti Afaan Itoophiyaa, Keeniyaa fi Somaliyaatti irra jireessan dubbatamudha. Ta'us, bulchitoonni biyyoota kunneenii Afaan kun Afaan sab-qunnamittii kamiyyuu akka hintaanef jaarraa tokkoo oliif ittisa turan. Hata'u malee, Gaanfa Afriikaa keessatti bara 1960mootaa kaasee jajjabachaa dhufuu qabsoo Oromoofi siyaasni eenyummaa haala hineegamneen Afaan kun gara radiyooti akka dhufu taasiseera. Garuu, kun akkas ta'ee osoo jiruu, qorannoon dhimma kana ifoomsu kan gaggeefame hinjiruu. Kanaafuu, qorannoon kun akkataa haalli siyaasa eenyummaa Gaanfa Afriikaafi qabsoon Oromoo Afaan kana gara radiyooti fide agarsiisa. Akkasumas, akkaataa Oromoon tamsaasa radiyoo Afaan Oromoo kana itti simate xiinxala. Qoranichi walitti dhufeenya Afaan dhalootaa fi eenyummaa saba afaan sana dubbatuu jabaa fi kan wal utubu ta'uu isaarratti kan xiyyeeffatedha. Ragaan qirannoo kanaaf dhimma itti ba'amefi xiinxalame mala qorannoo akkamta ta'ee mala qorannoo seenaa kan giddugaleessa godhatedha. Argannoon qorannoo kanaa akka mullisutti, tamsaasni radiyoo Afaan Oromoo baqattoota Oromoo Mooqaadishuu jiraaniin bara 1962 daqiiqaa shaniif eegaledha. Kunis tamsaasa barbachisaa ta'uun isaa hubatee Keenyaatti bara 1963, Hararitti bara 1972 baname. Baqattoonni Oromoo kan tamsasaa kana barbaadaniif rakkoo Oromoorraa jiru saaxiluufi Oromootti keessumattuu warri Itoophiyaa akka mirga isaaniif qabasa'aani. dadamaqsuuf. Mootummaan Sumaalee immoo waraana Ololaa Itoophiyaa fi Keeniyarratti gaggeessuuf barbachisummaa isaa hubatee sagantaa guyyaatti daqiiqaa shaniif ture gara sa'a tokkootti ol guddise. Mootummaan Keeniyas sagantaa wal fakkaatu guyyaatti sa'a afuriif bane. Kanas kan godheefi Oromoon Keeniyaa keessa jiru ololaa Somaliyaarra dhufuun akka hindogoggorreefi deggeresa Oromoo waarawaa argachuuf. Mootummaan Itoophiyas sagantaa radiyoo kan Afaan Oromoo isa calqabaa Hararitti bane. Adeemsa kana keessa Afaan Oromoo Afaan raadiyoodhaan ittin wal lolaniifi irratti wal lolan ta'e. Qabsoo isaa itti aanufis bu'ura kaa'e. Darbellee qabsoon radiyoo Afaan Oromoo kun qabsoo Oromummaa itichuu keessatti ga'ee guddaa taphate.*

**Jechoota Ijoo:** *Afaan Oromoo, hacuucuu, qoqqobbii, raadiyyoo, tamsaasa*

### 1. Introduction

Afaan Oromoo is the vernacular language of the Oromoo people. The Oromoo is the largest nation in the Horn of Africa and most widely distributed ethnic group. They occupied territorial areas stretching from Tigray in the north to the interior of Kenya as far as Mombasa, on the Indian Ocean coast, in the south; and from Somaliland in the east to the border of Sudan in the west. The total area they have inhabited is about 367,000 square kilometres (Asmarom, 2004, pp. x & 3-34; Catango, 1964, p. 165).

Before, the Oromoo were subjected to the Abyssinian conquest in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; they organized themselves around their own indigenous democratic administration system, Gadaa, and lived peacefully using their vernacular language, Afaan Oromoo. However, this form of self-rule through democratic system was eroded with the European partitions of Africa and Menelik conquest. The partition made by the colonialists did not take into consideration the historic and cultural unity of the speech community but based on European and Menelik self-interest. The partition had either lamped several speech communities into one state boundary or bifurcated large speech community into the boundaries of different states. (Vzoigwe, 1985, p. 31).

The politics of identity had its origin in the partition of African among European colonizers and Menelik conquest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In this project, the Oromoo were partitioned into Ethiopia, British Kenya, and a good number into colonized Somalia (Asmarom, 2006, pp. x & 30-34; Tesfaye, 2019, p. 48). In such forceful attempts of amalgamating different ethnic groups, the vernacular language of the speech communities became the first target. Most scholars in the fields of identity studies have agreed that switching common vernacular language of the speech community is the first and important step in melting the boundaries between “in-groups” and “out-groups” categorization (Smith, 1971, pp. 149-150). This is because, vernacular language has served not only as a means of communication but also as a storehouse of one’s myths of origin, customs, culture, history, communal cohesion, collective identity and world view which are the major elements in the establishment of the categories (Plesu, 2001, p. 14). The states that attempted to assimilate the Oromoo into their favoured core identities exhaustively worked on these elements in down pressing of Afaan Oromoo from the public affairs until the Oromoo struggle forced them to reverse their positions.

Among the three colonial powers, the situation in Ethiopia was severer than in Somalia and Kenya. In Ethiopia, the high number of Oromoo population size of Oromoo, the geographical location and the vastness of Oromoo territory made the Oromoo to be seen as a potential threat to Ethiopian state whose design was to create a country one culture, one religion and one language. The attempts were made to suppress and disintegrate the Oromoo geographically, culturally, linguistically, religiously, economically and politically that were started as early as the process of the conquest in the last quarter of nineteenth century and continued without interruption even until today.

The imperial army and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergies were distributed over the Oromoo land in order to enforce the formation homogenous nation. They assessed, confiscated and distributed the land to which the Oromoo had strong identity attachment. To make matters worse, the conquerors indiscriminately depicted Oromoo culture as ‘primitive’, ‘backward’ and ‘undeveloped’ (Teshale, 1995, p. 18) as a justification that their conquest had to be seen as civilization mission (Mohammed, 1990, p. 2). They branded the traditional Oromoo religious practices as the worship of the devil which the Orthodox Christianity saw it as a profane (Interviews with *Qes Fikadu Wayyeessaa*; *Ejjeetaa Tolasaa*; *Beranu Fikadu*; *Oljirraa Guuta*). They depicted *Afaan* Oromoo as vulgar language and passed a resolution on its replacement with Amharic (Teshale, 1995, p. 18). All these were the first measures taken by the conquerors in order to make the Oromoo to feel ashamed of the cultural identity which they had built over generations and to make them to prefer to join the identity of their conquerors. The major objective of the conquerors was to uproot the Oromoo identity so that the Oromoo would not develop Oromoo nationalism that could hamper the intended homogenization into Amhara culture, Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity.

## 2. Material and Methods

For the study, pertinent documents that were produced during the imperial era were collected and examined. Pertinent archival and secondary data were visited and consulted Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University, Harar Radio Station and National Archive and Library Agency were visited and pertinent archival and secondary data were collected and used in the study. Oral data were also collected especially from Dirre-Dhowaa, Arsi, Baalee and Boranaa. These areas were selected because they were the regions almost came under the influence radio broadcastings from the three countries. Data from Kenya were collected for me by Mr. Adamu Beyene who has exposure to the area, and that from the Somalia were accessed from those who had been in Mogadishu during the study period. Most oral data were collected using snowballing method.

All the data that were sorted, critically examined and their relevance to the study theme was checked before their incorporation to the paper. They were also crosschecked against one another and their reliability was proved. Then after, the data were analysed qualitatively based on historical research method and interpreted, using a narrative, analysis and descriptive approaches. It was through this procedure that study was made comprehensive, and meaningful.

### 3. The Politics of Afaan Oromoo Over the Radio Broadcastings

As Christ (2003, p. 149) correctly states, politics of language is the highest stage of all political movements, in fact, which is rare to achieve without a combination of all conflict factors into a single symbol. This is because the relationship between vernacular language and experiences is reciprocal. As Bourdieu correctly states the importance of this relationship between language and experience appears more evident during crisis situation than any other time (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 170). Therefore, the control of a language of a given community is significantly high in the mobilization of the speech community either to support the resistance struggle or to maintain *status quo*. This is more exacerbated with the rise of broadcasting technology. The state controlled the media in order to impose social, political, and economic ideologies of the society of the favoured language on the others. At the same, the subjects whose languages were suppressed would organize for contest to have their own ideas in their own vernacular (Caso, p. 1; Comboy, pp. 9-25). That is why before the rise of internet technology, the control over broadcasting stations is equally important as storming or defending the palace (Burke et al, 2000, p. 9). Therefore, the role of mass media, through paper print or electronically aired in either strengthening the status of one language over the other or creating consciousness to resist has been a great revolutionary development in human history (Poe, 2011, pp. 161-163). That is why in most parts of the world, there has been a great rush to control media centres so as to have total control over the people.

This is more serious when the language of transmission is in a mother tongue as mother tongue language is a guide to social reality. Scholars agree that the society addressed by the media in their mother tongue are more beneficiaries in receiving and internalizing the information than those who hear information in a second language or through translations. In support of this Plesu argues that “no matter how well you speak other languages, you are one or two degrees below your level when you use them.” (Plesu, 2001, p. 14). Therefore, the role of the broadcasting that uses a mother tongue language is double. One, it is important for the mobilization of the target society towards the intended objective by creating awareness among the listeners on what to support and what to oppose. Second, it is important to facilitate the development and promotion of the language which he/she uses (Tubiana, p. 25).

The project of controlling the media in Afaan Oromoo was started by the closing of Afaan Oromoo Radio Broadcasting in July 1942. The broadcasting was started by the Italian colonial forces in Finfinnee and Jimma in 1939 (Badasa, 1980, pp. 27-29). In August 1944 all Ethiopia languages were outlawed by a decree that banned their uses for any public purpose other than Amharic and Geez. The declaration intended to make Amharic the sole official language to be used by all Ethiopian ethnic groups. Along with this, Afaan Oromoo, which used to have considerable benefit from missionary education, was severely hampered by this policy. The missionaries were legally forbidden to teach and preach in Afaan Oromoo. Any missionary who violated the law was warned that he/she would be deported without any preconditions (*Negarit Gazeta*, Year.3 No. 12, August 12, 1944; Perham, 1948, pp. 33-134). Following the decree, it was not only Afaan Oromoo that was made illegal for political purposes, but also written literature in Afaan Oromoo were collected and burnt. It was legally forbidden to keep literature written in Afaan Oromoo (Mekuria, 1997, p. 333; Interviews with *Qes* Fekadu Wayyeessaa; *Qes* Tasfa Jireen, Biilaa; Ejeetaa Tolasa)

The Oromoo élites who were irritated with the marginalization of *Afaan Oromoo* by the Ethiopian state felt that it was tantamount to move against their very existence as a nation. As a result, they insisted on searching for any broadcasting station that could extend its assistance for broadcasting in *Afaan Oromoo* (Informants: Kuma Eda'e; Tilahun Jootee; Kebede Firrisa). The irritation was the result of what Joseph Tubiana states, "The citizen who is constantly addressed by his[her] radio set in a language which he/she does not understand would feel attacked or at least excluded and rejected by the official national community." (Tubiana, p. 25). It was the same feeling that made some Oromoo elites to believe that the Oromoo must have the media that broadcast in their language. These individual Oromoo elites who had better understand of the contribution of broadcasts in rallying the mass since they had exposure to the Voice of the Arab Radio Programme from Cairo, and the reading of the most influential newspaper of the Arab World known as *Al-Ahram* (Informants: Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Abdi Buh; Adam Ibsa; Rashid Buuba; Musa Ahimad). This is because in the 1950s, these mass media from Cairo became the voice of revolution and nationalism on the African continent and the Arab World (Kodjo and Chanaiwa, 1993, p. 762). Therefore, the Oromoo and other oppressed people of Ethiopia were in critical need of radio broadcasting in order to disclose the Oromoo grievances and denial as well as to call the Oromoo mass to rise up against the severe oppression they were forced to bear.

At the same time the Somali Irredentist government in search for any possible opportunities that could help them to collect the support of the Oromoo. It was intended to mobilize the Oromoo mass against their respective governments by exhaustively exposing all the grievances and tyrannical experiences the Oromoo had. The proposition was that radio broadcasting had a key role in engaging vast majorities without geographical barriers. The intention was that they could win over the Oromoo support in Ethiopia and Kenya in the formation of Greater Somalia through broadcasting in *Afaan Oromoo* as they knew that in both countries the use of *Afaan Oromoo* for public purposes was suppression for a long period of time (Informants: Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Abdi Buh; Adam Ibsa; Rashid Buuba and Musa Ahimad).

### **3.1 The Launching of *Afaan Oromoo* Broadcastings from Mogadishu and Kenya and their Political Impacts**

The overlapping interest of the question of exiled Oromoo elites and Somali irredentist government created favourable condition. It led to the birth Radio broadcasting in *Afaan Oromoo* in 1962 from Mogadishu that realized the wish of the Oromoo to hear issues in their own language over the radio (Gow, 204, pp. 308-309). Informants state that the Oromoo who heard the transmission expressed their joy since the broadcasting in *Afaan Oromoo* broke the baseless myth of the imperial era that runs, "Afaan Oromoo is not fit for broadcasting as it [uncouth sound] damages the radio wave and the radio itself". This derisive statement was, in fact, denigrate *Afaan Oromoo* and reduced it to inferior position in order to exalt Amharic as the only language that qualifies transmission (Informants: Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Abdi Buh; Adam Ibsa; Rashid Buuba; Musa Ahmad; Yonus Abdullah). In fact, it is to the credit of Ayub Abubakar who took self-initiative and persistently engaged in the discussion of the urgent need for broadcasting in *Afaan Oromoo* explaining the role of the broadcasting had in mobilization of the Oromoo against the request of Emperor Haile Sillasie's regime (*Ibid.*).

Ayub Abubakar was a military officer during the imperial regime. He was a lieutenant. As a result, he very well knew what was publicly and secretly done against the Oromoo. The experiences that he witnessed as an Oromoo frustrated him. This made him to seek exile and he escaped to Somalia to reveal the oppression done against the Oromoo people with all possible means which he found advantageous. Having rich information about the imperial regime, Ayyub Abubakar was the first person who started broadcasting in *Afaan Oromoo* through Radio Mogadishu which started to transmit only for

five minutes daily. As the only one staff, Ayub became fully dedicated himself to the work of broadcasting that attracted a large number of Oromoo and became influential (Gow, 2004, p. 309; OMN interview with the late Abdii Hussein).

The five minutes transmission of Afaan Oromoo radio programme became the issue of discussion among the Oromoo of Ethiopia and Kenya who welcomed it with tears and joys. The late Abdi Hussein and Yonus Abdullah, who served as the journalist and musician of the broadcasts respectively, stated that as the Somali government admired the passion that they exhibited during broadcasting, he increased the duration from five minutes trial transmission to one hour each day. With this, the number of journalists increased to six while those the musicians to five. The Somali government covered all the necessary budget for the operation (Informants: Yonus Abdullah; Ahmad Yasin interview with the late Abdi Hussien on Oromoo Television on 9/11/2016 and Shantam Shubbisaa on 12/09/2013).

The broadcasting was more successful in Ethiopia because all of the staffs were those who had experienced the oppressive rule of the Ethiopian government. In addition, they had easy access to the information regarding the situations of the Oromoo in the country through their relatives, friends and other Oromoo activities. At the same time, the information about the situations in Ethiopia was easily obtained through those individuals and groups who moved into and out of the Somali as there was no strict visa rule. Besides, the way the journalists and the musicians articulated the information with impressive expressions made the transmission to earn a large number of listeners (*Ibid.*).

Consequently, the broadcasts unleashed fears among the government of Ethiopia and Kenyan Arican National Union (KANU). The KANU that formed the first Kenyan government on 12 December 1963, feared that the Oromoo in Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya would be receptive to the propaganda of the secessionist movement of the Somali nationalists. Except the Booranaa, Garbaa, and Burjii, the other ethnic groups living in the NFD organized themselves under the umbrella of Northern Province Progressive Party (NPPP) and carried out its campaign for the secession of NFD to Somali Republic (Whittaker, 2012, p. 391).

Observing the ethnic politics ramping the region, KANU did not waste their time to launch broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo immediately in the month of their independence. Kenya allocated four hours long transmission program in Afaan Oromoo on daily basis from 8:00 pm to 12: pm. The Oromoo in Kenya were delighted and appreciated the radio broadcasting in their language for such long hours although much complains were to come late in order to reschedule the transmission time since it was the time when people go to their beds. Thus, the purpose of the launching of the broadcasting was to help counter the broadcasting from Somalia and also to get the support of the Oromoo in their propaganda campaign against the secessionist Somalis. The broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo was used as good tactical military strategy to defeat the then rebels who were supported by Somali government (Informants: Hassen Shaamoo and Shaamoo Halakee).

As anticipated, the consciousness it created among the Booranaa and other Oromoo clans in the Norther Kenya as well as southern and eastern lowland Ethiopia was said to have been significant. Through the broadcasting the Kenyan government was able to keep away the Oromoo in Kenya from supporting the secessionist war of the Somali nationalists by giving wider coverage to the longstanding conflicts of the Booranaa Oromoo with the Sumali over the grazing land and other resources (*Ibid.*; Aguilar, 1996, pp. 355-357; Baxter, 1994, p. 170).

In fact, the broadcasting not only brought impacts on the Kenyan Oromoo but also the impacts were significantly felt among the Ethiopia Oromoo through its long hour's air coverage. Although its propaganda influence was not as much as that of the Mogadishu, it made the Oromoo of Ethiopia to

question the marginalization policy of the government. The Oromoo who had information on the broadcasting from Mogadishu and Kenya desperately perceived the Ethiopian government as the one responsible for supporting Afaan Oromoo that has a large number of people in Ethiopia. Both the Kenya and Mogadishu used for broadcasting in order to achieve their political objectives while the Oromoo who were the majority in Ethiopia became a potential minority in their own country (Informants: Mahdi Hamid; Esayas Hordofaa; Kuma Eda'e and Abdii Fiixee's Interview with Hussein Adam on Oromia Media Net Work Television on 25/12/2015).

Nonetheless, the *Afaan* Oromoo broadcasting from Radio Mogadishu gave more coverage to the ideology of Ethiopia government and highly influenced the Oromoo of Ethiopia than that of the Kenya. The broadcasting which began with only five minutes daily transmission and by one staff soon rose to predominance as it exposed the reality of the Oromoo in the Ethiopian empire. Above all, what radicalized the Oromoo through the broadcastings were the poems and the songs which were aired by the radio. Both the poems and the songs were carefully prepared with powerful words in a way that could touch the feelings of the Oromoo in the country. The poems and songs that were transmitted assisted the journalists and the musicians to address broadcast the propaganda that directed, provoked, and recast the perception of the social, linguistic, economic and political realities of the Oromoo in Ethiopia. Informants stated that the most revolutionary the poems and the songs that were disseminated at the time convinced the youth to start armed struggle. As a result, many of them joined the Oromoo insurgent movement (Informants: Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Abdi Buh; Adam Ibsa; Rashid Buuba; Musa Ahimad; Yonus Abdullah). The extract given below is one of the revolutionary songs sung by Yonus Abdullah that were being transmitted through the Radio Mogadishu of the *Afaan* Oromoo programme.

#### ***Afaan Oromoo***

*Bilisummaan aannanii*  
*Nama beekutu dhugaa*  
*Kan bilisummaa hin beeknee*  
*Bira taa'ee mugaa*  
*Bilisummaan bilisummaan gariidha*  
*Yaa obolleeyyan ka'aa lafaa hirribaa*  
*Baasa hinjirree nuutti as baasee*  
*Haqa keenyaa addaan facaasee*  
*Dachee keessan masinoo keessan*  
*Kan irra taa'u adawwii kessan*  
*Maa callistanii teessan? (Ibid.)*

#### **Free Translation**

Freedom is like milk  
 He who knows it well drinkst  
 He who does not know it  
 Slumber while sitting by its side  
 Freedom, freedom is virtuous  
 O! Brothers wake up from your slumber  
 As you faced all oddities and treated inhumanly  
 We are denied justice  
 The fruit from your land and irrigated farm lands  
 Is reaped being by your enemy  
 How come! You became silent?

It is a song of experiences of suppression sung by the legendary Yunus Abdullah and frequently aired by Radio Mogadishu. The contents of the song pointed to the suffering of the Oromoo, and the necessity to fight for freedom and justice. Informants from Dirre-Dhowaa and Harar unanimously agreed that the songs and other broadcasts from Radio Mogadishu were so persuasive that the Oromoo did not want to miss the program. Those who could afford it bought radio sets. Those who had no wherewithal hurriedly went to someone who has a radio from their neighbours to listen to the programme. In fact, in eastern Ethiopia, access to radio apparatus was not an issue as the apparatuses were easily smuggled into Ethiopia. It is said that the Somali government also allowed the sale of the apparatus at lower cost (*Ibid.*).

As a result, the Oromoo who were located within the wavelength the broadcastings are said to have admired the Somali government. Moreover, as the radio broadcasting was launched at the time when the Oromoo were in strong friction with Ethiopian government on the issues of their identity, the

propaganda campaigns that were conducted through poems and songs over the radio drew a large number of the Oromoo in Harar, Baalee, Arsi and Booranaa Oromoo into the war of insurgency. The radio had also access to the most up-to-date information from Ethiopia through the Maccaa-Tuulamaa Association. In areas where land alienation was so critical like Baalee and Harar, the songs and the news transmitted by the radio served as a propaganda tool which attracted many youth Oromoo to join the struggle (Lewis, 2002, p. 411; Temam, 2002, p. 79). As a result, the programme received wide popularity as the listeners from Ethiopia, Kenya and even Djibouti sent letters after letters praising and encouraging the programme (Gow, 2004, p. 309; Abdii Fiixee's Interview with Hussein Adam on Oromia Media Net Work Television on 25/12/2015).

The effectiveness of the broadcasting in mobilizing public opinion against the imperial regime worried Emperor Haile Sillasié who went as far as sending mercenaries in order to kill Afaan Oromoo journalists of the Radio Mogadishu instead of reforming its administration and launching Afaan Oromoo broadcast as the Kenyan government did. The assassination of Ayub Abubakar, the founder and the first journalists of the Radio Mogadishu programme in Afaan Oromoo programme by a Swiss mercenary, and the drowning of Abdullah Arsi (one of the Musicians for the broadcasting in 1966) under mysterious circumstances while he was swimming at the Somali coast of the Indian Ocean was part of the conspiracy (Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Abdi Buh and Yonus Abdullah; Ahmadyasin Ali interview with Abdi Hussein on Oromoo Television on 9/11/2016 and Artist Shantam Shubbisaa on 12/09/2013).

The assassination plot was successful because the journalists and the musicians of the Radio Mogadishu in Afaan Oromoo had little or no protection. The Somali government relaxed the security protection that it extended earlier to the staff of Afaan Oromoo Programme of Radio Mogadishu. The protection was relaxed because the output of the broadcasting did not go in a way the Somali government wanted it. Rather, it simply called on all the Oromoo to form unity in their struggle against the emperor's regime and any other section who had an interest to rule over the Oromoo. It relaxed its emphasis on the issues of Greater Somalia as before. It was this situation that made the Oromoo staff of Radio Mogadishu vulnerable to the mercenaries who went as far the Shore of Indian Ocean (*Ibid.*).

The situation was more deteriorated when the Afaan Oromoo staffs of Radio Mogadishu were threatened by the Siyad Barre, who became president of Somalia after the assassination of Abdirashid Ali Sheremarle in October 1969. After he came to power, Siyad Barre forced the journalists to rename Afaan Oromoo Radio programme as Somal- Abo which was used to mean Afaan Oromoo speaking Somali. The Somali government sought name Somali-Abo was as a way to curb the broadcasting that called on the Oromoo unity since he made the territorial claim that language. Hararge, Arsi, Baalee, Gujii and Boorana were the territory Somali under the pretext that they were Afaan Oromoo speaking Somali (Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Abdi Buh and Yonus Abdullah; Ahmadyasin Ali interview with Abdi Hussein on Oromoo Television on 9/11/2016 and Artist Shantam Shubbisaa on 12/09/2013).

At the same, the Oromoo staffs of Radio Mogadishu were discontented with the name Somali-Abo which they considered it as part of a plan to bring the Oromoo under Somali domination (Interview with Yonus Abdullah and Colonel Siraji Daadhi; Ahmad Yasin interview with Abdi Hussein on Oromoo Television on 9/11/2016 and Artist Shantam Shubbisaa on 12/09/2013). The disagreement was observed clearly when the Oromoo staffs of Radio Mogadishu opted to run the program as Afaan Oromoo rather than that of Somali-Abo (*Ibid.*). Nonetheless, the Somali government did not want to quite the program immediately. It preferred to continue working on inciting Oromoos to organize themselves against the Ethiopian government which they depicted as their number one obstacle in the formation of Greater Somalia. Therefore, the radio continued to be used by the Oromoo activists and Oromoo insurgents and remained the only media that was important, especially, for the Oromoo insurgents. It helped them very



much in exposing and disseminating the objective the insurgent movements in eastern and southern parts of Oromoo land. It demystified the accusation by the Ethiopian government that the Oromoo insurgent movement stood in support of Somali irredentism. Rather, they clarified to the Oromoo people that their objective was for the liberation of Oromia. The radio transmission included top-secrets that were collected through networks including important government officials. As a result, the influence is said to have increased from time to time and rallied almost all the Oromoos in eastern and southern Ethiopia against the imperial regime. In connection with this, its popularity increased tremendously since many Oromoos resorted to buying radio apparatuses. It is said that the staffs of the Radio program became busy with several letters sent from the listeners in eastern and southern Oromia. The audience used to send poems, folk stories, songs and histories to be broadcast over the radio program reminding them of the need for more time allotment (Gow, pp. 309-310).

The Ethiopian government seriously felt the challenges. However, rather than launching rival radio broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo as Kenyan government did, it went on advancing other mechanisms for the total closure of Afaan Oromoo broadcasting. The use of Afaan Oromoo for both print and electronic Medias was restricted. The Imperial government did not bother about Afaan Oromoo when radio broadcasting began to be operated in Kiswahili in 1951/2, in Somali in 1953/4 and in Tigrigna in 1967/8 (Bulletin, Ginbot 1992,p. 19), the languages that had a smaller number of speakers in Ethiopia than Afaan Oromoo (Mekuria, 1997, p. 342). However, some Ethiopian scholars wrongly stated that since the Oromoo did not pose threats to the government like those peoples whose languages were allowed for radio broadcasting program me (Tesfaye, 1971, p. 28; McNab, p. 81; Perham, p. 380). But the opposite was true. The broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo might have been feared for the very reason that this would promote Oromoo nationalism which they believed would create an obstacle to the expansion of Amharic language and the unity of Ethiopia as a homogenous nation (Mekuria, 1994,p. 102).

Worse still is, the exclusion of Afaan Oromoo from the World Lutheran Federation Radio Gospel broadcasting which the emperor himself inaugurated on February 19, 1955/63. The program was launched in Amharic, English, Arabic, Kiswahili, Malagasy, Afrikaans and Zulu (Addis Zemen, No.647, Yekati 19/1955). Informants argue that although the initial target of the World Lutheran Federation was to use Afaan Oromoo in the broadcasting since it was the language which had been used for long in teaching and preaching the gospel. However, the increasing pressure from the government forced them to drop out the language which had been in use for preaching and writing for a long period of time (Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Esayas Hordofaa; Kuma Eda'e; Badhaasaa Simaa).

As if the systematic suppression of Afaan Oromoo at home by outlawing any institution to use language for broadcasting is not enough, no stone remained unturned by the Imperial government in order to get the closure of the Radio broadcasting from Mogadishu. They persistently urged OAU and UN to condemn the government of Somalia for its propaganda campaigns and military operation that it supported against Ethiopia. Those Ethiopian representatives who attended both OAU and UN meetings had used every opportunity to ask the participants of the meetings to join them in condemning the Somali government for violating article 16(1) of the Cairo's Resolution of AHG/Res., which proclaims "the preservation of existing borders at the time of the accession to independence." (Delimitation and Demarcation, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2014,p. 1).

The regime also exhaustively worked on defaming the broadcasts in Afaan Oromoo and its staff. On the series of *Addis Zemen*, the leading government newspaper, was indulged in defaming Afaan Oromoo staff and their philanthropists which came out frequently with different headings such as "Is there anything that Ethiopia. Expects from the Somali?", "From the Mouth of the Betrayals", "The Satanic Propagandas of Mogadishu Leaders", "Somalia's Way Hurts African Unity", etc. (*Addis Zaman*,

*Maskaram* 20, 1955 E.C.; *Yakatet5*, 1956.; *Yakatet* 11, 1956; *Magabit* 17, 1956 E.C.). Nonetheless, the regime could not able to stop the broadcasting that already won over the hearts and the minds of many audiences located within the range of the Radio wavelength. The only remaining alternative that the Imperial government left with was to launch broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo that could have the power to offset that of the broadcastings from Mogadishu through the same wave range and the same time. In order to counter the Radio Mogadishu and lure the Oromoo, the regime launched the first Radio broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo at Harar, the very same opportunity it had lost ten years before (The copy of the first quarter report of the radio station on 30 *Tir*1965 (09 February 1973).

### **3.2 The Launching of Radio Broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo in Ethiopia and Its Subsequent Political Controversies**

The launching of broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo in Ethiopia is interesting because it was launched by the very government which had continuously worked to suppress and made the use of Afaan Oromoo illegal either for public or print media. Until it was forced to launch broadcasting under the pressure of Radio Mogadishu, the government was not interested at all to address the Oromoo in the language they best understood although the number of Afaan Oromoo speakers at the time was no less than those of Amharic (Informants: Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Rashid Buuba; Musa Ahimad; Yonus Abdullah). In fact, the suppression of Afaan Oromoo from the broadcasting was a project that was started with the restoration of the emperor to power in 1941. With this, the broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo which the Italian had already started during their occupation of Ethiopia was outlawed. However, since it became clear to the imperial government that it would not be able to withstand internal pressures, it was forced to launch transmission in Afaan Oromoo in order to counteract the propaganda campaigns that were transmitted through the Radio Mogadishu. Thus, the Emperor launched Afaan Oromoo radio broadcast in November 1972 that could cover the entire wavelength of the broadcast from Radio Mogadishu (*Ibid*).

However, the broadcasting was not to be seen as apposite response to the Oromoo question. Rather, it was aimed at pacifying the Oromoo who were outraged by the imperial policy that suppressed Afaan Oromoo while the Radio Mogadishu launched broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo to which many audiences from Ethiopia were highly receptive to it. It was taken as the best solution to calm down the Oromoo grievances, and if possible, to bring them back to the orbit of Pan-Ethiopianism. (Informants: Mahdi Hamid; Esayas Hordofaa; Kuma Eda'e and Abdii Fiixee's Interview with Hussein Adam on Oromia Media Net Work Television on 25/12/2015).

Since the decision to launch the broadcast was made spontaneously, necessary preparations were not made. The order was passed without the proper recruitment of the journalists and the preparation of convenient offices that can serve as radio station. Therefore, the house for the station was rented from a private owner and man power was recruited on the basis of their ability to read and write in Afaan Oromoo rather than recruiting professionals in journalism. It was only three men who were recruited as journalists with one typist and janitor (The first quarter of the station report on 30 *Tir*1963 E.C/09 February 1972). The question of professionalism, suitable studio, furniture, budget, and other facilities were left to time so that it was difficult to believe that they could have managed all the activities needed for broadcasting.

However, the good thing is that the recruited journalists badly needed broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo than the government needed them for broadcasting. According to Kuma Eda'e and Hussein Adam, it was a pleasure for the first journalists of the broadcasting to have the Oromoo radio broadcast in Ethiopia and they faced all the challenges with interest ((Informants: Mahdi Hamid; Esayas Hordofaa; Kuma Eda'e and Abdii Fiixee's Interview with Hussein Adam om Oromia Media Net Work Television

on 25/12/2015). The journalists who worked energetically dedicated their time to the preparation of the program. Among them, the most prominent was Yeshawali'ul Mengistu, who was assigned to the broadcasting station as an accountant and typist. She joined the journalists on her own accord and covered shortage of man power by involving herself in the preparation of the program besides her regular duties (The copy of the second quarter report of the station on 30 *Miyazia*1965 E. C. /08 April 1072).

It was under this circumstance that the Ethiopian regime began the work of detaching Oromoo audiences from the Radio Mogadishu. The program not only used Afaan Oromoo for broadcastings, but it also worked deliberately broadcasting at the time when the Radio Mogadishu program was transmitting. It was done in such a way that made the range of the wavelength of Radio Mogadishu and its transmission time to overlap in order to turn away many Oromoo audiences from it. The efforts were to narrow the opportunity of listening to both radios at different times so that the chance to compete one over the other would be minimized. Until the contents and the intention of the transmission began to be analysed we can assume, many Oromoo who were in the coverage of the broadcasts are said to have tuned their radios to the broadcasts from Harar (Informant: Kuma Eda'e; Taha Basha and Abdii Fiixee's Interview with Hussein Adam on Oromia Media Net Work Television on 25/12/2015).

The issue was taken so seriously that on its tenth anniversary of it launching the emperor visited the station to hear the immediate impact in person. Kumaa and Hussein, who were the journalists of the station, explained that the emperor was amazed and felt happy when he heard the report that most Oromoo who had tuned their radio to the *Afaan* Oromoo program of Radio Harar. The report is said to have enthralled the emperor and made him to take the broadcasting as a guarantee so long as it countered the propaganda from Radio Mogadishu. Nonetheless, these journalists witnessed that except notifying the journalists not to deviate in any circumstance from working within the framework of homogenous Ethiopia, the Emperor did not provide some recommend nations to enhance the development of the station. It is said that the emperor did not make the least effort to respond to the complains of the staff for the improvement of facilities and to fill in the manpower needed for the broadcasting, perhaps, the emperor had some hidden intentions to terminate the broadcasting after the propaganda tension from Mogadishu would be controlled (*Ibid.*).

However, it was no sooner the emperor finished his visit and left for the capital than the clash of interest began between the local government officials and Afaan Oromoo staff of the station. The government needed the radio to work aggressively in praising the government's homogenization policy. To this end, the government imposed strong censorship on the issues to be broadcasted. On the other hand, the Afaan Oromoo journalists inclined to focus on the real-life situation of the Oromoo as they knew practically what was going on. In addition, the contents of the transmission should come close to the Mogadishu broadcasting to attain the intended goal of winning over the listeners.

In order to evade altercations with the local officials, the broadcasters employed words, phrases, sentences and expressions with layered and hidden meanings to reach the people with their intention (*Ibid.*). They carefully coined every word and line of satirical oral literature in a way it could convey the intended messages. To evade easy security detection, the texts were artfully interwoven with subtlety and ambiguity, which only the knowledgeable and attentive listeners could translate meaningfully. In the case of the transmission of the songs, they were checked for having the contents that could form the basis of resistance and cultural survival in their inner meanings. Therefore, each song was coined with ideology of the moment in a way that it expressed covertly the idea to advance self-awareness and political identity (Informants: Ibrahim Haji Ali; Mahdi Hamid; Yonus Abdullah; Halloo Daawwee; the late Hailu Disaasaa).

This clash of interests was in fact, not restricted to the broadcasting station. It also extended its roots into the listeners. The listeners who were in the government orbit and sensed the impact of the broadcasts were said to have put some constraints on the quality of the broadcasts. For example, the technicians of the radio station complained to the telecommunication branch at Harar for reducing the permitted 100KW to only Fifty KW that weakened the quality and the coverage of the broadcastings. This is indicative of the lack of a genuine commitment by the government and local officials to Afaan Oromoo broadcasting for long term service. Other officials had also tried to impose restrictions on the transmission of Radio Harar that range from oral warning to the incarceration of some of its staff at Harar (Informant: Kuma Eda'e; Taha Basha and AbdiiFiixee's Interview with Hussein Adam on Oromia Media Net Work Television on 25/12/2015).

On the other hand, the listeners who understood the covert meanings of the transmission continued sending letters of admiration for the staff of Radio Harar by urging them to do more. The director of the station stated in the report that within nine months of its beginning, the station received 9749 different letters sent from the audiences. The letters were also sent from those who live outside the air coverage asking for the broadcasting to reach them (Yearly Report of the Station on *Tiqimt22*, 1966/ 1 November 1973). Yet, informants and Hussein Adam argue that many more listeners preferred to listen to the overt speech of Radio Mogadishu. This struggle was followed by the permission of Radio Voice of the Gospel in the autumn of 1972 to broadcast in Afaan Oromoo that the emperor had refused when the broadcasting program had been launched in Finfinnee on 19 February 1955/63(*Ibid.*).

#### 4. Conclusion

In essence, although it has been widespread attempts to suppress and then remove the vernacular language of the speech community in an effort to carry out the assimilation policy, this study shows that in most cases the results of the suppression were proved to be the opposite. The Oromoo struggle to have their language broadcast over the radio in the 1960s and in the early 1970s were cases in point. Despite the imperial government's official decree that banned Afaan Oromoo and its systematic efforts to keep away Afaan Oromoo from public use in general and from printed media in particular, the acts put the Oromoo to start all possible forms of struggle that finally forced the government to launch broadcasting in Afaan Oromoo but under the surveillance of strict control of the Radio. The permission and the needs to broadcast in Afaan Oromoo Radio from Mogadishu, Kenya and Harar (Ethiopia) were because of the bitter and continuous Oromoo struggle to save their vernacular language which is the storehouse of their cultural experiences and the major marker of their identity. Therefore, the study established that the attempts that were made to erode and deny the ethnic identity of the Oromoo pushed the Oromoo into more aggressive reaction that directed at demanding not only the use of Afaan Oromoo for media in Ethiopia but also self-determination for which several hundreds of thousand Oromoos sacrificed their dare lives.

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### Informants

No.	Name	Age	Place and Date of Interviews	Date of Interviews
1	Abdi Buh	65	Dirre-Dhowaa	July 18, 2008 and December 25, 2015
2	Adam Ibsa	60	Dirre-Dhowaa	July 17, 2008
3	Esayas Hordofaa	65	Addis Ababa	August 28, 2017
4	The late Hailu Disaasaa	52	Addis Ababa	April 14, 2008
5	Haloo Daawwee	53	Dirre-Dhowaa	July 16 /2008: December 20, 2015
6	Hassen Shaamoo	60	Moyalee	July 12, 2008
7	The late Ibrahim Haji Ali	65	Addis Ababa	August 26, 2008; October 26, 2016 and January 19, 2017
8	The late Kebede Firrisa	65	Addis Ababa	July 30, 2008.
9	The Late Kuma Eda'e	65	Dukam	April 22, 2008
10	Mahdi Hamid	60	Addis Ababa	August 27, /2008
11	Musa Ahimad	77	Dirre-Dhowaa	July 18, 2008
12	Rashid Buuba	77	Dirre-Dhowaa	July 18, 2008; December 15, 2017
13	Shaamoo Halakee	62	Moyaalee	July 12, 2008
14	Taha Basha	65	Harar	July 20, 2008
15	Tilahun Jootee	69	Naqamtee	April 04, 2009
16	Yonus Abdullah	77	Addis Ababa	February 22, 2018