



Full Length Research Paper

Foretelling Encounter, Symbolizing Fighter and Yearning Winner: The Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual among the Ituu Oromoo, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study focuses on the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual practices of the Ituu Oromoo. The study relies on an explorative research design. We gathered the data for the study through focus group discussion, observation, and key informant interviews. The Ituu sacrifice Korbeessa and Goromtii goats, demanding peace, victory over their enemies upon conflict, and averting the potential challenges ahead of them. The findings of the study reveal that the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is performed anytime when needed. This ritual is context-based. It is performed either when conflict becomes very frequent or is predicted to occur in the near future. Only males attend the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. Male children are taken to the ritual to let them know about it from their very childhood. Fathers and elder brothers, as well as any adult male, assist the children in carrying out the ritual. The ritual serves to foretell the natural and social environment. This ritual is conflict-oriented, and women do not participate directly as main actors. We analyzed the data using the content analysis method. The qualitative data from the field were categorized and organized into different themes.

Keywords: Biluu Bilannaa, Ichimoo Buusuu, Ituu, Korbeessaa-Goromtii, Qabannaa, Maxxaarrii

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Axereeraa

Qorannoon kun jila (kadhaa) Korbeessaa-Goromtii Oromoo Ituu irratti xiyyeeffata. Qorannoon kun saxaxa qorannoo akkamtaatti dhimma baye. Haaluma Kanaan malleen funaansa ragaalee kan akka marii garee, Af-gaafii fi daawwannaatti dhimma bayamee jira. Ragaaleen funaanaman kunniin mala qoqqooddaatiin kan qaaceffamaniidha. Egaa, Oromoon Ituu kadhaa (jila) Korbeessaa-Goromtii kan raawwataniif nageenya kadhachuu fi yoo lolli uumame ammoo diinota isaanii irratti injifannoo argachuu fi. Akka ragaan qorannoo kanaa mul'isutti kadhaan Korbeessaa-Goromtii haalota irraatti hundaa'un yeroo barbaachise kamittuuni raawwatama. Keessatti ammoo, Korbeessaa-Goromtiin kan geggeeffamu yeroo lolli irra deddeebiin uumame yookiin ammoo fuulduratti tilmaameedha. Jila Korbeessaa-Goromtii kan hirmaatu dhiirota qofa., kunis kan taheef jilli kun lolairratti kanxiyyeefatuu fi kan kallattii dhaan lola irratti hirmaatu dhiirawaan taheefi. Kanaafis, ijoollen dhiirotaa daa'imummaa isaanirraa kaasanii iddoo jilaa kana geffamanii akka isaan hubannoo argatan godhama. Dubartiin ammoo jila Korbeessaa-Goromtii hin hirmaatan.

Jechoota Ijoo: Biluu Bilannaa, Ichimoo Buusuu, Ituu, Korbeessaa-Goromtii, Qabannaa, Maxxaarrii

1. Background of the Study and Justification

1.2 The Concept Ritual

As ritual is a characteristic feature of human being, people usually do it in their lives (Schirch 2005). Like some other social science words, the term ritual lacks universal definition. Many scholars and researchers conceptualized the concept of ritual differently. Though dozens of definitions were proposed no one seems to accept definitions given by anyone else (Kreinath et al., 2006). Ritual is defined as a patterned and habitual action that gathers people together, including ceremonial activities and practices (Sims and Stephens, 2011). Sirch (2005) defined ritual as religious or secular activities performed for specific purposes. According to Turner (1969), ritual is learned through formal activities that are not drained by technology and have roots in belief and mystical practices. Rituals are ceremonies or performances that enact deeply held beliefs or values. Rituals are the result of group interaction rather than individual skills and performances (Dorson 1972). In its instrumental use, the term refers to an action that is executed with conclusive results, such as the severing of a limb (Hendel 1989). In the subjective sense, ritual is the act of practicing non-repeating a momentous experience.

Many of the ritual practices are followed by sacrifices. Sacrifice is a culturally rooted practice using animals or other offerings (Detienne and Vernant 1989). Sacrifice means giving something at a cost. Sacrifices are part of an offering, but they are different. Sacrifice is different from offering in that the quality and quantity of something offered are considered in relation to what the sacrificing person/group has at hand while offering does not take that in to account about resources at hand (Firth 1963; Gusdorf 1948). Therefore, sacrifice is giving something voluntarily at loss while there are other

alternative ways (Danby, 1933). Sacrifice are not only animal or food offerings as many people understand, it rather includes sacrifice of energy and time also (Sosis and Ruffle, 2004) (Sosis& Ruffle 2004). These scholarly discussions are pertinent for the different practices in the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. This ritual is a group performance with the intention of drawing victory, success and security out of it. The Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual also entails an elaborated ritual with full of energy and symbols and sacrifices among the Ituu Oromoo.

1.2 The Oromoo Ritual System: An Overview

The Oromoo signify the concept of 'ritual' as *jila*, which in turn holds feasts, ceremonies, and festivals (Leus 1995; Kumsa 1997; Tufa and Gafarso 2018). For the Oromoo *jila* is a ceremonial practice by which members of the community join together to perform their personal and collective activities (Asmarom 1973). This practice of ritual belongs to the realm of *Waaqaa*, the physical creator of the universe. In the traditional Oromoo worldview, ritual activities are performed for *Waaqaa*. According to Kassam (2011), though the concept may hold different understandings among different Oromoo groups, it is the intersection of *Waaqaa* (Holy creator), *ayyaana* (principle of nature) and *safuu* (custom). The Oromoo perform ritual practices to assure peace on the ground and their vertical relations with their *Waaqaa* (Kassam 1999; Ruda 1993).

There have been many studies with regard to ritual practices among the Oromoo. The majorities of these studies were conducted among the Tuulama, the Arsii, the Boorana and the Gujii Oromo. Hamado and Chala (2016) studied the indigenous Oromo peacemaking ritual, focusing on the Tajoo among the Waayyuu Oromo of Arsii. According to these authors, the Taajoo ritual is the peace building ritual practiced by the Waayyuu community of the Arsii Oromo. Taajoo is performed during the Hinnika (spring) season as a New Year celebration. The ritual is primarily performed in order to obtain peace, fertility, and prosperity from their *Waaqaa*. Kassam (1999) studied the ritual and its classification, specifically the Boorana Oromo terminal sacred grade rites of passage.

Bacha, Kuto, Fufa, and Kamil (2018) studied the *buna qalaa* ritual of the Boorana Oromo. Tufa and Gafarso (2018) studied magic beyond ritual, "exploring *raaba* ritual and Ritualization among the Arsii Oromo. *Raaba* ritual is the name of a *gadaa* grade immediately before assuming ritual and political power. According to Tufa and Gafarso (2018), the *raaba* ritual is an Arsii Oromo indigenous ritual practice that is performed for a variety of reasons. The major purpose is to get relief from worldly problems and to have a blessed life. This ritual ceremony increases people's understanding of the values of tolerance and understanding.

Some studies have also been conducted on the *ateetee* ritual of the Oromo society. According to Hussein (2019) and Nicolas (2018), *ateetee* is the ritual practice mainly performed by married Oromo women for many purposes, among which fertility, safe delivery of women, demand for peace and rain. *Ateetee* is also an Oromo female deity system by which women defends their rights against any mistreatment.

Specific to the Ituu Oromo, they perform different ritual practices that are deeply rooted in their traditional religion, *Waaqeffannaa*. Some of these are the *Korbeessaa-Goromtii*, *Killa qalaa*, *Korma qaluu*, *Hirsii/hulluuqqoo*, *Biyyoo*, and *Shaffee*. *Killa* is what is sometimes called *buna qalaa*.

Killa/buna qalaa is a coffee meal made of dried coffee berries. This meal is prepared by cooking the well washed coffee berries with butter and cutting the tip of each coffee bean with one's teeth (Bacha et al., 2018).

A *korma qaluu* is a ritual performed in order to obtain victory over an enemy. It is the ritual of slaughtering one big bull at *malkaa*(riverside). *Biyyoo* is the ritual ceremony performed by senior men and women at a specific ritual site in need of rain during a severe drought.

Hirsii/hulluuqqoo is a ritual performed by the Ituu Oromo demanding for rain, health of family and livestock, and peace. According to our informants, *Hirsii/hulluuqqoo* is attended both by women and men, but it is led by women while men are passive attendants of the ritual. *Hulluuqqoo* is performed in most cases during spring (*birraa*) season. According to our informants, the *hulluuqqoo* ritual drives its name from the Oromo term *hulluuquu* meaning to pass through something. It is performed to mark safe transition from heavy rainy season to bright spring season. However, the focus of this study is the *Korbeessaa-Goromtii* ritual of the Ituu Oromoo of Eastern Oromiya.

Despite several similarities among the various rituals across Oromiya including the Ituu Oromo, they have their own specificities in terms of attendants, purposes, places, times and performances. For instance, contrary to the *ateetee* ritual, the *Korbeessaa-Goromtii* ritual is attended exclusively by males. In addition, none of the above studies discussed the ritual practices of the Ituu Oromo in particular. As a result, the purpose of this study is to fill the knowledge, theoretical, and conceptual gaps about Oromo ritual practices, with a focus on the *Korbeessaa-Goromtii* ritual. The *Korbeessaa-Goromtii* ritual is the practice of sacrificing a lamb and heifer goats aimed at preventing conflicts and gaining victory over enemies when conflicts occur. The findings of this study will contribute to other researchers who have an interest in studying ritual practices.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1 The Ituu: An Overview

The Ituu are an Afaan Oromoo-speaking pastoral and agro-pastoral community in the eastern Oromiya, Ethiopia. Genealogically speaking, Ituu the son of Murawwaa, is one of the five Oromo tribes under Bareentuu confederacy (Abdurahmen 2016; Boru, 2021). Furthermore, the Ituu gave birth to ten sons, called as 'Itu-Kudhan', means the ten Ituus. These ten gosa are the Baabboo, the Gaamo, the Elelle (Afur-galaan), the Beerree-Hidhabuu^a, the Baaye, the Gaadullaa, the Algaa, the Arroojjii, the Addaayyo, and the Waayyee. These ten Ituu are divided into two exogamous moieties (Afendi, 2020; Boru 2021). These exogamous moieties are the Kuraa and the Galaan, where the first five gosa are under the Galaan moiety, while the next five are under the Kuraa moiety (Boru, 2021). The ten gosa are deep divided into many sub-clans and lineages.

^aSome peoples consider 'Qaalluu' as the name of gosa, but this is wrong. There is no gosa named Qaalluu in the Ituu gosa. The name of the gosa is 'Beerree-Hidhabuu', not Qaalluu. It is to say, rather, the Ituu's Qaalluu are from the 'Beerree-Hidhabuu' gosa (Boru 2021). Because, in every Oromo tribes, Qaalluu are from specific gosa.

Geographically, the Ituu reside in larger areas extending from Carcar (currently West Hararghe)^b to Fantaalle district in East Shewa zone of Oromia National Regional State (Alemayehu, 1998, Gadaa 2018). They also reside in some parts of Walloo (Jaalataa, 2010). Though they live in these extended areas, the Ituu mainly dominate Carcar areas, which is historically known as *Ona Ituu*, the Ituu district (Alemayehu, 1998; Boru, 2021; Abdurrahman, 2016). The Ituu border the Karrayyuu Oromoo and the Afran Qal'oo Oromo in the west and east, respectively. They border the Affar in the north and the Somali in the north-east. In the south and south-west of the Ituu are the Anniyyaa (Humbanna) and Arsii Oromo groups, respectively (Boru, 2021). Though these are the traditional demarcations of the Carcar land, it does not mean there are clear cut boundaries between different Oromo groups and other ethnic groups sharing borders with the Ituu. Coming to the social and political organization the Ituu are structured and organized by the Gadaa and Gosa system. Despite their inclusion into the Ethiopian nation-state, the Ituu have sustained the Gadaa system and activate it in religious, ritual and also legal contexts. The Ituu used to be followers of *Waaqeffannaa*, the traditional religion of the Oromo people. However, the Ituu are now predominately followers of Islam, which flourished in their areas centuries ago (Boru 2021).

2.2 Study Design and Methods of Data Collection

The ritual studies are ethnographic in nature and, thus, we used a qualitative research paradigm. Interview and observation methods are also relevant in most cases such studies (Schilderman 2007). Focus group discussions, observation, and key informant interviews were methods used to collect data. Accordingly, we conducted three focus group discussions with elders, because elders do have long standing experience with the ritual. The first group had six discussants and the second and third had seven each. Key informant interviews were also used for this study. Seven elderly people who have rich knowledge and experience of the ritual were selected purposively. And two prophets (*raayduu*) were also interviewed. All participants were interviewed and discussed at their convenient time and place. An observation method was also used to cover areas that were unable to be covered by those previous methods. To get a deeper insight into the performance, the Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual was observed. Accordingly, the principal author directly observed while the Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual was held on May 21st, 2020. Different phases of the ritual were visited. Photographs and video records were taken and analyzed. The emotional expression, facial expression, and different activities done during the ritual were observed carefully. While observing, notes were immediately jotted down. Based on the study's objectives, the qualitative data collected through recording and note-taking was categorized and organized into different themes.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 The Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual of the Ituu

Korbeessaa-Goromtii is the Ituu Oromo's ritual of sacrificing a lamb and a heifer goat under a ritual tree. The name Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is derived from the sacrificial young goats, a lamb and a heifer. Even though the term "*korbeessaa*" refers to a male goat, what qualifies for sacrifice is a lamb

^b Carcar is the original and appropriate name of the Ituu land, named after the biggest lake 'Haroo Carcar', which is located in Carcar, near Odaa Bultum. It was during 1940s that the name Hararge came to the land of Ituu, Anniyya and Afran Qal'oo (Boru, 2021)

rather than a grown male goat. According to key informant, the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is performed in the hopes of achieving peace, avoiding potential man-made and/or natural difficulties, and achieving victory over enemies in the event of conflict. It is therefore a ritual in response to a predicted conflict to occur in the near future. Unlike other rituals, this ritual is exclusively (more of) conflict and peace oriented.

This ritual, according to Ituu Oromoo elders, does not have a regular time to be performed; rather it is context-based. It is performed when conflict a severe conflict is going on and also when conflict is predicted to occur in the future. Usually, the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is performed once a year. However, according to the elders, the ritual may be performed twice a year. In this case, the second ritual in the same year is a follow-up because of the effects of the first ritual. People often call it '*faana*,' after the first ritual. If the initial Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is followed by a bad fortune, it has to be repeated immediately to correct the wrongs and reverse the unwanted effects.

Data obtained from FGD also indicated that there is a possibility for this ritual to be performed in different parts of the Ituu Oromo. The number of rituals, the date, and the ritual ground vary across the Ituu Oromo's vast territory. Each locality has its own ritual site and fixes the date of the ritual based on the prevailing social and environmental contexts that demand the performance of the ritual. According to the Ituu elders, it is not necessary to perform the ritual at each locality on the same day.

It is a *raayduu*^c who always decides and declares the performance of the ritual when need be. The need for this ritual emanate from two sources. A *raayduu* declares the necessity of the ritual based on his prophecy. Alternatively, the local elders demand for the ritual from situational analysis and fear of the potential conflict with their neighboring groups and its severity. They ask the *raayduu* to prophesy about the conflict and its potential consequences. The process of fortune-seeking is called *alkaajima laaluu*, meaning foretelling.

A *raayduu* of any locality can declare the performance of the ritual by the Ituu residents outside his area. If a *raayduu*, regardless of his residence, prophesies severe conflict to occur in particular areas of the Ituu Oromo, this particular locality must perform the ritual. The Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual performance on a particular part of Ituu land serves the purpose of protecting the entire Ituu from the potential danger to come.

The pair of heifers and lamb goats to be sacrificed for the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual must come from specific clans and specific families^d by the instruction of the *raayduu*. For this particular ritual, the lamb and heifer are provided by the Baabboo, Alga (Jiille in particular), Waayyee, Gaadullaa, Eelle, and Baaye clans. The goat-providing families are respected and honored. It is from these specific clans that specific families are selected to give lambs and heifers. The same clans are the providers of goats throughout the Ituu Oromo lands. The elderly narrated that there were eight families in different places. The Ituu use the term "*warra re'ee*," meaning "goat providers' families", to refer to these families. But

^cA *raayduu* is a prophet. The Ituu have many prophets who live in different localities of the Ituu.

^d In the ritual tradition of the Ituu, specific clans and families are identified as the providers of animals for ritual sacrifice. These families are called by the name of the ritual for which they provide the animals for sacrifice. For instance, *warra biyyoo* (those who provide ritual sheep for the *biyyoo* ritual), *warra-kormaa* (who provide a ritual bull for the *malkaa* ritual), and *warra-re'ee* (who provide a ritual lamb and heifer for the Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual).

the foretellers who prescribe the ritual also decide whose goats have to be slaughtered for a particular ritual. As a result, turns on those families are rotated.

For this ritual, a lamb and a heifer goat are counted as one goat. In some cases, the sacrifice can be two pairs, but still the heifer and lamb goats are counted as one to denote the one-ness of the actors. The Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is attended only by males. This is because, according to discussants, the ritual entails elements of conflict and fighting. In other words, the ritual symbolizes fighting at battle fields, which are commonly attended by males. This is not to say that women do not fight their adversaries. Rather, among the Ituu Oromo males are responsible for facing any physical challenges, such as fighting enemies, while women are supposed to take care of the elderly and children, which are equally valued. Male children also attend and perform the ritual under the supervision of their fathers, brothers, and kin. This helps children to be aware of the ritual from their very childhood.

The Elders reported that the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is performed only under the *dhaddacha* (acacia) tree. Other rituals can be performed under *dhaddacha* and also under other trees like Odaa. For the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual, there are many ritual *dhaddacha* trees across the Ituu land. This *dhaddacha* ritual is also known as the *dhaddacha jinfuu* Ituu. *Jinfuu* means the end of something, particularly the other tip of a spear. In the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual, "*jinfuu*" denotes the permanent place of the Ituu. As the discussants reported, *jinfuu* also denotes the center of their land. The Ituu claim that Carcar is their homeland, and there they have their *dhaddacha jinfuu Ituu*. As a result, the Ituu want this ritual *dhaddacha* or their province of Carcar to be theirs and not taken by their enemies. They are always ready to defend it.

There is another pertinent ritual called *mutaa-marsaa*. A *mutaa-marsaa* is a piece of nail-shaped metal that is sharp on its end and is nailed down on the root of the ritual *dhaddacha*. The *mutaa-marsaa* should not be seen. It is hidden deep in the earth. *Mutaa* is nailed down into the earth to show/aspire to *jinfuu*. According to the elders, *jinfuu* embodies two definitions. For one thing, it is to aspire to let the land on which they nailed *mutaa* be their permanent land, as the *mutaa* permanently reside on that earth. On the other hand, they promise each other that though by conflict with their enemies they are pushed back inward to their boundaries, they should not leave their end border, *jinfuu*. Therefore, the place where *mutaa* is nailed shows *jinfuu* the end tip of their land.

The elders stressed the existence of a relationship between the *dhaddacha* tree and men. Ituu Oromo says "*dhaddachi dhiira*," which means "*dhaddacha* tree is male." The tree is considered a brother of the Ituu, ready to provide support when needed. So, for every threat against the peace of their land, they have to ask for the help of their brother *dhaddacha*, mainly through performing rituals under it. What matters is not the physical *dhaddacha* but the power of the ritual performance under the *dhaddacha*. The Ituu perform this ritual under a permanent *dhaddacha* tree, as long as it lives. Indeed, the elderly reported that the *dhaddacha* tree has a longer age, as compared to other trees, estimated at 100 years and above. Once selected, a particular *dhaddacha* tree serves many generations as a ritual ground. If the existing ritual *dhaddacha* falls, the other new and growing one in the same vicinity will be commenced as a ritual tree.

When choosing a new ritual *dhaddachaa*, some important criteria are considered. According to informants, it has to be the *dhaddacha* whose branches and tips remain intact, and the one with its full peel. It is the role of the elders to select this particular ritual *dhaddacha tree* from among others. Once it is selected, everybody knows it, and nobody cuts its branches or removes its peel. Everybody respects and preserves it because the tree has now gained a new status and spiritual power. Parents are responsible to show their children the venerated tree.

3.2 Procedure of Performing the Korbeessaa-Goromtii Ritual

The Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual passes through different stages or phases. The ritual performance begins with the declaration of the ritual by a *raayduu* who decides the day and the goats providing families for the ritual based on the prevailing context and his prophecy. The foreteller uses euphemistic speech while declaring the ritual. They say "*dhaddacha reebaa or dhaddacha tti dheessaa!*" meaning escape to the *dhaddacha* tree or run to the *dhaddacha* tree. Contextually, it means praying for peace and victory over enemies through performing the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. The call is clear for the public to be ready for the ritual.

The *raayduu* communicates all necessary information through their agents, called *ergo* or *miila*. The *ergo* (messenger) communicates the pieces of information to all the concerned families and personalities, including the *warra-re'ee*, local leaders, all males across the villages, and the public as a whole, to make the necessary preparations for the planned Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. The blessed families, according to the discussant, are those who are chosen to give ritual goats because they help to prevent conflict, maintain peace, or ensure the Ituu's victory. The public blesses the families that give goats for the ritual.

3.2.1 Attending the Ritual

The goat-providing families should be at the forefront of those attending the ritual. These families deserve special respect and protection on their way to and from the ritual. Because all males who have reached the maturity age are qualified to attend the ritual. All appear with their guns and other sharp materials, like spears and machete. Other tools, except those relevant to the ritual, are not required at the ritual site because, according to the elders, the ritual symbolizes a battlefield where one has to come with firearms.

However, some key elders and community leaders usually come with *dhibaayyuu* (the thicker and straighter stick used with *siinqee* in times of ritual). Some of the elders who attend the ritual also hold tiny sticks and *cophii* (a grass-like browser). These sticks are from the *harooressa* tree. The *harooressa* tree and *cophii* are selected for reasons. The two species commonly grow in all areas of Carcar, the Ituu province, and Fantaalle. According to Ituu Oromo elders, both the *harooressa* tree and the *cophii* browser do not dry even during the dry season. They are drought resistant and are taken as symbols of strength and resilience. The Ituu elder underscored that using these species in every ritual denotes the strength of the Ituu. It suggests they aspire to withstand their enemies just as those species withstand disasters.

3.2.2 Tying up the Cophii and the Sticks

To commence the ritual, the elders, tie up the sticks and *cophii* together with the peal of *dhaddacha*, and then tie to the *dhaddacha Jinfuu*. Tying the sticks and grasses together denotes unity among the community. They aspire their unity be strong, and tied together by love. While tying the sticks and grasses to the ritual *dhaddacha* attendants say:

YaaGooytaa walitti nu hidhi
 Oh! Lord tie us up together
 Ituu itittuu nu godhi!
 Make the Ituu as tied together as yoghurt.
 Nu tissi/tiksi, nutti tissi
 Protect us, protect our livestock.
 Heeratti nu bulchi
 Let us live by our rules.
 Gadaa nurratti eegi
 Keep our Gadaa safe.
 Uumatti nu bulchi
 Help us follow Waaqaa
 Hamaa nurraa qabi
 Protect us from disaster.

The elders who hold *dhibaayyuu* sticks come together and hold all their sticks together. They hold some of the sticks horizontally and others vertically. The first indicates the direction of their potential enemies. It also means standing together to defend their enemies in unity. The second signifies prayer to their lord from the sky to help them. They pronounce it as "*Yaa Gooytaa walqabannee si qabanne!*" We have formed a unified front, and we need your help. This is to indicate that the attendants resolved their disputes, made their horizontal relations peaceable, and came together in unity to demand peace from their god, *Gooytaa*. The elders and the first comer do this repeatedly until all attendants come together at the ritual site.

At the time when the majority of the attendants are available, the elders commence the ritual. A raayduu makes a speech about the necessity of this ritual at that particular time and place. They usually want to know if there are individuals in dispute with each other. According to the informants, the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is successful if and only if individuals in avoidance or at odd with each other settle their problems before attending the common ritual. For the success of the ritual any person should not have any feeling of grudge against his fellow Ituu person while attending the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. Discussants reported that individuals in dispute shall settle their dispute before starting the ritual or they must abstain from the ritual not to impact the result of the ritual negatively.

Elders, therefore, openly question if there are some people in dispute and at odd with each other. People in most cases confess that they have a dispute with someone else. If not, other attendants who know the secret of the dispute between the participating persons expose the case to elders. According to informants, some serious disputes which remained unsolved by negotiation and/or mediation or any other mechanisms are settled on the occasion of this ritual. Nobody refuses to settle his case, because an unsettled dispute among the attendants of the ritual is believed to have a negative impact on the

ritual which in turn would harm the community as such. Therefore, the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is very important for the reintegration of the members of the community who had been at odds with each other. Similarly, someone who has *harka nama* (committed homicide on Oromo men) does not attend the ritual. *Harka namaa* does refer to someone who killed his or her fellow Oromo person rather than someone who killed an enemy person. Once it is checked that there are no attendants who are not in peace with each other the ritual is commenced in its full stage.

3.2.3 The Raayduu: Reading the Practices

The raayduu takes on his role of following every activity of the ritual from its beginning to the end to predict the bad or good fortune in the future. He must be so cautious to predict the future from the ritual as precisely as possible. Particularly, if the conflict with their neighbors is inevitable, he tries to predict the consequences of the coming conflict. The raayduu interprets the success and failure from the performance of each ritual practice. The power to interpret is given to the raayduu only.

The attendants rather try to read the facial expression of the raayduu to do their prediction. Based on whether they read a feeling of sorrow or joy from the *raayduu's* facial expression, the attendants may guess that their future may be or may not be good. Still, the attendants do not know the specific events to happen, as a raayduu does; they guess rather. The attendants have aggressive behavior as if they are on the battlefield. But the *raayduu* never tell about the message they read from the ritual to anyone till the ritual is completed, because some practices sign good luck while others implicate bad luck. No conclusive prediction is given from incomplete ritual. The raayduu takes maximum care not to let the people quit the ritual by losing hope (if they are told bad news) or by being overconfident (if they are told good news) from an incomplete reading of the ritual.

The rules and regulations of Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual demand the completion of the ritual in either case. Therefore, they decide about the future depending on the cumulative results of every practice in the ritual. The *raayduu* foretells the consequences in terms of death and murder of the combatants, raid of livestock, and defeat at the end of the fighting. Experienced and aged elders define and paraphrase the words and reads of the *raayduu* who in most cases uses euphemistic speech while communicating their prophetic observations from the ritual.

3.2.4 Igniting the Ritual Fire (Ichimoo Buusuu)

Ichimoo buusuu is a traditional way of making fire by hitting fire sticks. It is this fire that the attendants use for the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. Fire stick connotes an elaborated symbolic meaning in the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. Elders demand the fire pronouncing "*ichimoo buusaa*" loudly; means fuel the fire by hitting the fire-stick. In between, all attendants tie a white peal of *dhaddacha* tree on/to their heads. Elders stressed the tie of a peal on their head is done to make all attendants wear a uniform. In the tradition of the Ituu Oromo fighters during combat tie this peal. This, according to elders is to differentiate themselves from enemies, because when the fighting becomes very severe and complex, fighters may be mixed, and to identify fighters on their side from enemies they use this white tie of *dhaddacha* peal on their head. Therefore, the peal serves as a military uniform.

After the fire is set all attendants are ordered to collect firewood. While ordering attendants, elders leading the ritual loudly say '*ori'i*', literally it means 'run'. Attendants then know it is an order for

collecting firewood. It is not right to use wet and growing/blossoming trees as firewood, because, the firewood used in the ritual symbolizes their enemies. The wet and blossoming trees represent children and women, who are not killed on the battlefield. The dry wood, but standing trees are still not used. Only dry and failed woods are used for this purpose. All attendants collect firewood. They produce a huge campfire for the ritual. The fire camp, according to elders, symbolizes destroying and firing their enemies.

Firing an old-dry tree implicates firing the forerunners and main warriors of their community. After the fire is fired, all the attendants of the ritual round four times around the flaming huge campfire. Elders reported rounding to the campfire symbolizes encircling their enemies, firing them and turning them into war captives. All attendants carefully handle their sharp materials and guns while rounding the campfire not to harm others. All men who have guns remove the bullet from their guns. While rounding around the fire, every person targets/points his/her sharp materials towards the wood in the fire, as if they are shooting or spearing against the enemies. Woods in the fire represent the enemies. After four times rounding of the campfire, all attendants stand targeting their sharp materials and guns towards the campfire. They sing the following song called “*diri waaqa*”

Lead singer	Followers
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
Kaonakiyyadhiibedirinja’aadirii	Diri
Spear the one who wants cross my boundaries	Let we spear
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spea
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
Ka qe’etti na game dirin ja’aa dirii	Diri
Spear someone who wants to come around my home	let we spear
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
Ka ilmatti na game dirin ja’aa dirii	Diri
Spear the one who wants to kill my sons	let we spear
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
DiriWaaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
Qarakiyyattidiridirinja’aadirii	Diri
Let (enemy) face my spear	let we spear
Diri-Waaqa	Diri
Spear	Let we spear
Diri Waaqa	Diri

Spear

let we spear

3.2.5 Symbolic Hunting and Killing of the Enemies

Following the *ichimoo* ritual, all men meet under the ritual tree where the raayduu orders the attendants to search and catch the grasshopper in the field. According to the informants, this insect represents the potential enemies and their livestock. There are three strictly prescribed rules and regulations in hunting the grasshopper.

The first is silence. Since the attendants rehearse hunting enemies or enemies' livestock everybody should keep silent and focus on his mission. They should not speak loudly for this would alert the enemies. The second is to take care of oneself from falling on the ground. To fall while hunting/chasing the enemies' marks the person will fail in the hands of the enemies or will be killed in the real fighting. It also implies that the enemies will attack the Ituu from his side. Finally, the attendant should not bleed during this ritual campaign of catching grasshopper. Everybody shall be careful of sharp materials in their hands as well as thorns. It is believed that anyone whose blood is shed in the process of ritual, in any case, would bleed either being wounded or killed during the real fighting.

Anyone who either failed down or whose blood is dropped shall perform reversing ritual/pray at his private home. This private ritual must be on the evening of the same day. This person has to tell raayduu what, when, how, and where he fell down or his blood was spilled. Based on the nature of the event, the raayduu instructs the person what he has to do to reverse the potential danger to come. According to the rules of Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual, unless he performs the private pray, he would never attend the real battlefield. If he does, he would be reported soon to the war commander, *abbaaduulaa*, and should be excluded from taking part in the fighting. Therefore, at the end of the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual, responsible elders are assigned to advise and supervise those who have to perform private rituals at their respective residents.

According to informants, someone who catches the grasshopper would face good luck. He would kill enemies or raid enemies' livestock. To catch many grasshoppers is to kill many enemies and raid numerous livestock from their enemies. Therefore, every attendant searches the insect with high commitment even though it is a very tiresome practice. All participants run in search of the insect. There is high competition among all attendants over catching the grasshoppers. To stand first by catching the insect is rewarding. Once someone catches it, he goes back to the elders and foretellers to report. Everyone who caught grasshopper reports himself to elders and community leaders. Ritual leaders identify and count attendants who caught grasshoppers. Once taking note of the successful individuals, the elders order the hunters to release the caught grasshoppers. It is forbidden to kill the caught grasshopper. According to elders, since grasshoppers symbolize enemies and enemies' livestock they deserve appropriate treatment once caught. War captives are not killed; instead, they are even adopted into someone's clan.

After a while, all attendants return under the ritual tree. Whatever their number maybe those who caught the grasshoppers are divided into two main sections of Ituu moieties, the Kuraa and the Galaan. The raayduu then publically asks the number of attendants who caught grasshoppers from both sub-moieties. The discussants reported that inspection of person who caught the insects from both moieties

have its implications. According to the *raayduu*, it is good if the numerous people are from Galaan moiety. The Ituu elders narrated that the Galaan moiety is the more blessed as compared to the Kuraa moiety. If individuals from the Galaan moiety are more successful it implies the success of the Ituu as such.

3.2.6 The Qabannaa and the Biluu Bilannaa Practice

The *qabannaa* is another main ritual procedure on the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. *Qabannaa* means literally ‘touching’. However, in this case, *qabannaa* refers to the practice of smearing the blood of the ritual goat on the forehead of all attendants. The goat owner slaughters the goats. He then collects the blood into a piece of a container, called *hullee-diroo*[°]. And then keeps for other practices to come. The butcher cuts the goats from their neck only. The goat owner and all attendants stay away from the slaughtered goat, while the prophet has to observe the dying goats as part of the ritual with its implication to forecast.

Data from Ituu elders showed that a *raayduu* specifically foretells from the slaughtered goat. He closely observes the front and back legs of the slaughtered goats. Depending on the direction of the legs the *raayduu* predicts with which of their neighboring enemies (Afar, Somali or Argobba and Amhara) will conflict break out shortly. And therefore, whether the legs of the slaughtered goats are to the north direction (to Afar) or the west direction (to Argobba and Amhara) matter. The conflict is predicted to happen accordingly. The *raayduu* then informs the people to make necessary preparation accordingly. Informants reported that sometimes the legs of the goat may be in neither direction nor clear. In all cases, the directions or confusion of the direction of the legs have implications and are part of the overall ritual processes to predict. The *Raayduu* also reads dead bodies, hair in particular, of the goats. After *raayduu* has done with his role of watching and reading the slaughtered goats, blood smearing continues (See plate I)



Plate I: *Qabannaa* Practice

[°]*Hullee-diroo* is made from browser/tree called *Khalaalaa*

The owner of the ritual goat commences the blood smearing ritual by inviting all the attendants to the practice. Every attendant rushes to smearing blood. The goat owner smears a few first comers by himself. And other key persons (ritual leaders) help him with smearing all attendants. No attendant smears himself; he rather smears for someone. Nobody has to leave out smearing the blood. According to discussants, someone absent of the *qabannaa* would face bad luck in the future fights. The bad fate may also communicate to other Ituu. According to the rules of Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual, during *qabannaa* ritual blood should not drop on any part of the attendants' body or even touch their clothes. All attendants smear specifically on their foreheads because fighters encounter their enemies directly. The forehead connotes direct encounter and face-to-face fighting. Attendants should carefully perform the ritual practice. Attendants also smear blood on the tip of their sharp materials to pray let their sharp materials shed the blood of their enemies on real fighting. Some experienced elders reported that blood is smeared for different reasons. It is smeared for "*faloo*" meaning sorcery. These include hoping for good fortune or luck for the Ituu. It is about to pray for defeat, kill and shed the blood of enemies' raid, and displace enemies. While performing the practice of *qabannaa*, the anointer (be it the owner of the ritual goat, ritual leader a friend) pronounces with blessing gesture as follows.

Adda Jabaadhu

Be strong headed/ never flight from battle field/be brave

Siidaa danddee tayi

Si hin dandayin

Adda-dhahi

Beat or shoot head of your enemies

Mataa dhiiraa tayi

Be strong

Adda diinaa argadhu

Get (shoot) the head of your enemies

Adda dhoosi

Destroy

The meaning of smearing forehead thus entails a prayer to save one's head from attack and to the contrary to shoot the enemies' foreheads. The goat owner waits until all attendants complete smearing the blood. He then smears himself for the second time. This is called *jinfuu*, meaning the end of the smearing. After *jinfuu*, no attendants are allowed to smear. The next is *biluu-bilannaa* practice.

The next ritual practice on the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual is "*biluu-bilannaa*". *Biluu* is a mixture of blood and crushed soot of charcoal. The mix becomes mud. *Biluu-bilannaa* is the practice of anointing this mixed mud on someone's head. The *abbaa-gonfoo* leads the practice of *biluu-bilannaa*. The *abbaa-gonfoos* having his *biluu* on his hand stays away from all attendants. Attendants then come to smear this mud for themselves. This smearing is different from previous smearing, *qabannaa*. According to informants, only some of the participants deserve the smearing of *biluu*. These are the people whom the community recognizes as brave fighters. According to elders, braveness, which accredits someone to smear *biluu* is evaluated by many things. Someone who faced enemies on a battlefield and didn't escape from is eligible to smear *biluu*. And somebody who heard livestock and protects them from the neighboring raiders despite the number of the raiders and their efforts to chase

him or kill him is also eligible. One who withstands his enemies till he gets support from his fellow Ituu brothers. One who is not a liar (Ituu call such man *nama guutuu*).

Therefore, individuals who are appropriate for the smearing compete with each other on the *biluu*. While smearing people become very emotional and continue vowing. Moreover, the one who feels confident and would not escape enemies in the battle would come to smear it. Attendants know each other very well and comment on each other at the spot. If the community does not recognize, someone cannot smear by his own will. The *abbaa-gonfoo* has also full right to ban someone whom attendants do not perceive brave. The *abbaa-gonfoo* confidently says “I allow my *biluu* only for a brave”. Still, the *abbaa-gonfoo* cannot ban a brave man from smearing by undermining his braveness, because it is a public event.



Plate II: - *Biluu* (on the hand of *Abbaa-Gonfoo*)



Plate III: Attendants smearing biluu

According to the rule of *biluu-bilannaa*, once someone smeared this mud; the man is not allowed to escape from fighting his enemies, even if he is alone at that particular place and surrounded by enemies. Once he smeared he would die running forward to meet the enemy face to face. He has to die there where he faced the enemy if Waaqaa does not rescue him. The elder showed that it is shame to escape the enemy once someone smeared this *biluu*. *Biluu* is therefore, one way of sharpening children and adult to be brave and accrue warrior behavior. However, a child who has not ever attended a battlefield can smear *biluu* since children cannot be identified as brave or not in their childhood age.

Next, the skin is removed in a somewhat different way from normal slaughtering. Initially, the goat is slaughtered from its neck. A tiny skin on the backbone starting from tail to head is removed first. The ears and horns of the goats are removed with the first tiny skin. The owners of the ritual lamb and heifer goats wear this skin. It covers the head of the man. The head side of the skin is put on the head of the man and the tail side is hung down on the back of the man. It is this practice and wearing of this skin that gives the goat owner, the name *abbaa-gonfoo*. (*gonfoo* is something that covers one's head).



Plate IV: Abbaa-gonfoo,

All attendants taste the raw meat of the ritual goats. The meat is butchered into pieces and tasted by all attendants. The meat tasting ritual is called *dhaandhama*. Elders stated that tasting the little meat of two goats by hundreds of attendants is a symbol of unity and tolerance among the Ituu. It is also a sign of promise to perform the orders of the *raayduu*. While tasting the meat attendants vow. They promise to never escape from each other during fighting

The attendants collect four legs, lungs, head, and tongue of all the sacrificed goats together. If the sacrifice goats are two or three pairs, elders put the organs of each pair separately. Neither organs of different goats nor different organs of the same goat are mixed up. These collections are called *kuusaa*. The *raayduu* foretells from *kuusaa*. The elders put the collected organs at some distance from and at the right side of the ritual site. Elder reported they put on the right hand of the site because they aspire everything in the fighting be good fortune for them. All people silently watch at the organs, until a *risaa* (an eagle) comes to eat these organs. According to *raayduu* if a *risaa* does not come to eat this *kuusaa*, the effect of the ritual will not be good. Even sometimes if *risaa* is late to come, attendants pray that the bird to come. Otherwise, it is difficult for the *raayduu* to foretell conclusively. When a *risaa* comes to eat those collects of goats flashes the following things are considered.

1. Whose goat's organ does the bird has eaten?
2. Which organ (lung or leg or other) has the bird eaten first?
3. Does the bird eat the organ sitting there or run away?
4. Has the bird finished the *kuusaa*?

Maxxaarrii dhoosuu is another practice on the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual. *Maxxaarrii* means skin and *dhoosuu*, means dividing. *Maxxaarrii dhoosuu* is the practice of dividing the skin of the sacrificed goat into many tiny ropes. The attendants tie the tiny rope from the goats' skin to the ritual *dhaddcha*, their heads and on sharp materials. Attendants also tie it on their hands. This tie of rope skin is called *meedhicha*.

3.3 Declaration of the Foretells by Raayduu and the closing of the Ritual by Blessing

At the end of the ritual, the *raayduu* declares the main foretells/prophecies. The elders and community leaders provide instructions concerning the whole life of the community. These instructions may entail mobility directions of the Ituu. If *raayduu* predicts, for instance, conflict with Afar or Argobba, community leaders inform the public to migrate seasonal migration to these directions. The *raayduu* and leaders inform the wider community to reside on strategic directions which would help them defend their enemies. The *raayduu* forecasts the death of lives in the conflict. However, they would not tell the exact magnitude of the loss. They also forecast during which season would conflict will be severe. The elders and experienced *abbaa-duulaa* (war leader) recite different instructions concerning fighting ethics. These decrees according to FGD conducted with elders are 1) not to harm civilians (mothers, elders, and children); threatening them is unethical. The *raayduu* curse anyone does these. 2) To escape from livestock while facing enemies at the herding sites is considered as violating battle norms. Fighters should choose death defending their livestock and people rather than escaping from enemies. 3) Flipping faces to enemies' faces and running forward to face enemies is necessary.

The *raayduu* and elders conclude the Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual by blessing. They use the most common blessing among the Ituu Oromoo.

Eebbisaa

Eebbaba dhaadhi badhaadhi
Prosper by bless
Taadhii Taadhii
Prosper many times
Taadhii roobaa
Let prosperity be as many times as rain
Horta abarii
Let you reproduce
Barrii nagaaa
Let the year be peace
Bariinnagaa
Let the dawn be peace
Ummanninagaa
Let the people be peace
Horiinnagaa
Let a livestock be peace
Orfoobaaduu
Let Orfoo be filled with milk
Baadhanagayaa

Hawaasa

Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel
Let it be
Leel

Let there be peace	Let it be
Taadhin burduq(2x)	Leel(2x)
Let livestock reproduce many times	Let it be

Then, all attendants continue singing along their sub-moiety of Kuraa and Galaan. Kuraa participants say “*kura baallin galma*” while Galaan attendants say “*galaan baallin galma*”. In either case ‘*baallin galma*’ meaning, *baalli* is an ostrich’s feather which a person who killed an enemy put on their head. *Galma* meaning numerous denote the number of *baallii*. They sing that way to aspire many individuals from their sub-moiety will kill the enemies.

4 Conclusion

Through practicing Korbeessaa-Goromtii ritual, the Ituu develop a winner mentality. The main aim of this ritual is to defend the territory, their livestock, and people from enemies. They have furious neighbors competing with them over pasture and water. The Ituu attempts to defend their territories and livestock through appealing to the supernatural power and making prior preparation which helps them to have a sense of predetermined victory over their enemies. This would in turn help them to fight in one heart. In addition, they often recite their unity, skills, and disciplines in terms of building their fighting capacity. By taking their children to this ritual the Ituu also socialize their children to have a mentality of defeating enemies and protecting themselves from enemies’ attacks. Children are taken to the ritual site to help them know and internalize the ritual from their childhood. On the Korbeessaa-Goromtii the Ituu also strengthen their unity by resolving disputes among individuals to stand against their encounters.

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