Dararo Ritual Practices: Its Importance and Historical Genesis Among Gedeos, Ethiopia

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Abstract: The major objective of this study is to discover importance of Dararo in the Gedeo belief system, and associated practices in the study area, how Dararo is related to Magano and other superhuman bodies and the interconnectedness between Dararo and Gada system of Gedeo and its practices. For this study, both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Primary data included Focused Group Discussion, Interviews and field observation. While published and unpublished data were used as secondary data. The study discovered the following findings from the analyzed data: Dararo holiday celebration has been given a special attention among Gedeo societies not only because it serves as an occasion for the smooth transfer of Gada power from one individual to another but also a time when the societies provide praise to their God for the harvesting of their farm products For the Gedeo society, Dararo is a holiday which marks the beginning of their new year in their local calendar. During this holiday the Gedeo worship their God and never do such activities as agriculture, build new houses and were banned from sexual intercourse. According to the various written resources research results, Dararo has got many meanings although it generally stands to mean a holiday, it also means generation, flowers e.t.c

Key words: Dararo, Mageno, ritual practices, Deresso, Fego, clan organization, cultural resources

Introduction
Dilla town, the seat of Gedeo zone, is situated at about 165 kilometers south of Addis Ababa in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). SNNPRS is one of the nine states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia by the 1995 constitution. Historically, before the end of the 19th century the people of Gedeo was an independent entity having their own
The social and political system of the Gedeo was mainly dependent on the land which plays a pivotal role. Just like other southern parts of Ethiopia, land in this area was owned communally. The land has been used as a centre for religious practices under the Gedeo hayicha (literally means elders/wise person). The place used for the practice of cultural and social practices was known as Songo (Tadesse K., 2002).

There were and still are several Songo where people gather to thank their Magano (equivalent to God). This is similar to the Waqa of the Oromo. According to sources, the traditional religious beliefs of the Gedeo are centered on a supernatural being referred to by the Gedeo as Maganno, which literally means Sky God. According to sources, all creations, best qualities and abilities and limitless powers are attributed to the Magano whom all Gedeo by instinct invariably believe to exist. Hence, the entire body of Gedeo oral traditions, their proverbs, maxims, folk tales, and myths reflect their beliefs and convictions in Magana. Besides Magana, natural objects and geographic features such as trees, rivers, and hills which are thought to possess superhuman powers are also adored. On the whole, the religious devotion of the Gedeo revolves around their desire to be protected against calamities and misfortunes with all the adverse situations prevented, to live in peace, good health, happiness and wealth. Ritual practices used to carry out at places where such superhuman believed to exist. Some of the rituals are still alive. Just after the harvest season every year in the month of January, the Gedeo have a prayer ceremony (thanksgiving festival) called Dararo. In Gedeuffa Dararo literally means flower. Dararo has started to revive especially after the Derg regime, that is, 1974 and onwards. This paper is about this particular ceremony called Dararo which is practiced by Gedeo in Gedeo Zone of SNNPR. The change and continuities in this ritual practices will be presented in logical and historical manner by analyzing its elements (Tadesse K., 2002).

In reality there are no ritual practices which are incorrect and unworthy. All are true in their own fashion; like religion, all answer, though in different ways, questions about conditions of human existence. Every ritual practices is made up of intellectual conceptions and religious practices. Thus, the beliefs and rites, which compose them, must be dealt with successively for ritual practices is something one is devoted or committed too.

2. Aims of the study

Nowadays, Dararo rituals and ceremonies or their procedures are understood only by the elders, although is well practiced at some districts of the
zone. Therefore, its practices and significances is not well studied, and as a result not well known. Thus, it is important to document and analyze the ritual practices and importance of the society.

The study tried to reveal what is Dararo, its meaning, practices and procedures in the area under study there by disclosing the importance of this event in maintain cultural and natural heritages in the area under study. This in turn, hopefully, show how indigenous practices play their respective role in the making the society under unity and keep together under the same areas of influences.

Therefore, this research came up with the indigenous ritual practices and procedures in the study area. Equally, it showed how this practice contributes to the natural environment protection in the hidden respect of the natural law. Last, but not least, it can be also served as a bridge for other researchers who are interested to carry out research on similar area. The study generally looks at the following major points: (1) The importance of Dararo in the Gedeo belief system, and associated practices in the study area. (2) How Dararo is related to Magano and other superhuman bodies among the Gedeo people through the passage of time (3) How these indigenous belief systems survived to present day despite the influence of modern religions (book religion) (4) The interconnectedness between Dararo and Gada system of Gedeo and its practices will be also assessed systematically.

Materials and Methods

For writing this paper both primary and secondary sources were used. The primary data was collected through extensive interview and discussion with people who are expert in the areas. Semi-structured questionarre was developed and provided so as to get insight of the people about Dararo in the area and the sector in the woreda under study particularly culture and tourism both at wereda and zone level. This helped to get and keep the accuracy of the information in logical way. Data was also collected from groups of an elders in the area. An elders in the local area who play great role during Dararo ritual practices was identified with the recommendation of concerned bodies. They were targeted so as to get common idea that prevail among elders. This system was trangulated with historical case studies for reliability. The secondary data was collected from books, journals, magazines, research papers and other documents. Then these secondary data was used in the body of the paper so as to make the primary oral sources more scientific and justifiable.

Results and discussions

Gedeo, its traditional religion and ritual practices

Gedeo myth of origin
The Gedeo are located between 5 and 7 degrees North latitude and 38 and 40 degrees east longitude in the escarpment of the south eastern Ethiopian highlands overlooking the rift valley, in the narrow strip of land running from north (Sidama zone) to the south (Oromia region) (Tadesse k., 2002). The Gedeo share boundary with the Guji-Oromo people in all directions except to the north at which they are bordered with Sidama ethnic group. According to 2007 national population census, the Gedeo had a total population of 986,977 people (CSA, 2008), of which over 23.35 are believed to live in Oromia region, notably in Guji and Borona zones.

The myth of origin of the Gedeo people is full of debated and controversies among the group itself (i.e the group’s self identification) and with others to whom they ascribe allegiances-the Guji. According to information from some written documents and some of Gedeo informants, the Gedeo people identify themselves to the Oromo ethnic group, particularly to the neighboring Guji people, in such a way that today’s Gedeo and Guji people descended from the same ancestor. The myth goes like this:

Long ago, there was a man who had three sons namely Darasso, Guji and Boro. The descendents of these sons became Darassa (Gedeo), Guji and Borona respectively. (The latter two belong to Oromo ethnic group). The myth further states that their father wanted to share his properties to his sons according to their interest in a traditional ceremonial procedure of inheritance. When they came to the ceremony of inheritance, Darassa came up with a ploughing pole (horda), Gujo came with a stick (archume) that is used for herding and Boro came with a rope used for trying a cow while milking. On the basis of the implements they brought during the ceremony, their father blessed them on the symbolic representation tied to a plough pole, a stick and rope; thus gave agricultural land for Darasso, and cattle and grazing land for Gujo and Boro (key informants).

Today, the Gedeo are among one of 56 ethnic groups who were lumped together and formed the southern nations, nationalities and peoples region of the new federal structure of Ethiopia. But this does not mean all of the Gedeo people live only in this region. While about 700,000 Gedeo live in Gedeo zone, there are also about 300,000 Gedeo living in Oromia regional state, particularly in Guji and Borona administrative zones. Formerly, the Gedeo were referred to as Darassa and their country Darassa Awraja, one of the districts of the former Sidama Tekilay Gizat (Imperial province), (Tadesse K., 2002).

During the Derg regime, the district was renamed as Gedeo Awraja. As of EPRDF’s coming to power,
some parts of Bule and Wonago were dissociated from the previous Gedeo Awraja and incorporated into Oromia region and Sidama zone respectively. In addition to this, Amaro wereda (The area of kore ethnic group), was separated from the awraja and given the status of special wereda (the country of kore ethnic group), was separated from the awraja and given the status of special wereda. Despite this, Gedeo Awrja has been raised to the level of a zone. This was said that an indication of the geopolitical and economic significance of the Gedeo to the national development in general and to the endeavor of south region’s development in particular (Dagne, 2011).

**Gedeo religion**

The Gedeo believe in Mageno, the one and only one Supreme Being. They also believe that Mageno manifests himself in his works of creation. Therefore, the Gedeo have high respect for nature in general. The Gedeo recognizes the role of the intermediaries between mageno and man. These are elderly men and women. The Gedeo believe in life after death. Ancestral spirits are regarded as the legitimate intermediaries between Mageno and the people. There are few people among the Gedeo who are regarded as saints (Wabeeko). These are believed to be able to predict future events. People troubled about their relationship with Mageno consult the Wabeeko who give advice on these matters.

There are certain places, such as riversides, hillsides, or large trees, where individuals present their petitions to Mageno. The Gedeo often present their petitions together with Xeero, offerings presented to Mageno. A piece of food and/or a mouthful of honey sprayed over the area comprise the xeero. In doing so, the Gedeo always refer to the Mageno who created these beings (rivers, hills or trees). Most outsiders misunderstand this as a pagan approach. Each Gedeo village has its own Songo, the place for mass prayer (qeexala).

Christian missionaries came to the Gedeo in the early 1950’s. They established two churches, i.e, the Ethiopian Kalehiwot church and the Ethiopian evangelical church mekaneyesus. Of these, the Ethiopian kalehiywot church (EKC) attracted the bulk of the Gedeo population and exerted a far-reaching influence. According to the central statistical authority (1996), today, 43.2% of the Gedeo population is protestant Christian i.e largely followers of either of the two protestant church, whereas followers of the original Gedeo religion make up 24.6% of the population. Orthodox Ethiopian Christians, Catholics Christians and Muslims comprise 22.1, 2.8, and 2.85 of the population respectively. The latter three religions are predominantly professed in the towns. The majority of the rural population (more than 83% of
the total) either followers the indigenous religion or is protestant Christian.

The missionaries found their evangelical work among the Gedeo quite easy, as they had only to substitute the Christian God for the Mageno of the Gedeo. Moreover, the Gedeo were not new to the concept of Christian God, as they had been introduced to it earlier by the orthodox Ethiopian Christians Hirbbe Abbayyi, pers.comm.1999 what was new, however, was the way the missionaries related this concept to the situation of the Gedeo, i.e to their oppression by the feudalists who professed Christianity themselves. Equality before God of all races of man, of all nations, of all men and women, as emphasized by the missionaries, was all the more appealing to the Gedeo (Alemu Shetta, pers.com.2000). The same situation is reported for Christian missionaries among other peoples, e.g. the Ethiopian evangelical church yesus (EECMY) among the Sidamo and the Oromo (Tolo, 1989).

**Historical foundation and development of Dararo**

For the Gedeo society, Dararo is a holiday which marks the beginning of their new year in their local calendar. During this holiday the Gedeo worship their God and never do such activities as agriculture, build new houses and were banned from sexual intercourse. According to the various written resources, the researchers have consulted, Dararo has got many meanings. Although it generally stands to mean a holiday, it also means generation, flowers e.t.c

In the tradition of Gedeo society the coming into coming being of Dararo is narrated as follows: In the ancient times, there was an authoritarian, oppressive and exploitative system, known by the Gedeo society, as akkomanoooyee under the leadership of Gossalo ruling monarchy under the administration of that system the Gedeo people were forced to present a gift to the Gossalo ruling dynasty from all kinds of things they produced. This was done by all members of the society collectively and annually.

The literal meaning of such annual contribution was called by some section of the society as ‘Gumata’ while others called it ‘Banne’ although the authors of this paper find it difficult to understand as to why such differences appear owing to lack of sources. In any case, the literal meaning of ‘Gumata’ is aid, charity or prize awarded for those who did something important for the common good of the society. But sometimes it also means a gift presented to a certain woman who recently gave birth to a male or a female baby. However, ‘Banne’ means a gift presented to the ruling Gossalo monarchy every new year by the people.
During the reign of the last two monarchs of Goddao the oppression and the exploitation of the people by ruling establishment was worsened as a result of which popular resentment increased and a revolution erupted shortly afterwards. The popular revolt led to the downfall of the oppressive and exploitative Gossalo monarch. After the downfall of the oppressive Gossalo administration, the Gedeo people adopted a new and a democratic political system known as Balle. With the coming of the new popular and democratic Balle system, Banne and Gomata were also transformed from presenting a gift to the monarchy to thanks giving annual new year holiday. This holiday began to be celebrated annually very colorful among the Gedeo because the people accepted it by their own free will and not imposed by the ruling class on them.

Ever since the 16th c, Dararo is celebrated annually. The celebration of Dararo festivity was enjoyed by the Gedeo Society for consecutive ten days between 28 December to January 7 every year. They celebrated it more than 400 years beginning from the 16th century mainly because not for the sake of annual holiday but because the society gained their political and economic freedom from the Akkomanoooyee ruling system.

**Dararo celebration process and its historical linkage with Gada system**

Dararo holiday celebration has been given a special attention among Gedeo societies not only because it serves as an occasion for the smooth transfer of Gada power from one individual to another but also a time when the societies provide praise to their God for the harvesting of their farm products. The following are the procedures to undertaken the celebration of Dararo holiday: At the eve of the holiday, elderly peoples representing seven clans from the three Gada system administration areas such as Supo roga who administers ‘dega’, Dipata roga who administers ‘weyna dega’ and small proportion of ‘dega’ and Riqata roga who administers ‘kola’ areas are assemble at Agamsa Odaya’a. After they once make sure the existence of all representatives from each respective seven clans, a cultural practice called ‘Jila-song” has accomplished which is known by the name ‘Fego’.

The main contention of the song is to indicate the settlement of ancient Gedeo nation came from Harasu, Hawata, genale, Solomo and other far areas at the place called Agamsa and the existence of the old precious culture having its all qualities.

Next to this, at the early morning day of the holiday of Dararo, Aba Gada at the for front followed by the Rogas and elders from each respective Gada administrative areas march to a place called kara,
place of Senego located 2km away from oda’aya’a. There is a historical link between their collection and stay in Kara with the Gedeo nation. In ancient time due to war with the enemy forces, seven individuals belong to the Gedeo nation retreated to a place called ‘kara’ and climbing to the tree to save their lives. Following this, the enemy forces attempted many times to cut trees in order to fall the Gedeos from the tree. However, they were unable to succeed since the tree was re-erected after its fall on the ground. Thus, the invaders turned back to their original homeland without executing their mission. Since then, this place has been given a special attention in celebrating Dararo holiday. In Kara before embark up on of pray to Mageno (God), the following practices are carried out:

All respected elders and representatives of the seven clans came from different Gada administrative regions are ordered to seat over the circularly arranged enset leaf put in ground. After this, father of Songo will move to Aba Gada and asked him by saying as follows ‘Why you came here/ isn’t there peace in state, people and government?. In response to this question, aba Gada replied as there is prevalence of peace and the main reason for his arrival is to celebrate the annual Dararo holiday with his fellow nation by praying to God to maintain peace among state and society.

Following this, praying and praise to God are accomplished hierarchically by all Gada fathers.

After performing this in Kara, all elders, Rogas begun to move to Oda ya’a, Songo house by making aba Gada at the forefront. While they enter into praying ceremony at Songo house, all properties like sticks, body armor, local tools and other properties are expected/should have to be found or collected together at the place in front Songo called “Kari Songo”. No one is allowed to enter with. If someone gets with the aforementioned properties, it is widely known among the Gedeos as that person isn’t come for peace.

At the end of pray in Songo, the communities prepared and provided coffee and breakfast to elders and Aba Gada. After this, a cultural play called ‘Fego’ is officially started leading by aba Gada. When this colorful ceremony winds up, Aba Gada forwards gratitude message to participants of the holiday. Aba Gada together with other fellow elders heard various social problems from local communities turn by turn. Aba Gada in return informed the problems to rogas by analyzing what the different individuals have said before. Next to this, those individuals who had been involved in unethical acts (which are not allowed by Gada rules) are identified with the help of the community and ordered to seat in front of Aba Gada, Rogas and local elders and then elders recruited from seven
clans has condemned those selected individuals who implemented different unethical activities by violating rules and regulations of Gada system.

**Gedeo clan organization and customary system of administration**

**Gedeo clan organization**

Deresso, the apical ancestor of the present day Gedeo, was said to have seven children, three from the senior wife and four from the junior one. The sons were named as Darasha, Gorgorsha, Doba’a hanuma, Hemba’s, Logoda, and bakaro. Descendants of these sons are organized into two ‘houses’, shole bate (the senior) to which the first four belonged; and Sasse bate (the junior) to which the last three were members of. It is from these seven sons of deresso bate (the junior) to which the last three were members of it. It is from theses seven sons of Deresso that the present day seven Gedeo gosa (clan) claim to have descended from. Oral informants have revealed that darasha clan is said to be senior clan.

The Gedeo social structure consists of gosa (clan) at the highest and extends down to lineage, extended family, and nuclear family. The later consists of the husband, his wife (wives), and their children. The extended family includes the brothers of the husband, his father and mother, and his brothers’ children in addition to the nuclear family members. Informants listed down twenty five lineages under the three clans of SASE-bate, and 15 lineages under the four clans of shole-bate. All of these lineages are exogamous, as to the same information source.

Up on his death, Deresso divided the land Amon the seven sons. Each clan thus was awarded specified territory. Before their incorporation into the Ethiopian empire in the last decade of the 19th c, the Gedeo lived in a federation of Sasse roga (three zones). These are the Subbo, Dhibata and Riqata and were ruled by a council of elected elders, according to the Gada tradition (Tadesse K., 2002). The division of Gedeo land into the Sasse Roga was for administrative purpose. With the exception of slight variation in dialect and climatic condition, people living in the sasse roga have similar culture. However, in each of the Sasse roga some clans are more dominant than others (Demissie, 1988). The Subbo roga encompasses the northeast or the highland part of the Gedeo which covers Bule wereda, Dhibata is the southeastern part which includes Yirgccheffe, kochere(formerly Fiseha Genet) and gedeber weredas; and Reqata is the northern part of Gedeo which includes particularly Wonago wereda, and the town of Dilla(Tadesse k, 2002).

When society is organized by clans the members of a clan are considered between themselves as brothers and sisters. Their duty to one another becomes one of the mutual support and defense. Offence of one member is an offence against all.
The strength of the clan is reduced if a member of a clan is killed. Therefore, compensation must be obtained either by reduction of the strength of the offending clan or by payment of goods, money, or anything considered convenient by the custom. For the matter of revenge the inconvenience of the person is not regarded, it is enough that he belongs to the offending clan. Among Gedeo, the unit is not the individual but the kin. The individual is but part of the kin. If he be injured, it is the kin which is injured. If he be murdered, it is the blood of the kin that has been shed, and the kin is entitled to compensation or to revenge. If he commits a wrong, the whole kin is involved; and every member is accountable, not as an individual, but as part of the kin that committed the wrong. These days, however, as ‘civilization’ advances the right of vengeance was gradually limited, and thus only the offender and/or sometimes his immediate kin remain responsible.

**Gedeo customary system of administration**

In every society there are acceptable mechanisms of maintaining societal rule either though formal or informal method of enforcing these rules; otherwise, the survival of society is inconceivable. Thus the Gedeo like their neighboring Guji-Oromo and the Sidama, have the Gada system, which they call it balle system (Tadesse k. 2008). The Gedeo balle system has slight variation from the Guji Gada system. But it is often referred as Gada system both by the community itself as well as by outsiders. Some used the terms interchangeably. The balle systm provides secular and religious leadership for the Gedeo. In the Gedeo balle structure, a man passes through nine balle grades in his life period9 beginning from early childhood to old age) all though qadado, siida, lumaasa, Raabba, Luba, Yuuba, Guduro, Qullullo and Cewwajje which represents childhood to old age. Each grade, as most informants indicated, lasts for eight years. Within each grade, activities and social roles were strictly defined both in terms what is permitted and what is prohibited.

Informants have confirmed that the recruitment of individual to a certain balle grade is not related to the actual age of the age set members but people of different age can be belong to the same balle grade. Similarly, John Hinnant in his study of the grade system of the Gujji-oromo states that the Gada has superficial resemblance to age-grade is that the Gada organization segments the ideal or normative male life into a number of stages or grades and specifies the appropriate behavior for each grade just as the age grade organization does(Hinnant, 1997).

There is no written evidence about the origin of the Gedeo balle system. Nevertheless, there are
common insights about the myth of origin of the Gedeo balle structure. In the main, according to the various oral traditions, the Gedeo people developed their balle system from the Gada system of the Guji-Oromo with whom they had a long history of cultural, economic and political relations and geographical proximity.

McClellan (1988) by narrating from his informants presents the origin of Gedeo Gada (Balle) system as follows:

The Guji Qallu named Woman first started Gada. Gedeo admired I, believing it to be a proper way for people to elect their leaders, but the Guji were unwilling to teach the ritual to the Gedeo. Finally, two Gedeo men, disguised as women, slipped secretly into the Qallu’s compound and were granted asylum from the angry Guji. He then taught these men the secrets of Gada. After a time, these men returned home, only to dispute between themselves who should be the first Abba Gada. A contest between the two, fifu and Dacho, was held to resolve the conflict. First each was asked to carry water from Ghedicco in a sieve. Only Dacho was able to accomplish this feat. Nest they slaughtered edoxen, and dacho’s was found to be without a heart, a true miracle. Since that time miracles have been associated with abba Gadash.

This myth helps explain three general features of the Gedeo balle system, the great similarity between the Guji and the Gedeo models, the respect which the Gedeo traditionally had for the Guji Qallu, and the shared nature of the Gedeo Abba Gadaship (McClellan, ibid). Several scholars also seem to agree to this story. Since then, elders used this system of administration to maintain ethnic cohesion among the Gedeo as well as interethnic cooperation between the group and the neighbor Guji-Oromo. These institutions in some way share some functional and structural similarities with each other.

Although the Gedeo shares the customary system of administration with their neighboring Guji-Oromo, there are also some variations between the two groups in that the Gedeo have only one central leadership-Abba Gada while there is separate Abba Gada for each Guji-Oromo group. We understand from this that there is some sort of centralization in the Gedeo Gada system with respect to the Abba Gada; but decentralized traditional administrative structure for the Guji-Oromo (Asebe, 2007).

**Dararo and other ritual practices as a potential for tourism business**

**Tourism business**

One of the African countries that have a very long history is Ethiopia. Its history goes back to some 3000 years ago, the Axumite period when Axum was one of the great empires of the world. This country of ancient civilization has many different...
cultural, historical, and archeological as well as eco-tourist sites in which it never used them for long period of time. The rock hewn churches of Lalibela (1978), Semien National Park (1978), Fassil Gibbi, Gondar region (1979), Axum (1980), Lower valley of the Awash (1980), Tiya(1980) and Harar Jegol are among the few put into the UNESCO world heritage list.

There are quite a lot of tourist attraction sites in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples as well as in the region. Gedeo zone has huge historical, cultural, archeological and natural tourism resources which is not yet exploited and prompted well. Despite this fact, the local community in the region as well as the zone is living in a severe poverty. The only mean of subsistence that they have is the traditional agriculture activity that they perform through generations. It is also well known that this agricultural activity is at its low level of practice and performance. The Economist Intelligence Unit states the fact as follows. (2002): “Although there has been a complete reorientation of economic policy since 2010, Ethiopia’s economy faces sever structure problems; the most critical of these is food insecurity. Near total dependence on rain fed agriculture, low fertilizer use, and susceptibility to pest damage, coupled with extensive highland oil erosion, has resulted in low and erratic yields.”

This clearly implies that there must be a structural adjustment in the agriculture sector. In addition to that, depending on agriculture as a sole means of livelihood is not enough. Diversifying the agriculture sector and looking for other possibilities of source of income is the question of the day. One of them is looking towards the promotion and consumption of tourism as a source of livelihood. It is well known that the zone has a very big potential in the tourism industry.

Although some change is taking place with regard to tourism, the change is not meant to the local poor. Incomes and benefits remain at the national and regional level and in urban areas only. Local communities should know, work for, and benefit from it if the sector is to grow and sustainable development is to be achieved.

**The Gedeo cultural heritage**

The Gedeo have a rich culture that fosters hard-work and egalitarian principles. Begging for money or food, even for the blind and physically disabled, is forbidden. Until very recently, the Gedeo loathed working for money. This still true in a large part of the countryside. Violence is also discouraged, as the Gedeo believe violence only breeds violence. Therefore, killing a human being is not a mere crime, but a curse (munddo0 among the Gedeo. Those who commit this act in whatever way
are excommunicated. A special purification process has to be performed to re-integrate those who had to kill during war times. The Gedeo present offerings (xeerooo or prayers (Mageno kadhata) before killing animals for food. Theft, lying and adultery are regarded as sociably evil and evil before God. Individuals committing these acts are punished in public.

**Ballee, the Gedeo Gada tradition and Dararo relevance as tourist attractions**

There are different manners, in which these prescriptions and principles are passed down to the young. Songs (e.g olkka, irbba, were’o, qeexala, goorgoree, wi’dhishsha, gadda, boochchisaa, weddo, dookko, meella) and mass meetings (haagana) where public debate is engaged, can be mentioned. The Gedeo have drums with which they accompany these songs. The drum (okolee) is so important in Gedeo culture that there are specialists for its manufacture.

The Gedeo also have a rich sport culture with jumping (Utaalchcha), running (Gongga), throwing (mogido), or hockey (qallee). The game played with two persons with stones on a wooden board or stone (saddeeqaa) is still popular. Very little archeological and/or anthropological reports referring to the Gedeo are available. This however does not mean lack of evidence. It shows lack of research. Some attempt is now being made by French archeologists studying in the Gedeo zone (Tutu-fela site). There are numerous megaliths distributed all over the Gedeo country. These are claimed by some to predate the Egyptians pyramids. Unfortunately, these cultural heritages from which there is much to be learned and gained are not recorded, and they are fast disappearing with the elderly. This is one area where the Kale-hiywot church, wrongly considering all that is traditional as satanic, has inflicted heavy damage.

**Dararo’s festivals, events and celebrations as a tourism attraction**

Beyond to natural and manmade tourism resources, cultural attractions are one of huge tourism potential in the Gedeo zone. Cultural shows during Dararo holiday celebration like live performances, festivals, spiritualized legends, songs, dances, and stories as well as religious liturgical services are the major resources which is not yet exploited and prompted in all areas of Gedeo zone. Moreover, village discovery programs for volunteers in the evening and weekends, as well as late afternoon horse riding programs are another parts of tourism resources which could be used to sustain the benefit of communities. This kind of community tourism business activity needs to be scheduled with a cultural calendar of festivals and event management and programs.
This part of the cultural economy within the cultural activities and cluster of the creative industries has the potential to be one of the most important economic exercises in tourism development operations in the zone. Festivals are a means for fast capital formation and resource mobilization in tourism in the zone. In the zone, festivals, events, and celebrations management and their business operations are one of the wider areas of economic activities that the new cultural economy provides for multicultural societies with and diverse cultures. Many countries that profit from creative tourism industries do have a sector development plan and cultural calendars of the targeted development operations and goals with measurable outcomes and clearly defined indicators. Traditional and religious festivals are the popular traditional celebrations which have been widely practiced in the zone.

References


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