

Marriage Practices Among The Gidda Oromo, Northern Wollega, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is a descriptive study of marriage ceremonies and types of marriage among Gidda Oromo, northern Wollega, Ethiopia. The information was obtained by interviewing with elders of the study community. Data were collected from January 1993 through August 1993. Naqataa (betrothal) is the most common type of marriage among the Gidda Oromos followed by Sabat marii, Hawwii, Butii, Aseennaa and Dhalaa.

Keywords: Marriage practices, Oromo, Gidda, Wollega

1. INTRODUCTION

When we view the entire range of past and present human societies marriage can be described as a culturally approved relationships or a union of one man and one woman (monogamy), of one man and two or more woman (polyandry), in which there is cultural endorsement of sexual intercourse between the marital partners of the opposite and, generally, the expectation that children will be born of the relationship (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1977).

To obtain the approval of the society it is necessary that the union be formed and recognized in accordance with the unwritten customs and taboos, as in traditional societies, or in accordance with established laws, as in more civilized societies (Westermarck, 1977). The custom of marriage differs in various parts of the world and every civilization produces a marriage pattern appropriate to itself (Ludlow, 1965).

Ethiopia consists of a number of nations and nationalities or ethnic groups with different backgrounds and ways of life. The Oromo people are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and account for 50%-60% of the population of the Ethiopian Empire State (Tilahun, 1992). They are "a very ancient race, the indigenous stock, perhaps, on which most other peoples in this part of Eastern Africa (the Horn of Africa) had been grafted" (Bates, 1979). The Oromo people primarily reside over a vast region of Ethiopia predominately in Wallaggaa, Iluabbaabooraa, Jimmaa, Shewa, Arsii, Baalee, Harargee, Walloo, Boranaa, and

Southwestern part of Gojjam (see Map 1). Ecologically and agriculturally Oromia region is the richest region in the Horn of Africa. Livestock products, coffee, oil seeds, spices, mineral resources and wild life are all diverse and abundant.

The Oromo people have their own language, which is called Afaan Oromo or Oromiffa. Oromiffa is a Cushitic language spoken in most parts of the Ethiopian Empire and northern Kenya. It is considered one of the five most widely spoken languages from among the approximately 1000 languages of Africa, (Gragg, 1982). The Oromo language has very rich vocabulary and it is the third most widely spoken languages in Africa, surpassed only by Arabic and Housa Fulani (Gadaa, 1988; Hordofa, 2001).

The Oromo have vast and very rich culture, fostered by the size of the population and large land areas with diverse climatic conditions. Marriage is one of the most important rituals in the Oromo culture. There are three things Oromos talk about in life: birth, marriage, and death. These are the events that add to or take away from the family. Therefore, it is the task of anthropologists and sociologists or other professionals to have a record document about cultural lives of Oromo people including marriage patterns, family formations and kinship system. This study deals mainly with the marriage practice among the Gidda Oromo, northern Wollega, Ethiopia.

Gidda Oromo community is found in Gidda Kiremu district, one of the 17 districts of east Wollega Zone (Ethiopia). The district is located in the northern part of the east Wollega zone with an area of 2739 km². The study community is bordering Limmuu in the West, I'bantuu in the North West, Abbay River in the North, Amurruu and Jaardegaa in the North East, Angar River in the South, and Abee Dongoroo in the East (see Map 2). No detail studies have been conducted on the Gidda Oromo culture, except by Bonnie, who gave us a brief understanding of marriage system of Wollega in general and Assefa Tolera, who studied marriage practices among the Horro Guduruu in particular.

The objective of this paper is, therefore, to identify marriage ceremonies and types of marriage among Gidda Oromo, northern Wollega, Ethiopia. The findings of this study would help to understand, nurture, promote and preserve historical identities Oromo cultures.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Four representative localities (kebeles) in Gidda-Kiremu District were selected for this study. These are Harbuukannee, Konnojji, Bocoksa, Ballaamminoo, and Kusaa'ee. The source of information relevant to the objective was mostly obtained by interviewing the elders of the community above 60 years of age. A researcher who knows the people's culture and speaks very good Oromiffa interviewed fifteen (15) senior citizens of the study community from January 1993 through August 1993. It is the elderly people who gave us ample

information about the marriage system of the Gidda Oromo, both the present and the past practices. We also used our own observation to supplement the information obtained from the elders of the study community. Literature review was made on available written sources about the Oromo marriage in general and the study community in particular.

3. MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

The Oromos have a traditional marriage ceremony which descended from earlier times (antiquities). The great social significance is attached to the wedding ceremony. The wedding day is a very important day in the life of both the bride and the groom. It is important for the bride whose wedding celebrated once in her life. As for the man, he can celebrates his wedding if he marries a second or third wives either because of the death of his first wife or when ever he wants to have more than one wife. However, even for the man, it is the first wedding ceremony which is more important than the second or the third one. These ceremonies do not take place equally in all forms of acquiring wife (marriage). The most typical is *Naqataa* (betrothal) form of marriage where the ceremony starts at the moment when marriage is first thought of and even continues after the marriage is concluded in such case as *Ilillee*, *Mana Aseennaa*, *Minje Deebii* and *Torban Taa'umsa* which will be discussed in this chapter.

Bethortal is a form marriage mostly arranged by the parents of the bride and groom with a great deal of negotiation. Traditionally the groom's parents search for a bride for their son. Before they make any contact with the bride's parents, the groom's parents research back seven generations to make sure that the famalies are not related by blood. Once this has been done, the boy's parents then make contact with the girl's parents through a mediator. The mediator goes to the home of the girl's parents and asks if their daughter will marry the son of the other parents. The girls's parents often impose conditions and the mediator will take the message to the boy's parents, then arrange a date for both parents to meet at a mutually convenient location. When the parents have reached an agreement, the man and woman get engaged (betrothed). The parents then set a wedding date and they meet all the wedding expenses.

After the betrothal is conducted, both parents prepare food and drink for the wedding and invite guests. The families enjoy the wedding ceremonies of their children and say that *yeroo cidha dhala keenyaa itti arginudha* (it the time to see the wedding of our children). Both families begin to make wedding feast including *Farsoo*¹, *Daadhii*², *Araqee*³ and food. These preparations begin a couple of weeks before the date of wedding. Fifteen or twenty days before

¹ What the Amharas call talla, a local drink made of grain and the leaves of a small shrub called *geeshoo*.

² An intoxicating honey beer.

³ Home brewed alcohol.

marriage, the young girl friends of the bride-to-be are invited to come to her house after dark to practice singing and dancing. This is called *Jaala Bultii*⁴. The boys and girls of the community gather and sing by the house of the bride and the bridegroom. The singers on the side of the bridegroom praise him and his relatives while degrading the bride and her relatives by their songs. The same is true of the singers on the bride's side.

One month before the wedding date, the groom requests his companion (*hamaamota*) and age mates (*Hiriyya*) to travel with him to take his bride. It is also his responsibility to choose the *miinjee* (*miinjota*, plural)-the best man. Usually these people come with mule. If most of the bride's friends and best men come with their own mules it is assumed to be an indication of groom's wealth. The father of the boy also tells one of his age-mates to go with his boy as *waa'ela abbaa* (father's stand-in).

A week before the wedding date the bride will start washing her clothes, arranging her hair and finish her unfinished works like traditional clothes and other household furniture. Her friends will not depart from her thereafter. Women in the neighborhoods of the bride would help the mother of the bride in grinding, roasting grains which are used for making food and local drinks. They also fetch water, collect firewood and carryout some other similar works. The men on their part help by fetching objects, which are necessary for the feast, by constructing temporary staying rooms called *Daassii* for the attendants of the feast and decorating the compound.

The bride and her friends often discuss about the departure which is inevitable. During this time they are sorrowful and often sing breath-taking melodies, the bride makes prose in poetical style and weep and her friends follow after her in singing the prose and weeping. In the early morning of the wedding date, the relatives of the bridegroom gather. After a while bride's companions gather while girls near the house of the bridegroom sing and dance. After wards, companions will be provided with food and drinks. The bridegroom then will be dressed with the clothes especially prepared for that date and will be seated a midst of his relatives. The parents of the bridegroom, elders and relatives will bless the bridegroom. When the bridegroom leaves his houses with his companions, the girl will accompany him by beating drums, singing and resounding (*Ilillee*). If the bridegroom is from the wealthy family, bullets will be shot as a pride to the family.

The companions will proceed to the bride's house singing songs. When they arrive at the house of the bride's family, a certain procedure should meet. That is, the bride with her friend will come to the gate of the place reserved for the companions and beating drums. By doing this, she bars the bridegroom and the companions from entering the house of her family. Such activity is known as *Balbal qaba*. She will do this until she gets a certain sum of money from the bridegroom as an entrance fee.

⁴ Dancing and singing, which takes, place around the boy's and girl's house in the evening two or three weeks prior to the wedding and terminates on the wedding date.

Sometimes the bridegroom tries to enter the house of the bride's family without giving a certain sum of money to the bride. During this time, a dispute may arise between the bride and her age-mates on the one hand and the bridegroom and his companions on the other hand on whether or not the company of the bridegroom should be let enter the house of the girl's family without paying some amount of money to the bride. Sometimes the disputes may lead to serious debate and even to exchange of blows. In such occurrences, some individuals from bride's family try to cool the nuisance and make the girls leave the entrance. This is almost carried out by making the entrance fee negotiable by both sides. That means these individuals advice the girl to reduce the sum and the company of the boys to pay a certain sum. After the sum fixed is paid the bridegroom and his companions will sit on the seat reserved for them in the temporary staying rooms (*daassii*). After they get in the *dassii* hosts from the bride's family provide food, distributes *waancaa*⁵ or drinking glasses to them and fills it with good quality *Farsoo*. After the food is eaten, the groom puts *gatii caabii*⁶ before the hosts lift it a way. The feast goes on in the form of eating and drinking.

The companions together with girl's parties sing and dance. Following this, the groom and bride receive blessing from the girl's parents. In that blessing place the father and the mother of the bride as well as close relatives of her will assemble and the bride and the bridegroom will be seated side by side in front of the individuals who bless them. The mother of the bride will provide *wancaa* full of *farsoo* or milk. The bride and the groom will take hold of the glass by putting their hands together on the glass at the same time. While the bride and groom holding the glass together, the father and mother of the bride will bless them by saying *walitti horaa bulaa*, which means have children, wealth and all necessity of life and live together. *Graan keessanii fi afaan keessan tokko haata'u*, which means be one mind and heart. Then the bride and groom will take a sip of the drink of blessing. At this moment older men take out all items or materials made ready to be given as a *gonfa* (gifts) to count, tie and pack them. These are prepared by the bride and her parents, and are also contributed by near relatives and the bride's age-mates. The gifts contributed by the invited people in the form of money or kinds are called *gumaata*.

After the competition of the blessing process, the elders from the bride's side demand a *miinjee* (the first best man) to be named and becomes forward when the proxy for the groom's father (*dura adeemaa*) calls his name. Then the best man is asked whether he has a sister or not and his willingness to be a brother of this girl (*miinjee*). If he names his sister, he will take an oath in her name to take care of the bride as his own sister. He receives an oath to counsel and protect her ways, to help her whenever she is in problem and asks him for help. The best

⁵ A vessel made of horn of animals which is used for drinking purposes.

⁶ *Caabii* - earthen dish or plate used for dining. *Gatii caabii* - money paid by the groom after the food is served. The girl's mother takes this money and it is usually between twenty to thirty Ethiopian Birr.

man says, “If I fail to assist her, let my sister’s best man treat her like that”. In the case that the best man has no sister, he swears saying that the same kind of treatment should come to himself. After that the groom and his companion, through the elder representing them then, state now we ate and drunk and finished what is required of us. So, we appeal to your will to let us go because we on our part have guests at our home. The groom rises alone while the best man helps the bride and leads her out. The bride walks with her best man under the newly bought umbrella and mounts her mule by the help of the best man. The companion take all the material given as dowry and mount their own mules. After this, the bridegroom and his company will leave for their home with his bride. On their way to bride’s house if they come across a river, the bride halts her mule because she wants the groom to promise her half claim over a cow. The girl does not practice this whenever she comes across a river. Rather, this is done only in the cases of rivers which she might come across near his or her house. In the case of the second river when she practices the same act, she would be promised the second half of cow as the case may be.

On arrival at the groom’s house, the groom’s sister and her friends singing to defame the bride. The companion present the *gonfaa* (gifts) and count it in front of relatives and invited guests to show how much her parents are hard working. The groom’s sister blocks the entrance until he pays her some amount of money. The companion who takes the responsibility of the bride then pays some amount of money to the groom’s sisters who do not let the bride enter the house and if they got they leave the door.

The companion and other guests enjoy themselves with the feast till the morning while singing and dancing. That night the boy deflowers the girl. The best men and the groom’s mother go to the girl after she has been deflowered. The bride’s scarf is used to take the blood to proof her virginity. If no proof of virginity is found, the husband whips her with *alanga*⁷, and sometimes sends her back to demand the return of marriage payment. But such practice is at less degree these days. If she is found virgin, the groom and the best men shoot of the gun to declare her purity and the groom’s mother and the best men take possession of the stained scarf and emerge triumphant to declare the virtue of the girl. The best men spend five days with the couples except for the day they return to her parents’ house for the *misiraachoo*⁸ For these five days the bride remains in the small house behind a curtain with her best men, visited freely only by the groom and his mother throughout a five day isolation. During these five days the best men do not allow any one to visit the bride without offering some cents.

One day following the wedding day the best men and other friends of them congratulate the girl’s family on the virginity of their daughter and their proper upbringing. On the arrival the best men and his friends shoot off the gun and

⁷ Whip made from hippopotamus.

⁸ Congratulating the girl’s family on the virginity of their daughter and their proper upbringing.

present the stained cloth to the individual family members by placing it on each of their caps while he sounds *ilillee*⁹. The friend or relative is obliged to offer a gift for the privilege of viewing the bloodstained scarf. The scarf is not necessarily the one, which has a spot of a blood on it. Every individual is supposed to give more than two coins (0.20 Ethiopian cents). After spending there enjoying the feasts and congratulators start for their house, directly to the house of the newly weds to stay there till fifth day.

On the fifth day, the bride introduces herself to the groom's family and makes a formal entry into the big house of the groom's parents. The entry is called *mana aseennaa*. Before the girl leaves the little house, the couple and the *miinjotaa* feed from the *marqaa*¹⁰ and *qorii*¹¹ provided by the groom's mother. When she leaves her small house the groom shaves her *qarree*, which is another sign of her new status, and she also shaves a small portion of her husband's hair. Following this the couple enter the house of the parents followed by the *miinjotaa* and at the door her husband's father promise her cows, and she reciprocates by providing the father with heavy *bullukko*¹² and the mother with *kutaa*¹³ and *sabbata*¹⁴.

The *miinjee* also brings many things for the ceremony such as *qorii*, food served with chicken dish, and pot full of *farsoo*. All the family with their relatives enjoy the feast prepared for the ceremony. From that day on wards the *miinjotaa* go their homes and the bride lives with her husband without feeling of loneliness.

After month or two the bride family invite the couple with *miinjotaa* to return home. This first homecoming is known as *miinje deebii* (returning of the best man). For that day the groom prepare a goat that will be killed at the house of the bride's family. His mother prepares *qorii*, *araqee* and *kukkutaa*¹⁵, which the bride takes with her when she goes for the *miinjee deebii*.

After getting prepared, the couple and the companion go with few friends on fixed date. At the house of the bride's family, young girls gather and sing together. On the arrival they are given seats in the temporary staying rooms. The bride's family provides them with food and drink. After eating and drinking, the bride stands up to exchange greetings with her family and relatives. Following this the best men dances at the middle of the girls dancing out side, declaring the virginity of the girl while the bride serving the food she has brought. People rarely sleep that night; usually stay all night eating, drinking and singing. Early

⁹ An utterance of victory or joy.

¹⁰ A pride made from grain flour, usually barley served with butter.

¹¹ Barley roasted and serve with special butter.

¹² A large garment usually worn by men. It is local production made from cotton.

¹³ A cotton cloth which is very long worn by the women from the top to the bottom. It is usually worn on the date of festivals and wedding.

¹⁴ It is a long step of cloth, which is worn by Oromos of Gidda area round their waist.

¹⁵ A food soaked in a meat soup.

in the morning, the groom brings into the front the goat he has brought and the first best man kills it.

From the killed goat, steer or ram what ever it may be, the right hind limb will not be consumed there but the newly weds take it to their home. And also the skin belongs to the best men. The couple, the best men and friends who accompanied the couple and relatives of the bride's family eat meat from the goat prepared by the bride's mother and women from the surrounding. After this, few friends who accompanied the couple return home while the couple and the best men stay for another one or two days. Before the couple return to their home, the family of the bride fix a date for their daughter to come back for yet another visit which is called *toorban taa'umsa* (a stay for a couple of weeks). On this fixed date the bride goes to her family accompanied by her husband who will turn home in the morning. She carries again flour and spiced butter to provide to her family. After her stay for a week with her parents the husband takes her home.

From this day on, the couple will have the opportunity to visit the bride's parents when invited for annual festivals and other domestic celebrations. This invitation and frequent visit is not one sided but reciprocal.

4. OTHER TYPES OF MARRIAGE

Other types of marriage experienced among Gidda Oromos were: (1) *Sabbat marii* (2) *Hawwii* (3) *Butii* (4) *Aseennaa* and (5) *Dhaala*

4.1 SABBAT MARI

Next to *naqataa* (Betrothal) type of marriage, *sabbat marii* is the second most frequently exercised type of marriage among this society. Indirectly it is a forceful marriage, which is practiced in a hurry. It is asking a girl for marriage which is done by breaching appointment arrangements or it is asking a girl for marriage without prior arrangement. *Sabbat marii* literally means rolling or folding a *sabbataa* (a long step of cloth, which is worn by Oromos of Gidda area round their waist) and it connotes a state of fact where the specific time set for a matter is fold and the case is desired to get its conclusion right there. Its conclusion takes one of the two forms, which are discussed subsequently.

One of the above two forms is that where a day is set for the betrothal by the families of the boy and the girl, the parents of the boy before the day set for the marriage will prepare a feast in secret by breaching the appointment. Then the boy will be made gather a company of men accompanying him in a secret and prepare wedding day clothes for the girl he would like to marry. Elders and the company of men will be sent to the house of the girl's family to request the conclusion of marriage before the date previously set for the marriage. These

attendants when they approach the house of the girl's family will send people from around the neighborhoods (of the girl's family) to request the girl's family permit the unconditional conclusion of marriage. The girl's family will surely suffer from shocking and anger when they listen to such news. The people living in that community gather when they come to know that a son of so and so has come to beg a daughter of so and so in marriage through *sabbat marii*. Elder people in the vicinity then plead between the girl's family and the boy together with his company arguing that once marriage is agreed up on, the girl's family should receive and listen to the men falling at the door of the house of the bride's family. At this stage, mostly the girl's mother will create trouble. Sometimes the elders and the company will stay there during the day and even the night without losing hope of getting the girl. During this time the neighbors will provide the elders and the company with food and drinks as much as they can furnish. The parents of the girl, even if they are griped strongly, will consent to the conclusion of marriage if the elders agree to each point in the former contract without any alterations or reservations. If there is no prior agreement on that point, the girl's family will usually impose expensive terms of agreement on the boy. This is to avoid the conclusion of marriage in this way. The elders in this case accept any term of agreement proposed by the girl's family and will request the substitution of less onerous terms for the most onerous ones. Hereafter, the contract of marriage will be concluded after the gradual negotiation on the terms. Finally, the elders thank the girl's family for agreeing with them and the girl be made get ready. According to the situations, food and drink will be prepared from the girl's family and the neighbors. Then the boy will take the girl to his house.

The other form of *sabbat marii* type of marriage is where the family of the girl has no prior knowledge of the marriage intended by the boy's family. The procedure followed in this form is in most cases differ to the above mentioned. In the olden days, the boy prepares different things when he is intending to go the house of the girl's family. Such things are stone, dry things, invites all sorts of the hand-capped people (dead, beggars mostly who know to bless or dam people). In such cases the girl's family does not refuse their daughter in marriage to the boy propose. So, they give the girl than being blamed or damned. To lose the girl is preferred than violating traditional beliefs of the society. Nowadays, *sabbat marii* is going by having *coqorsa*¹⁶, *ulumaa'ii*¹⁷ and *alangaa*¹⁸. In the middle of the night, the boy with two or three wise old men and a dozen of his friends silently approaches the house of the girl's parents. On arrival they put *ulumaa'ii* and *alanga* on the gets of the girl's family and sleep outside the surrounding hose until morning. Early in the morning, when the

¹⁶ Running grass. It implies that the good wish for the couple to produce children.

¹⁷ A tree with a nice odor. This is a wish that the couples would have a nice odor between them after they got married.

¹⁸ Whip. It implies a wish that the spouse live together with love as if they were coiled together like a whip.

girl's father or mother open the door of their house, one of the elders from the boy's side call them and say that *ilmi aagaa dhufeeraa intalli aagaa mana jirtii?* which means "Here is the son of a good, is there the daughter of a good in the house"? After this, a few of them search elder people from the surrounding to help them plead their case. The girl and her mother are not allowed to go out of the house stepping on the *alangaa* and *ulumaa'ii*, which was put on the door until negotiation, begin. As in the case of the first form of *sabbat marii* type of marriage discussed above, here also the advocacies try to convince the girl's parents so that they may accept the request. If agreement can be reached on the issues of marriage, the groom gives some amount of money to buy the girl clothes, shoes, umbrella and *uwwisa* for the parents.

Following this, girls gather and sing at the house of the girl's family while the groom's party eat food and drink *araqee*. Since the girl's family did not expect the marriage of their daughter through *sabbat marii* type, which is concluded in a hurry, they do not provide the groom's parties with *farsoo* rather they provide them with *araqee*, which is relatively easy to get it from their neighbor.

If it is decided that the marriage will be at some time in the future, both families prepare *farsoo* and *araqee* for the wedding. After the groom's party feast what ever they have been provided with, the process of *harkafuudha* and the blessing ceremony takes place leading to the girl's departure. The best men also takes an oath as in the case of *naqata* type of marriage.

If agreement cannot be reached on the issue of marriage, search will be conducted to obtain another wife for the boy as a commonly held belief in the Oromo society affirms that it is not good to the boy's life to have no wife after he began seeking the same. Therefore, the search continues until one is obtained.

4.2 HAWWII

This mode is characterized by that when a boy remains *qerroot* (bachelor) for several reason either because he is not handsome or he is from a family of low social status, the way he gets married is advised by his parents. The boy has no consent of the family of the girl. Sometimes, the girl's mother is involved in arranging marriage of her daughter through *hawwii*, but she keeps the secret in order not to make it known to her husband (the girl's father). This type of marriage is common among poor people and because of this the best alternative is secret selection type of marriage. Then the boy tells his father to go on negotiating the marriage where by then the father or any representative, or even the boy him self starts finding a friend around her house. It is mostly the girl's *sayyuu* (wife of the girl's brother) that the boy approaches and whom he thinks that she can keep secret and acts on a go-between.

The boy's father can go investigation of her parents to which she belongs. If the criteria of marriage discussed in chapter two is not fulfilled, the boy's father

refuses the idea proposed by his son and the matter ceases. On the other hand, if the criteria is fulfilled the father stimulates the process and gives the money to his son to buy clothes, shoes and umbrella for the girl. After she has been convinced by the go between, the date of marriage is fixed. As in the case of formal type of marriage (*naqataa*) the boy does not go to the house of the girl's family to take the girl on the fixed date of marriage. But there are places where the boy and girl with their company can mostly wait each other. Such places are either in the bush or by a river. She signs an agreement saying that she was not taken against her will and she will be taken to one of the boy's relatives until his parents prepare feast for marriage. In the next day early in the morning elders are sent from the boy's family to the girl's family to make the reconciliation. The girl's family easily convinced by the elders and they accept the union and receive a sizeable sum of money. Because the girl's family know that there is no force application involved in marriage of their daughter and there is no hope that they can get their daughter back, they usually soften to accept the union. The payment in this type of marriage is usually between 50 and 100 Ethiopian Birr, which is much less than other types of marriage except *aseennaa*. After the boy's family prepares the feast, the wedding ceremony takes place a week after the first date. The parents of the girl's also invite the couple, which is equal to *miinjee deebii*. *Misiraachoo* is also completed on the date of *miinjee deebii*.

4.3 BUTII

The Oromo of this area call *butii* the type of marriage, which is accomplished by force. This mode of acquiring wife in the Gidda Oromo has its reason of taking place especially on the part of the man, when the boy is refused by girl's parents, by the girl herself, if he is asked too much money as a bride wealth and different kind of gifts which he cannot afford. This type of marriage takes of the following two forms. The first is when the girl has consented she is induced to be abducted. The second is form is accomplished by compulsion without any prior knowledge of the abduction (unlike the first form) on the part of the girl.

The first form of *butii* type of marriage conducted where the girl's family suffers from economical problems. In this case, almost every body dares not to ask the girl of this family for marriage. Here, as years roll the girl's age will go over the above age customarily required for marriage. Consequently, the society develops a negative attitude towards the girl and stigmatizes the girl as *haftuu*, which means remaining unmarried. Thus, the girls at this stage desires to escape the curse of her family for marrying without their permission, by arranging for her subsequent abduction by the boy whom she is in love with. She does this without the knowledge of her family. She usually specifies the way of abduction, which the boy should take into action. Such ways are when she collects firewood, fetching drinking water and other similar situations. The boy is often informed of one of the above situations and abducts the girl accordingly.

The second form of *butii* is that where the boy with his friends abducts the girl from where he hides himself. The boy, however, waits for the girl in this hiding until she comes to his share. In this situation, if it happens that the girl is not alone, a combat is almost always likely to occur between the boy's friends on the one hand and the women or men with the girl on the other. In this combat the boy is likely to succeed in the fighting as he often goes out prepared for abduction. Thereafter, the boy takes the girl with him and then places her in a certain house of his relatives or bush so that no one from the girl's family might discover her whereabouts. The same night, where the abduction carried out, the boy deflowers the girl for a girl who has lost her virginity will not go back to her family.

On the tomorrow of the day of abduction, the boy's family sends elders to the girl's family to settle the matter. Settlement is usually difficult. Nevertheless, once the virginity of the girl is consummated, the girl's family never ever wants to retake their daughter and so that they can agree to the matter. This being so, the family of the girl usually ask high compensation sums for the moral and physical damage sustained by them as a result of the abduction. However, elders mediate between the two families to fix a reasonable sum agreeable by both sides. Then, the sum fixed by elders will be paid and the dispute will consequently come to an end. After-wards, agreement and peace begin to reign and the marriage for which the boy has carried out the abduction will be conducted. Other process and post wedding ceremonies are the same with the one we have discussed above.

4.4 ASEENNAA

For a woman to remain unmarried into her twenties is incomprehensible, though, she must go beyond her self, called *aseennaa*, literally means "entry". Nowadays, the people who practice *aseennaa* are insignificant in number.

When a girl is left unmarried or when her father wants to give her to some one whom she does not like, she chooses unmarried young man and then runs a way to his house without the knowledge of the man mostly in the evening. On the arrival she enters into the main room of the house (*diinqa*), scatters *iddii* (solanaceous fruit) and holding *qadabukoo* (big dough container gourd). The scattered *iddii* implies that she wishes more wealth to the family she has joined while that of *qadabukoo* is an expression of her status as the housewife in that family. She does this mostly when the boy's mother and some members of household are not at home. The young man whom the girl wanted to get married cannot reject the marriage whether he likes it or not. The rejection of this type of marriage results in ostracism by the society. The next day the parents of the girl are informed that the girl has come to the house of somebody.

4.5 DHAALA

Dhaala literally means “inheritance”. It is a type of marriage between a woman and the brother of a deceased husband or levirate. The reason behind this is to preserve the children of the deceased man within the family and save them from mistreatment by the stepfather to whom the widow may marry. According to the traditional practices of the Oromo society, the woman is obliged to stay idly thinking of her husband’s death for a period of at least one year. After her stay for one or two years without husband she is given the deceased husband’s brother, classificatory or full brother. The deceased man’s brother refuse to marry the widow thinking that as if she is his own blood relative. But he accepts when he is told to do so either by his family or elders in the community. This type of marriage depends on the number of children born to the couple and on how well the widow is liked by the parents of the deceased man. If the man has married his own wife before this arrangement, he turn to work in the fields between the two households, but if he is a bachelor (*qeerroo*), he will latter marry a girl because it is culturally credible and socially valued to marry a young girl and shave the *qarree*.

On the other hand, if there were no children born to the deceased man and the widow, she will return to her parents and gets married there unless she is beyond her child bearing age. Levirate union will also not be arranged for older widow, but her adult son’s will support her.

5. CONCLUSION

Almost all society in the world recognize the significance of marriage as a source of the foundation of a society which in turn is the result of many institutions among which one is family. Every society makes it a point to pay attention to marriage regardless of the technological advancement it has achieved or the geographical location it is in: irrespective of its being rural or urban. Thus Gidda Oromo too, as a society, recognizes marriage.

Different types of marriage seem to exist in the Gidda Oromo. Monogamy is the most prevalent form. However, polygamy is not totally absent; it also exists when the husband wants to marry another in his endeavor to get children- the most valued in the society. Besides the polygamous, husband is expected to be economically strong so that he can maintain both wives. At any rate, though this society seems tolerate polygamy, it primarily endorses monogamy. Hence, monogamy is the rule and polygamy is the exception. With respect to divorce in the Gidda Oromo, the presence or absence of virginity plays a role. The situation of divorce rarely occurs during the absence of virginity, which presupposes premarital sex.

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APPENDIX

Map 1. Oromia on the Map of Ethiopia.



