

## AMHARIC ORAL POETRY IN NORTH WOLLO: SOCIAL FUNCTIONS AND A SAMPLE ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

The study was conducted on “*Jiggiea*<sup>1</sup> Amharic oral poetry in North Wollo: social functions and a sample analysis”. As a pushing factor, ‘*Jiggiea*’ oral Amharic poetry performance gradually vanished from the farmers. One among the influences is modernization. Peasants are using mobile phone recorders in farming activities. Hence, this issue initiated the researcher to conduct a study on it. Therefore, the general objective of the study to investigate the social functions of Amharic oral poems produced and received by the people of North Wollo particularly engaged in *Jiggiea*. To attain the objective of the study, the researcher employed qualitative research method. Besides, primary and secondary sources for data collection were used. The primary data collection tools are interview and observation. Researches, articles, and journals were also employed as secondary method of data collection. This study was designed to record poems in North Wollo and to examine their social functions through thematic as well as contextual analyses. One of the findings the study revealed that praise, socio-political commentary, historical record and inspiring as the major social functions of *Jiggiea* oral poetry. Praise appeared to play roles in boosting farmers’ hard work, praise to bean ox, friends, place such as North Wollo and ethnic groups. In the category of socio-political commentary, condemnations of the behaviour of the farmers such as laziness, maladministration, generation gap, envy and malevolent, and expressions of government protests were reflected. In recording history, *Jiggiea Amharic* oral poems also reflect historical events and places such as great famine in Wollo and the historical province of ‘*Raya Azebo*’. Moreover, ‘*Jiggiea*’ oral poetry was also found out to play great roles in terms of inspiring team spirit and boosting work moral.

**Key Terms:** *Jiggiea*, North Wollo, Amharic poetry, praise, socio-political commentary, and historical record.

### 1.1 Introduction

Ethiopia, one of the most ancient African states, has a long history with multilingual and socio-cultural compositions, diversified economic activities, and interactional patterns of people. In fact, Ethiopia is known for its rich history and for its being a homeland for several cultures and languages. Thereby, it is natural that social groups are formed in Ethiopia in line

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<sup>1</sup>An informal network involves a group of people who are organized for a particular agricultural task like harvesting, weeding, digging, threshing, ploughing, loading, and transporting grain from the farm field.

with the contextually assumed similarities of cultural norms, traditions, economic bases and activities, and social systems in the ways of living together.

Ethiopia's multiculturalism is reflected in its oral literature. Levine (1965) wrote that the genius of Ethiopian peasants is visible in the stories, songs, verses, proverbs, etc., that make up their oral literature rich. Within the oral poetry, a good deal of original expressions and personalized commentary are found, especially in verse forms. Poetry exists together with their lives regardless of age and sex; everyone composes a variety of poems and songs, or recites and improvises other poems. Our peasants sing songs, or recite poems in the agricultural fields, during journeys, on holidays, hunting, wedding, and funerals.

The prominent scholars of African oral literature, especially Finnegan (1992) and Okpewho (1992), pointed out that the special role of oral poetry in most African rural communities is worth considering, especially during the time of peak agricultural seasons such as ploughing, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and constructing new houses. Oral poetry to accompany with communal work seems to occur 'universally' in African societies. Moreover, the different kinds of oral poetry extreme examples of 'special purpose' poetry in that they have a direct connection with a specific occasion and with the action itself.

In Ethiopia, oral poetry is the most common form of oral literature and it has a long tradition of application. An obvious literary quality that emerges from oral poetry comes to the forefront when one considers its importance in performance-centered perspectives. Bauman (1992) indicates from the social ground it has as medium of cultural expression. Both its production and receptions take the form of a collective activity from time immemorial. It is expressed in ceremonies such as in funerals, in marriages, in child naming and baptism ceremonies, in initiation of a particular social group, in wars times, and in other different kinds of human activities.

Oral poetry is a common cultural expression for people living in *Amhara* community particularly for people living in and around North *Wollo*. Most people in this area are agrarians; hence, they often participate in communal labours, commonly referred to as *Jiggiea*. People engaged in such communal labours, *Jiggiea*, so often make use of their rich oral poetry to express their feelings, ideologies, wishes, and world out looks.

The common understanding about the social functions of oral poetry in praising God, raising people's morale, appreciating hard-working, condemning laziness and dreaming for a better and happy future are not assuming the original forms and purposes of folklore. Thus, to study how *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poetry depicted some social functions among the people of North *Wollo Zone* is found significant.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Oral Poetry, as it is common in other genres of folklore, is a cultural expression, and is a way of transmitting people's accumulated knowledge, ideology, philosophy, purpose in life and so forth. People's creation of oral poetry often assumes what are the inspiring conditions and the contextualized purposes in producing them. As such, examination of the social functions of oral poetry would reflect how folk groups create knowledge based on the actually lived experiences and why they disseminate this knowledge. However, it seems little attention is given to the study of folk groups' verbal art integrating it with social significance. Finnegan (1992) indicated the varied functions of oral poetry. She pointed out that, "Oral Poetry serves people in many of their day-to-day activities such as working in agricultural fields and at home, participating in religious and ritual ceremonies." As such, she concludes that oral poetry has an important place and function mainly among non-literate societies. Similarly, Robert and Jones (1995) remarked that oral poetry is a cultural expression of people's commonly shared knowledge, attitudes, and social concerns.

Georges and Jones (1995) and Workman (1993) implied that many of folklore and literary studies emphasize on collection and documentation of folklore materials. By this, studies of oral literature disregard people's purpose and reasons of producing folklore materials. For this reason, this study will explicate how Amharic *Jiggiea* oral poetry is functional. Explanation of the context bound reasons would give insights about social functions of oral poetry. In addition to this, the informants of the researcher said that the society and governmental authorities in North *Wollo Zone* cultural and tourism office have given insufficient attention to *Jiggiea* folk poetry. In some few cases, much focus is only in collecting and documenting *Jiggiea* oral poetry. This oral poetry performance is gradually vanished from the society and it is difficult to see it sustained. Because now-a-days, the current productive generation does not perform it, rather they acquiesce to modern audio music used in mobile phone while performing *Jiggiea* and subsume farmer's family adopted from unfamiliar culture.

This study focuses on the social functions of *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poetry, in consideration of what social function of oral poetry means, collaboratively working in the field or in farming: it can be ploughing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, and threshing. In this context, *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poetry is believed to have its own social functions in a number of ways.

### 1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to understand the social functions of Amharic oral poems produced and received by the people of North *Wollo* particularly engaged in *Jiggiea*.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. Explicate social significances of oral poems at times of *Jiggiea*.
2. Document *Jiggiea* oral poems for further interpretations.
3. Identify the major themes raised in *Jiggiea* oral poetry's social functions.

### 1.4 Research Questions

Based on the objectives stated above, this study will try to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the social functions of *Jiggiea* observed in North *Wollo*?
2. How social functions of oral poetry are reflected in *Jiggiea* poems?
3. What are the possible factors that may determine the social functions of *Jiggiea* oral poetry?

## 2. Review of Related literature and Theoretical Framework

Folkloric items have roles in a given society ranging from entertainment to education and cultural recording. Folk poetry, as the other forms of folkloric items, has also its own functions and roles in a given society. Supporting this, Miruka (1994:118) stating the very mundane, philosophical and abstract nature of his classifications, identified five functions of folk poetry. These are socialization, aesthetics, social commentary and cultural and historical record. Similar to other field of studies, the study of folklore has varied perspectives. The prominent authority in the study of oral literature in Africa, Ruth Finnegan (1992) underscores how conducting a research "inevitably depends on *some* theoretical assumptions" Among the varied theoretical assumptions in studying folklore, this study of *Jiggiea* oral Poetry is framed mainly in two of the assumptions: functional and contextual. In the following sections, these theoretical assumptions are presented.

### 2.1. Functional Approach

In recent studies of folklore, not only the text but also the performances are subjects of investigation. As such, many studies examine texts and performance in consideration of them

as inseparable. In view of folklore as a cultural expression, Gorges and Jones (1995) state that the per-formative aspect and the social behaviour producing and consuming the folklore are strongly related. They further indicate that in the study of folklore, the need to consider its being an informal way of teachings and leanings, its applications in real life situations, and its evaluations as per identified and established traditions.

These traditions, Gorges and Jones explain are cultural performances that have guiding precedents of models of established belief systems, values, standard, etc. Traditions are also informative about folklore group's attitudes and knowledge, continuity/discontinuity in performances, and alteration of cultural practices in the course of time and spatial changes. Common too many folklore studies, Jones (1994) indicate that application of folklore stems from its symbolic, interactive, and traditional qualities. As such, meaning of a folklore material in a social construct rather than a mirror of factual information. The folklore is loaded with multiple interpretations generated in the interactions between performers and audiences. The symbolic meanings indicate what social behaviour and identities are assumed in the functions of folklore.

In sum, the functional perspective employed in this study shares Jones (1994) idea in defining folklore materials as "they have both a social and a historical character, exhibiting similarities in assumptions, attitudes, and ways of doing things through space and time". As such, this study of *Jiggiea* oral poetry primarily concerns itself into exploration of social functions viewing it's as an index of historical processes, as an indicator of cultural processes, and as a behavioural phenomenon. In the following, contextual approach that is closely related to functional perspective is presented.

## **2.2. Contextual Approach**

Oral literature actions are distinguished from other mode of social interaction by contextual approach convention of time, place, and company. According to Dorson, (1972: 251) Contextual approach is considering its social context. Supporting this notion, Bascom (1965:279) argues that the form is the same; the functions different, one cannot always tell form alone what the associated contextual functions. Finnegan (1977) pointed out the identity of the poem as actually realized, performed it a different time or to a different audience or a different poem. She further pointed out that an oral poetry has no existence or continuity apart from its performance, the skills and personality of the performer the nature and the reaction of the audience, the contextual, and the purpose.

*Jiggiea* oral poetry refers to the where, when and the circumstances of a performance with the social context. The social context is significant to understand social life and the most

crucial to interpret the text in good context. In doing so, figurative speeches, particularly metaphorical expressions that carry different contextual messages should also be considered. After that, classifying the poems based on the purposes that they played in their contexts of performance is clearly applicable.

In general, the two closely related theoretical perspectives (functional and contextual) are used as theoretical frameworks for they enable the researcher to bring together the traditional the social base, and the aesthetic qualities of *Jiggiea* oral poetry.

### **3. Methodology of the Study**

The researcher used purely qualitative research method to have reliable data for the study to gain a better picture of the reality of the issue on the research questions and its objectives in a natural way to be analysed. It helps to produce contextual description of the study. The data were collected using primary and secondary sources in order to situate the study theoretical framework. The primary methods of data collection included interview and observation. Secondary sources included documents like Books, Culture and Tourism office archives, research papers, online journals etc. In order to bring out the data for this research, the researcher used different methods and procedures such as the interview methods, focus group discussion, content analysis clearly discussed underneath.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique in this study to identify informants, cultural experts among other key informant and cultural officers. Because everyone does not practice *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poems easily; among the *Jiggiea* recital the researcher choose the *Jiggiea* poets only; since the youth are also moving apart from such kinds of oral poems. Furthermore, in-depth interviews with key informants were one of the strategies used for collecting data from the field. Among 19 members of the *Jiggiea* performer, ten knowledgeable people were selected from the study area. To know the concepts and the interpretations of each oral poem, performances, and team of the audience were interviewed once the performance was over.

#### **3.1. Instruments of Data Collection**

##### **3.1.1. Interview**

During the *Jiggiea* recitals, the participants' oral poems were collected in their settings to assess why, how, where and when they recite the poems. Then the researcher has tried to observe as many performances of *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poetry as possible. Through finding live performances and ceremonies of *Jiggiea* gave hard time for the researcher, sufficient data were gathered and analysed. The researcher had a chance to attend the *Jiggiea* poems recited in a real context and in live performance.

### **3.2 Transcription, Translation and Analysis of Data**

The data collected as per the required data collection methods were transcribed, translated and analysed accordingly. The researcher transcribed the video and audio-recorded materials. Transcribing recorded oral poetry on notebook has been carried out after field works and recorded from the interviews and the focus-group discussions were transcribed. It has been done by listening to the recorded texts repeatedly until the researcher has clearly understood the messages and transcription of the data.

The next step is the translation is one reason why the essence of most poetry and great prose is so resistant to translation; quite apart from the radically different sound patterns that are created in other-language versions. The researcher must project himself into the mind of the original author; he must transport himself into an entirely different world of relationships between sounds and meanings, and at the same time, he must establish equivalence between one infinitely complex system and another. Since no two languages are truly equivalent in anything except the simplest terms, this is a most difficult accomplishment. Certain researcher has exceptionally difficult to translate. The total number of the *Jiggiea* folk poems that has been collected through the foregoing instruments was fifty. Among these poems, thirty-eight were selected for the analysis. Then, as the original data collected are in Amharic, the researcher has translated them into English meanings. Once the translation is over, seventeen *Jiggiea* oral poems were identified and categorized their contextual themes and functions were analysed.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Major Social Functions and Themes Analysis of *Jiggiea* Oral Poetry**

In this part, the major themes and functions served through *Jiggiea* oral poems are discussed. In doing so, themes of the poems are analyzed contextually and classified based on their functions. For ease of discussion, *Jiggiea* oral poems are classified based on their functions under six major categories; namely, praise, curse, social commentary, historical record and cherishing patriarchy.

#### **4.1.1 praise**

##### **4.1.1.1 Praise farmer and farm animals**

Praise is the common subject matter raised in *Jiggiea* oral poems. Most of the poems recited to praise farmers are not focused on particular issues, rather on different aspects of good qualities of farmers. The praise poems deal with related to the farmers' hard working,

friendship, farm animals, places and ethnic groups and other similar aspects of socio-cultural experiences. As can be seen in the following extract, a farmer in North *Wollo* is appreciated for his diligence.

የገበሬው በሬዎች መጋለና ቦራ<sup>2</sup>፣  
 አንድ ቀን ያረሱት ዓመት የሚያበላ፣  
 ምርቱ ነጭ ጤፍ ነጩ እንዲሁም አበላ<sup>3</sup>፣  
 አከታትሎ ዘረ በቆሎ ሽምብራ፣  
 ደከመኝ ሰለቸኝ አይል ሌት ተቀን ቢሰራ፣  
 አርሶ ጠገብ ጎበዝ ችግር እማይፈራ።  
 The farmer's oxen are dark brown and gray,  
 What they plough in a day can be eaten for a year,  
 White *teff* and *abola* are his products,  
 Maize and chickpea are what consecutively sows.  
 Never says 'I am tired and bored' though he works  
 day and night,  
 Diligent cultivator satisfying his fill and  
 has no fright for a problem.

In the above *Jiggiea* oral poem, the performer appreciates not only the farmer but also his oxen. Even the oxen's colour, one is a dark brown and the other is a gray are admired. The poet appreciates the oxen intentionally that they are strong. They are strong even to the extent that what the farmer harvests on a plot of farmland of which these oxen would plough in a single day. And it can be enough to feed the family through the year. The poet appreciates the quality of *teff* and *abola* (the best quality of sorghum) which the farmer grows. Moreover, the hard working farmer is praised for he never says, 'I am tired and bored'. He harvests twice in a year first maize then chickpea.

The poet appreciation of a hard working farmer has its own significance. Since the farmer has symbolic representation of the crops, the people in North *Wollo* often share appreciation. The acceptability of good qualities of the products and how the farmland owned by the farmer, it would not be spared about the social function of *Jiggiea* oral poetry.

In the poem, the farmer's oxen are depicted, as they are strong. This indicates that the farmer has fed them properly. It is his careful follow up in feeding them that they can plough a wide area of farmland in a single day. About the good quality of the grains that the farmer produces, the poet appreciates *white teff* and *abola*. Similarly, to other Ethiopians people in

<sup>2</sup> A name of oxen whose skin colours' of dark brawn and gray respectively.

<sup>3</sup>A type of sorghumwith high quality.



North *Wollo*, symbolically represented *white teff* and *abola* as best qualities; thereby, these grains are used and preferred by first class consumers. More importantly, the farmer is appreciated for the prosperity he assumes which is sourced from his own toils being a hard-working farmer. In other words, the farmer's source of wealth is his hard work rather than other illicit ways of getting wealth. *Jiggiea* oral poems also encourage a comparative nature of productivity. As discussed below, the oral poem appreciates more of a farmer who produces plenty of crops than who produces a little.

በፊር ማረሻ ምድር አስጨናቂ ፣

እስከ እረፋድ አርሶ መቶ መቶ ወቂ ፣

ቆይ ባለ መቶ ባለ ሺህ ይናገር ፣

መስከረም አዝላቂ አንድ ምስለኔ አገር ።

Pressuring the earth in his iron made ploughing  
 Tilling up to late morning an' harvests hundreds  
 Wait, owner of hundred let owner of thousands speak  
 Who feeds the whole country up to the next year?

In the above *Jiggiea* oral poem, a farmer is appreciated for his amount of productivity. The earth would be under a strong pressure when the hard working farmer is ploughing a purposefully crooked tool. Only tilling the land up to late in the morning, he can thresh in hundreds and hundreds. Symbolically, it is not extended time one spends in work places.

Similarly, more successful farmers are respected than less successful ones. As indicated in the above poem, a farmer who produces much gets higher recognition for his hard work. Especially, a farmer who produces plenty which can feed many of people is respected. The contextual aspect of meaning construction can be seen how a poet emphasizes the productivity level. People living on a large area of land can feed themselves with the products of a single hardworking farmer.

የቦራ ባለቤት የሚያዝያው ገበሬ ፣

በተግባር ነው እንጅ አይደለም በወሬ ፣

ልጆቹን ይድራል በታቻምናው ጥሬ ።

The owner of 'Bora', the April's farmer,  
 Only in practice but not in chatter,  
 His children would get married with the cereal  
 Produced in the year before last year.

In this *Jiggiea* poem, farmer is praised for preparing a feast of wedding for his children and the oxen's skin colour that is a white starred. Wedding serves as a starting point of family formation is considered as important and basic social issues in North *Wollo*. A farmer harvests abundant crop that can afford the cost of a big feast, and uses what he harvest, which is preserved for wedding. This shows that preparing the wedding ceremonies by cereals produced in the previous year is considered as a sign of wealth.

**4.1.1.2 Praise to Farm animals**

Okpewho (1970) describes that cattle songs are a wide spread tradition in rural areas. The peasant composes different songs to expose the role of an ox during the time of ploughing, threshing, and a hard day's fieldwork with animals. In North *Wollo*, people have been dominantly agrarian society with subsistence way of living. They have mainly made livelihood by tilling cultivation. In this place, access to oxen is considered an important production resource than the land. There is strong relation between oxen and farmer. The farmer's life is also highly bonded with oxen. Through *Jiggiea* oral poems, the farmers praise their oxen during the seasons of ploughing, threshing, and harvesting. The following poems can be good examples to this category.

በሬ ያላንተማ አያ ያላንተማ ፣  
 ወይ አይኔ አያይልኝ ጆሮዎም አይሰማ ።  
 በርዬ አንተን ብዬ ስዘር ውዮ መጣሁ ፣  
 እንዴት ይደረጋል አንተንማ ካጣሁ ፣  
 በእግሬ እየረገጥኩኝ አበሳዩን አየሁ።

Dear Ox, without having you, *Ayya*<sup>4</sup>, without having you,  
 I would rather be deaf or blind with necked eyes.  
 Dear my ox! I see back, spending in search of you,  
 I don't know what to do if I lose you?  
 I suffered a lot on threshing on my bare foot.

The above poem tells that how a farmer's life depends on the oxen. In traditional understanding, the interconnection between the peasant and ox is well described. The farmer clearly knows that crop production cannot be expected without the role of the oxen. Therefore, he gives priority for them. His oxen know on their turn that at the end of ploughing, they could expect something from their owner. The peasant takes the ox to the

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<sup>4</sup>is a title of respect to an elder or an Ox.

place where there is clean water and green grazing area. The peasant by his toil and the ox by grass are mutually interdependent.

As indicated in the stanza of the poem, the persona asserts that he respects an oxen. He gives them dignity. Traditionally, Northern *Wollo* farmers thresh grain using their oxen, trampling the grain for hours. Threshing is a difficult work without oxen. When a farmer is losing an ox, it becomes a difficult job to him for threshing. He could not overcome this difficult challenge without ox. This tells that how much an ox is necessary for the entire life of a farmer. To sum up, this poem gives emphasis about the bond between an ox and the farmer in a traditional North *Wollo* community way of life.

**4.1.1.3 Praise to Friendship**

Finnegan (1976) says, "Oral poetry is used to appreciate the people's feeling, hopes, fears, aspiration, philosophy, and aesthetic". Friendship has a great place in *Jiggiea*. A person, who raises a good personality, helps his friend to perform like ploughing, weeding, and harvesting in *Jiggiea*. Therefore, the good character of a closest friend is admired in the following *Jiggiea* Amharic poetry.

አረ ደግ ሚዜ ደግ ባልንጀራ ፣  
 እርሻ እረስ እያለ ያበላል እንጀራ ።  
 A kind best man, a kind friend!!  
 One who encourages cultivating,  
 And to feed his friend food.

In this hurried world, friendship is challenged by several factors. This poem expresses how a good friend is metaphorically symbolized in a cordial relative. Perhaps, best friend takes sacrifices in wedding ceremonies in North *Wollo* custom. The poem also shows that friendship is allotted with friends what you have is praised in this poem. Besides, a good friend is generous to know briefly perform on the land is a difficult task; it needs much food on time. In this poem, we understood a good friend knows his friend's fatigue and he tried to feed sweat replacement in farmland. Thus, a good friend is a person who gives himself a ransom for all.

ዱኒያ ምን አባቱ አይሆንም ወዳጅ ፣  
 ቢከፋም ቢለማም ሰው ይሻላል እንጅ።  
 Don't bother about the 'Donia'<sup>5</sup>  
 It could not substitute good friends,

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<sup>5</sup>is Arabic word, which means wealth or amount of money, and it has been used by *yijju*.

By far man is a better asset, be it bad or good.

In this poem, the poet tries to compare money and friendship and it shows how friendship is crucial rather than money. In the holy bible, Matthew (6: 24) says that no man can serve two masters the one is money which is powerful to manage human heart easily. Related to this, Apostle Judas also sold Jesus by thirty pieces of silver. He chose money rather than Jesus; it told that how much money is deceptive. Accordingly, in this poem, we understand that money is discouraged and friendship has given a great place than money.

**4.1.2 Social criticism**

During *Jiggiea*, different issues are reflected like commenting, criticizing ideology, philosophy, and socio political realities. In this context, *Jiggiea* oral poems, that deal with condemn laziness, criticisms of the generation, envy, and malevolence. Through *Jiggiea* oral poems the farmers of *North Wollo* comment and criticize on the manner of the society. Particularly in this category, one can find that farmers criticizing laziness, envy and malevolent. As far as *Jiggiea* has a potential to criticize farmers, thus, the poems clearly criticise laziness of the farmer.

በበጋ እረስ ሲሉት ፀሀፍን ፈረና ፣  
 በክረምት እረስ ሲሉት ዝናቡን ፈረና ፣  
 ልጁ እንጀራ ሲለጩ በጅብ አስፈራራ ።

When they told him to plough in *Bega*, [dry season]  
 he afraid of the sun,  
 When they told him to plough in *Kirmt* [rainy season]  
 he afraid of the rain,  
 Then he intimidated his child, naming hyena  
 while the child asks him for food.

In this particular poem, laziness does not only affect individual’s life, it also affects families in which it is criticised by this poem. In Africa the farming, method is not mechanized. When farmers cultivate in the open air on the farmland there is no shelter for sun and rain. They have to bear the scorching hot sun in the ‘*Bega*’ season and the heavy rain in the *kirmt* season. In this poem, two seasons are recited with farmers doing activities. In the first two lines of this poem, one can also discover the seasons and fear of farmer.

The first two lines tell a farmer fear of the sun’s heat to plough in the *Bega*, and the fear of the coldest weather. However, it is a seasons to work hard for plough whereas a farmer hesitate to cultivate in such situations. Then, he has nothing in his house. Hence, there will not be enough supply of food to be consumed in his home stay. A child asks him *Inji*era but

he threatened his child with hyena. To sum up, laziness is the source of fear and it affects the comfort atmosphere of families. *Jiggiea* uses a number of poems to criticize the generation gap. The following *Jiggiea* oral poems are typical examples that criticize for the generation's weak moral.

ወሎን ትመስላለህ ገለፍላፋውን ፣  
 ላስቴ ትመስላለህ የጀግና ሀገሩን፣  
 ታዲያ ለምንድን ነጩ የሚያልፈሰፍሰው፣  
 እቴጌ ጣይቱዋ ለዚህ ለከርፋፋ ልብሽን አውሽው።  
 You look like the beautiful land of *Wollo*,  
 You look like *Lastian*, the land of heroes,  
 So, why he is frustrated,  
 Please, Empress *Taitu* share your heroic spirit  
 to this coward boy .

In this poem, indecisive behaviours of this generation are criticized. To explain the indecisive activities of the generation is lost in confident, loyal, and brave ways by comparing with Empress Taytu. Such kinds of listed indecisive characters are normal in day-to-day activities in this generation, whereas Empress Taytu Betul was Emperor Menelik II third wife and was thereby Empress of Ethiopia. She had been a confident, a loyal wife, a chief commander, and a brilliant military strategist. Empress Taytu, as a military strategist, organized the Battle of Adwa, which ends with the defeat of Italy. She had her own battalion, which she bravely commanded in the battle field, fighting in the frontline and motivating men against retreat. In this case, the last line of the poem is composed metaphorically. In the poem, borrowing for this cowardice heroic spirit is symbolized by being her commitment. As result, through this symbolism, *Jiggiea* oral poem criticize the generation's lack of moral and confidence.

In any society, people condemn what they think morally wrong according to the norm they establish and appreciate what they feel morally right. Oral poetry is also significant in shaping a society's behaviour by discouraging socially harmful manners and upholding the good ones. During *Jiggiea*, a person who used oral poetry to criticize and condemn malevolence that is related to bad practices and envy. The following poem is reflection of this outlook of the society.

ቁጭ ብሎ እየዋለ ከቤቱ በላይ ፣  
 ሰው ዋለብኝ ይላል አያጣም ጠንቋይ ።  
 As always sits puts oneself idle sitting in a home side,

And blames sorcerers one's poor farming as an excuse.

In this particular *Jiggiea* poetry, the poet condemns the witch act. According to the researcher's informants, some people among *North Wollo* society practiced some traditional and evil spirits to become rich. The people of *North Wollo* believed that such charmer, or consulter with familiar sprites, or wizard for that entire do these things are an abomination unto the lord. Therefore, the point in this *Jiggiea* oral poetry is criticizing a consulter with familiar sprit, which is a morally wrong act of the society.

In this real world, people condemn what they think morally wrong depending on the norm they set up and they be thankful for what they fell moral right. In *North Wollo*, *Jiggiea* oral poetry that expresses jealousy is a morally wrong, which people criticize in most cases. Under the following oral poetry, envy is reflected the outlook of the people.

ሲያርሱ አያርስ ሲዘሩ አይዘሩ ፣  
 ቁጭ ብሎ ውሎ ጥላ ለጥላ ፣  
 አሻግሮ የያል የሰው አዝመራ ::

He doesn't till the land when the others till,  
 Hedoes not sow when others sow lazing away,  
 He finally gazes at the harvest of others.

In the above triplet poem, the third line tells about the person who gazes at the harvest of others with jealousy and criticized by the *Jiggiea* performer. According to the informants, describe briefly about jealousness that such kind of man merely wishes to become rich. To relate this point, the one who aspires to be rich without effort rather gazes at the others harvest is considered as an evil eye. The one who does not plough when the other till, the one who does not sow while others sow also considered as an evil eye because it leads to look someone's harvests. To sum up, the function of this poem is to comment on acts of the *North Wollo* society who they are thinking about morally wrong. Therefore, from this, one can claim that the message in the above poem is to show that jealousy morally wrong in the society.

**4.1.3 Socio-political criticism**

In *North Wollo*, people reflect their feelings towards a certain political group using *Jiggiea* folk poetry. It can be used for reporting and commenting current affairs, for political pressure, propaganda and reflect influence public opinions. In the following couplet, the people condemn the political issues of the current government.

እንደ ዉሻ ብትጮህ ለንቃህ እስተከፈት ፣  
 እንግዲህ አይገኝ የአላዉሃ መሬት ::

Even if you bark as dog until your throat is highly open,

From now on, you will never get the land of ‘*Ala-wuha*’.

The above couplet is the land scramble strategy of the TPLF<sup>6</sup> is criticised by *Jiggiea* poetry. According to TPLF manifesto 1976) the geographic boundaries of *Tigray* is extended to the border included the land defined by ‘*Ala-wuha*’ which extended down to the regions of *Wollo* are including *Almata, Ashenga, and Kobo*. The poem was composed in the response to the opposition and resistance of TPLF, which bemoaned the loss of the best and fertile land, which is ‘*Ala-wuha*’ that was included and given to North *Wollo* farmers and our farmers strongly oppose the land scramble TPLF hidden agendas.

By using *Jiggiea* oral poems, farmers reflect dissatisfaction, predominantly, the government administration and lack of good governance. The following triplet can be good examples to show the local officials’ frequently favoured relatives and friends that practiced corruption and mischief.

ለሊቀመንበሩ አንድ ዘመድ አጥቼ ፣

ለስራ አስኪጆቹ እምሰጠው አጥቼ ፣

ተመቻሬ መሬት ቀረሁ ተለይቼ ።

For I lost relatives for the chair man,

For I lost a special gift for the *qebliea* manager,

I remained excluded from the land of ‘*Machare*’.

In the above triplet, during the redistribution of the urban land in 1989, when the EPDRF came in to power, some part of North *Wollo*, *Qebeles* chair man, local officials favoured to their relatives and they practiced corrupt *Qebeles* were shifted to *Woldia* town. During the land redistribution, the land administration officers were injustice, and mischief. To describe the first line of this triplet, it is against the way of their corruption. The persona in this poem resonates that it is through bloodline relation or nepotisms an authorities grant land. In the second and third lines of this triplet, local officials were corruption depicted in which they accepted *Gubbo*(a bribe). If persons who could afford to pay it, they could give what they have. In this line, a person who is poor and unable to give bribe for the administrator as corruption, no more he gets the *Mechare* land.

ያንን ማዶ እርሻ ማን ነው ያረሰው፣

ከ24 ስራ አስኪጆቹ ዘመድ የሌለው፣

መቸ ያበላል ያጠጣል ገንዘብ የሌለው።

<sup>6</sup> Mean Tigray People Liberation Front

Who till that farmland?  
 He hasn't relatives from 24,  
*Qabales* administrator,  
 So, he hasn't money to invite them.

From the above triplet, we can understand that, among *North Wollo woreda, Guba Lafto* has 24*Qabales* and each *Qabale* has administrators. In the first line of the poem, the poet satirically expresses the farmland was not ploughed properly and there was unploughed land seen in this farmland. In addition, if a farmer has relatives from *Qabale* administer, his land may be ploughed very well. The poet also tries to express the discrimination between a people who has relatives and not have yet. They made nepotism, the majority of the administrator's relatives and families land was ploughed in good only to those who have relatives of the administrator. The last line, a poet clearly shows *Qabalea* administrators' made a favour by taking amount of money and a poor farmer unable feed and give the amount of money to one who takes bribers.

The following poem depicts the corruption of local officials who accept a bribe from poor peasants.

ለስራ አስኪጃ የሚሆን እኔን እጅ አጣረኝ ፣  
 ከሴፍትኔት ዉጭ አምዘግዝጎ ጣለኝ ።

My hands tied to give a gift for *qabales* manager,  
 They marginalized me from *Safety Net* targeting.

In the process of implementing the safety net program, the program clearly included poor peasants. This program, first selects a poor peasant among the society then, it includes the poorest. During the first selection, the *qabale* officers like as administrators highly participate during the choice the one who include in safety net. To surprise, the manager demand bribe from poor peasants. In this poem, a farmer is poor and unable to give bribe for *Qabale* managers, as result of this; he has been marginalized from safety net program.

#### 4.2 Boost Work Moral

Many oral poems of *North Wollo* also boost the value of hard working habit and work competition through inspiring hard workers. Good work competition habits are essential for anyone who wants to succeed. It also increases our productivity, job satisfaction and it helps to you have better relations with your co-workers. Here is a round-up of farming quotes that will inspire you to be a farmer.



ከድብ በታች ወርደህ እረ ውጋ በሞፈር ፣

አጥንት ነው እንጅ ስም አይቀበር ።

Go down under the hillside /*Dibe* /, till the farm with *Mofar*<sup>7</sup>,

Bone is buried but not reputation.

It inspires the farmers who set round at *Dibe* to plough farmland. According to the researcher’s informants, some people who are set around *Dibe* merely and they gossip strong farmers’ life and criticise based on their interest. However, a poet openly inspires farmers to till the land and hard work. Accordingly, the poet reflect strong working on farmland, a one whose name will be glorified while a one who is alive even after his death and his work moral sprites also across the new generation. The second line briefly express one should work hard while he is alive and his reputation as a hard worker will remain after death. The name of farmer is well known by coming generation and the new generations sense the reward given to the person who shows exemplary manner in his life.

**4.3 Recording of History**

Oral poetry also plays an important aspect of social functions, which passes history from generation to generation. It preserves history. Georges and Jones (1995) say, "Folklore frequently serves as sources of historical information. Miruak (1994) also points out that oral poetry is not a deviant form presupposes a record of culture and history in the oral traditions of the society. *Jiggiea* oral poetry is composed out of experience of the society, and history recorded in it. Here are two *Jiggiea* recitals about recordings of historical facts.

እንኳን በማረሽ እረስ በገጅሞ ፣

ያነ ሰባ ሰባት እንዳይመጣ ደግሞ ።

Till the land with a plough, even with a machete,

So as not ‘77<sup>8</sup>’ recur.

The historical event in this *Jiggiea* oral poetry takes one backs to the 1985s the worst famine in *Wollo* as well as in the country’s history. According to the researcher’s informants, this year the drought is just as bad as those infamous events that sparked famines in 85. Hunger and malnutrition had risen sharply, and it is affecting millions. Despite the drought, the crops have grown tall and green, belying their fruitlessness. They are useless even for the animals, and their animals were dying. This poem also serves to record, transmit, and print historical facts in the minds of the younger generation. The other historical facts preserved in *Jiggiea* recital and inculcated a historical region and province of *Wollo*. Here is the couplet:

<sup>7</sup>a beam of plough.

<sup>8</sup> 1977e.c is a year that some parts of Ethiopia hit by famine.

በማለዳ ወርደህ ጓሉን በጓል ፍጩው ፣

ማንም እንዳይገዛህ እንደ አላማጣ ጩው ።

Crush *guwal*<sup>9</sup> by *guwal* starting early morning,  
To don't cheap as *Almata*'s salt.

In the above poem, in the second line the target called '*Almata*', which is the area included in the former province of *Wollo*. According to Misifin Massala (2002) and the researcher informants, *Wollo* is a historical region and province in the north Eastern part of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, historical records show that *Wollo* was after his coronation Twodros the second moved and "subdued the *Wollo Ormo* captured *Maqidala*." During the time of Italian colonial authority in 1941, *Amhara Sayent*, *Lasta*, *Raya*, *Wag*, and *Yejjuu* were annexed to *Wollo*. During the reign of Emperor Haileselassie I, peasant rebellions rocked the province, which include in the *Woyane* rebellion in 1943 and revolts of the *Yejjuu* in 1948 and 1970. *Wollo* was divided between the Afar Region, which absorbed the part of the province that extended in to the *Afar* Depression and *Hassibe* port in Eretria. *Wollo* divided by Derg regime in to two administrative regions; North *Wolo*, which is included now a day in South *Tigray* (*Raya Azabo*) and South *Wollo* included *Hassabe* (now a day one part of Eretria). After the downfall of Derge regime, the current government divides the area in to two administrative zones: South *Wollo* and North *Wollo*. However, *Raya Azebo* is now a day's included or part of in the *Tigray* Region. However, in poem the name mentioned '*Alamata*' and others also now a day part of *Tigray* Region. Therefore, the histories of this area that is depicted, these places have never been part of *Tigray*; especially *Raya Azebo* was hauled away from *Wollo* province. The poets point out the name historical province of *Wollo* and in particular place *Alamata*' expressed ironically. It is obvious that historical facts recorded in *Jiggiea* poems. Therefore, from this, it is possible to assert that this poetry plays a great role in recording history.

## 5. Conclusion

In North *Wollo*, *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poems have prominent roles in the community, especially in its social life and social works. *Jiggiea* oral poems are usually used to express feelings, socio- political affairs, philosophy, psycholinguistic and religious issues. Concerning the social functions, it was found out that *Jiggiea* folk poetry in North *Wollo* deals with three major categories. Consequently, socio-cultural, inspiration and historical

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<sup>9</sup>Mean Clod (lump of earth).

recordings identified as major social functions served as *Jiggiea* folk poetry with their different themes.

*Jiggiea* oral poetry has different social functions. Praising is the most common and predominant function of the poems. There are many reasons as to why the farmers to perform the poems. These are igniting work moral, doing the tasks in short period of time, to save human labour on the farm fields. In this category; praising hard work, praising cattle, praising friends as well as praising places and ethnic groups have been found out as the focus of the farmers. Farmers praise themselves because of their success of productivity. The farmers praise the cattle for their good services. Their productivity brings a strong bond between a cattle's and the farmer.

*Jiggiea* oral poems are used to also praise how much sacrifice is paid for others for the sake of good friendship. Moreover, socio-political criticisms have two specific functions for *Jiggiea* oral poetry. These are identified as socio-cultural criticism and protest against political power. The *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poems are also employed to criticize the different actions of the farmers. It has also been found focusing on activities, which the farmer as morally wrong, such as envy and malevolence. There are poems that are recited for criticising the lazy farmers in the farmland. To this effect, they have been struggling to provide much relief for the tiresome workers. During the performance, they criticise the generation to fill the gaps and compare to old time work moral to shape themselves as previous one.

In North *Wollo*, the *Jiggiea* poems are analysed in a sarcastic manner to reveal the farmers protest the government, and its land administrating strategy. The other use of *Jiggiea* poems is boycotting the different types of maladministration such as embezzlement, bribery, and abuse of power that overburdened the farmers.

The other social function of *Jiggiea* folk poetry is inspiration of farmers to exhibit them to be models in agricultural products. These motivations are reflected through hard working, and they inspire good work competitions to initiate and mobilize for the common activities. The ultimate goal is to maintain the integrity of the community, foster the sustainable economic development, and to save the time of the farmers in that community life.

The other important issue that has been identified as the social function of *Jiggiea* oral poetry is recording historical facts and places. The *Jiggiea* oral poems give a great contribution to record the historical facts and place, such as in the province of *Wollo*. The poems are clearly describing the former province of *Wollo* which is included under Raya Azebo (now -a -days, is included in South Tigray) and gives record of the worst famine year in seventy- seven.

All in all, *Jiggiea* Amharic oral poetry has been serving many functions. This oral poetry is an important vehicle of communication for North *Wollo* in their agricultural life. It is also significant that expresses their worldview, socio-cultural norms and socio-economic values and political, religious, philosophy, belief and the like. It also preserves the local history, wisdom, and artistic value of the society.

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