
Warqe Production and Women's Role

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to describe and analyse the cultural ways of warqe² production, its uses and the role women played in Wonchi district. For this research, interviews and observation data collection methods are implemented. According to the collected data, Warqe is the staple food and the main harvest of the South West Shewa Zone people of Wonchi district, the study area people farm different types of warqe plant, produce a variety of cultural foods, and use its by-product for many purposes. More than any other section of the community, women have been able to capitalize on the fruits of Warqe production. They have used it not only as a food source but also as a source of income. During the production time, women are employed as day labourers and use the money they earn to buy and exchange different materials, and more importantly to take care of their family. On the whole, this study revealed the indigenous knowledge of ways of warqe production practiced by the people of the study area, the traditional instruments used in the production, warqe as cultural food and the use of warqe by products. Future researches should emphasize on improved technology evaluation including processing instruments, the way of processing including keeping fermentation area sanitary, and identifying fast growing types of warqe in order to boost productivity of warqe.

Key Words: *Warqe* Cultivation, Production, uses and women

1. Introduction

Enset is the name given in Amharic language for the plant known in the science of agriculture as *ventricosum*. This plant looks like a banana tree

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² *Wareqe* is the local name given for Enset plant and its production in Oromia *Enset* cultivation districts.

and it is even sometimes called false banana. Enset is mainly grown in the south and south west region of Ethiopia. It is known by the name of *Warqe* in the enset farming zones of Oromia regional State, particularly in the Wonchi district³.

This plant, as different literatures point out, is used as a stable food by about 20 million Ethiopians, especially for those who are found in the southern and south western part of the country (Abrham Shumbulo and et al 2012, Admasu and Struik 2002). Steven A. Brandt and et al(1998) had stated that, in other parts of the world enset has been seen as an ornamental plant, while it has been a stable food in Ethiopia for roughly 5,000 years.

As my informants⁴ explicitly told me, by its nature, *warqe* keeps water in its stem for a long time; and this makes it a very important drought resistant crop. It also looks like an evergreen plant. People who are familiar with its farming culture use it as their stable food and have food security that can be sustained more than that of other cereals' farmers. As such, it is called by some researchers as "hunger fighting tree" or "tree against hunger" (Steven A. Brandt and et al, 1998:1).

Warqe is a multipurpose plant. Every part of it can be used not only as a food but also for different economical and cultural purposes. It is also used as animals forage. According to Belachew and et.al (2017), there are various types/varieties of enset. These different types of enset are known in different areas by different names.

In the study area, there are various type of *warqe* plants. As the informants clearly stated, there are six types of *warqe*. These are:

³ The first hand data collected from Wonchi District, Waldo Talfam and Fittewato *kebeles* of three *warqe* cultivation plots on the context of planting, hoeing and production through interview and observation.

⁴ Informants: 1) Urji Ijeta, he is a farmer , age 83, live in Waldo Talfam *kebele* 2) Turuneh Urji he is a farmer, his age 40, live in Waldo Talfam *kebele* 3) Gutema Uquba, he is a farmer, his age 65 he live in Fittewato *kebele*. 4) Brhane G/mikael, she is a farmer, her age 35, live in Waldo Talfam *kebele* 5) Sileshi Dirribsa, she is a farmer, her age 50, live in WaldoTalfam *kebele* 3) Hirphitu Likkisa, she is a farmer, her age 45, live in Waldo Talfam *kebele*.

- 1) *Badadeettii* is white in colour and needed more than the others,
- 2) *Farasiyee* –this warqe plant is red in colour. Most of the time this type of warqe is used for home consumption because of its unattractive dark colour in market; it is also chopped with other type of *Warqe* during production,
- 3) *Sabbaaraa*: this type of warqe's *amicho*⁵ is needed for its medicinal purpose. It is believed that this *Warqe* helps to heal broken bones.
- 4) *Awwanyii*
- 5) *Absaaraatii*
- 6) *Bashalgaa*. According to informants, this warqe type is a late comer and matures in a shorter time of plantation seasons than the other types. It is tall in size, ripe more quickly than the others, and the *warqe* dough produced from it is relatively white in colour than the other varieties. Due to its colour, the dough is more attractive and highly needed in the market.

Many researchers have studied *warqe* focusing on the southern part of the country, especially in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and peoples Region from the perspective of agricultural scientific applications and its natural capability in keeping food security sustainable. The exceptions are Dereje and Endale (2003), Tariku and Mogessie (2011) who have done their research in West Shewa Zone. However, the former studies did not emphasise on cultural ways of plantation, food preparation and other cultural activities regarding warqe.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to describe and analyse the cultural ways of warqe plantation, production, and its use in order to present the indigenous knowledge of the community under study.

2. Research area description

Wonchi is one of the *Woredas* in South Western Shewa Zone Oromia Reginal State. It is bordered on the south west by Amaya, on the north by Western Shawa Zone, and on the Southeast by Waliso and Goro District and its administrative centre is Chitu. There are other emergent small towns

⁵ Amicho is lower/bottom part of warqe stem

like Dariyan and Haro. Wonchi district has volcano made mountain, and there is a Crater Lake at its centre, which is known by the name of the district– Wonchi. There are two islands on the lake. One of them includes the Cherkos monastery. Tourists and other people who want to visit the monastery can navigate on local boats. Due to this distinctive natural landscape, Wonchi district has been a tourist destination. In addition to being one of the most valuable hubs of tourism in the country, the culture of the people in the area is distinctive. They invite guests in a lovely manner by saying “*Anatti haadhufu*” (“something will come to me”). It is the way they express their affection.

The major cereals grown at the study area are teff, wheat, barley, maize and sorghum. Field pea, house bean, chick pea and lentil are the major types of pulse produced. *Warqe* is also widely cultivated in Wonchi District. The livestock husbandry is also one of the means of livelihood of the people. Wonchi District has diversified different livestock population. These include cattle, sheep, goat, horse and donkey. Beekeeping is also important means of livelihood in the area. Livestock are essential components of *warqe* culture both in terms of supplying farmyard manure and in the provision of milk and meat without which consumption of *warqe* products would be difficult. The society has a proverb to express this, which is “*Foonan sodadha jedhe warqeen*” (‘Warqe said I fear meat.’) That means when *warqe* is served with meat, it becomes delicious and everybody eats it well. The people in the study area have various cultural foods that are prepared from *warqe*, which are unique to them.

According to the 2007 national census report, Wonchi district had a total population of 93, 624, of whom 46,915 were men and 46,709 were women, while 2.04% of its population were urban dwellers (CSA 2007:11). As documents show, majority of the residents practised Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, which numerically accounted for 70.12% of the district. Protestants accounted for 28.41%, while only 1.28% was Muslims, and the followers of Traditional religion and others accounted for 0.17% (Ibid:

289). I can deduce from my observation that the number of Protestant followers is rising in the woreda.

3. Method of the study

For this study, qualitative research method is applied. The term qualitative implies an emphasis on examination of the processes and meanings, but not measured in terms of quantity, amount, or frequency (Labuschagne, 2003).

In this qualitative method based research, data has been collected through interview and observation. In literature, there are different kinds of interviews. For this study, semi structured interview is applied because it helps the researcher to collect only the necessary data. And also this research data is collected from natural settings through direct observation.

The informants have been selected for interview by purposive and snowball sampling. Based on this mechanism, three men and women were selected. After a while, the collected data is classified and prepared for analysis.

4. Literature on the concept of food

As stated before, enset has multipurposes; its main purpose is as a food for human beings and animals. What is food? How has it been selected? How can it be a shared value indicator? And how can it be sustainable? From the regular point of view, food is a necessity. Without food, nobody can live. This is science. When we look at it from a different perspective, the ways of preparation, cooking, serving, and production and choosing food type based on ecology and financial capability, it depends on culture and religion. Different studies also support these facts. As Yohannes (2006:1) points out in his article,

Every society has food menus of its own depending on the prevailing culture of food production and/or acquisition. The types of plants and animals, which serve as sources of food are dependent on the climatic conditions or generally, the ecosystem characteristics of an area and the traditions of selection of crop and animal types.

Moreover, food has meaning; it is associated with different things and conveys so many messages. Regarding this, Anderson (2005: 125) states:

More generally, food has its own meanings. Everywhere, food is associated with home, family, and security. One main message of food, everywhere, is solidarity. Eating together means sharing and participating. The other main message is separation. Food marks social class, ethnicity, and so on. Food transactions define families, networks, friendship groups, religions, and virtually every other socially institutionalized group. Naturally, one group can try to use food to separate itself, while another is trying to use food to eliminate that separation. It also carries messages about status, gender, role, ethnicity, religion, identity, and other socially constructed regimes.

As a result of these multidimensional aspects of food and food preparation, different scholars have been analyzing food and its ways of preparation in multidisciplinary approaches. In the research of Mintz, and Christine (2002) as stated, Claude Levi-Strauss (1965) and Mary Douglas (1966) have made important contributions to a structuralism vision of food and eating. This structuralism view of food was implemented in the identification study of rules and conventions that govern the ways in which food items are classified, prepared and combined with each other. Beardsworth and Keil as described in the research of Vlaholias (2012). Munn (1986) also focused on symbolic value of creation in food. Sutton (2001) did research to show the social construction of memory through food, and other researches had studied food from the perspectives of functionalism, religion, status, gender and so on.

In this article, data analysis is made to show processes in cultural *Warqe* plantation, dough production, different food preparation, business carried out with *warqe*, and the role participants (especially women) play in all processes. At the same time, the role *warqe* and its byproducts play in the life of the study area people analysed from the perspective of function.

5. Cultivation process

Planting warqe has its own unique ways. According to the information gathered through interview⁶ and observation at the plot hoeing context, it starts by propagation (creating newly growing warqe) plant. For doing this, first immature *warqe*, locally known by the name *Iyyibaa*, is uprooted, and then it is cut at the area a little bit far from its corm. This process is known as “*Naddoo muruu*”. After it has been cut, the newly growing bud should be removed, filled by soil, smeared on it manure, and buried in a well prepared hole. This cutting and burying takes place between November 20 and December 9 (from Hidar 15 to 30 in Ethiopian calendar). Within the first year, many buds are grown up. These are called *ilmaan naddoo*. That means *Naddoo's* seedling. After a year, *Ilmaan naddoo* will be transplanted and replanted in another place. This process is known by the name of “*ilmaan tamsaasuu*,” which means scattering *warqe* shoots line by line. This process involves planting, preparing an area for this work, digging hole, and adding manure. Through continuous and considerable follow up for two years, it is grown up to the stage known locally as “*Masiyee*.” Two years after that, its place should be changed and named “*Iyyibaa*”. In between one or two years, it needs hoeing, for removing weeds or turning over the soil in that plot. After two years, its place should be changed again. This process is done fully in the same area; it does not need a new place. That means, at the place where matured *warqe* is rooted up, the “*Iyyiba*” would be planted. It would be planted in the hole matured *warqe* was uprooted. Then, it is left in the same place for four or five years in order to enable it to mature to the *warqe* stage.

According to my informants, the evolution from the seedling or propagation stage to matured *warqe* stage takes 12 to 14 years. Therefore, *warqe* plantation/farming is a time and labour consuming business. Up to the maturing stage, there are different activities that have to be done. These include weeding in season, hoeing deep in one or two years interval, tying

⁶ Informants: Gutema Uquba he is a farmer, live at Fittewato *Kebele*, age 65, Turuneh Urji, he is a farmer, live at Waldo Talfem *kebele*, age 40

the leaf together in line so as to permit them to grow in well condition, pruning the leaf for different purposes (encouraging for fuller growth or for letting it to dry and use it as fire wood), and adding dung and other plant nourishment materials. No one can do all these activities alone. Therefore, in addition to the whole family members' participation, the community should form cooperative bonds which are known by the name of *daadoo* and *daboo*. *Daadoo* means working for each other in a mutual way. *Daboo*⁷ is the method of working for one person in group for one day. These cooperative bonds or unions help for simplifying such tough works.



Fig.1 Men on hoeing



Fig. 2 planted Iyyiba



Fig.3 Dalge stage

Men take the lion's share in these plantation processes. Women also provide supporting mission such as serving food during the plantation, hoeing deep and transplanting occasions for *Daadoo* members. Women can also participate in the plantation stage, weeding, adding dung continuously and hoeing by simple digging tool.

⁷ As Bartels (1977:497) defines: Dabo is a one day's cooperation between 10-40 people, or even more, convened by a man who needs their help in e. g. ploughing and sowing, reaping, clearing, the making of a road, the building of a house, and the like. Dado is a form of long-term reciprocal cooperation on equal terms between a smaller numbers of people who work in turn for each other.

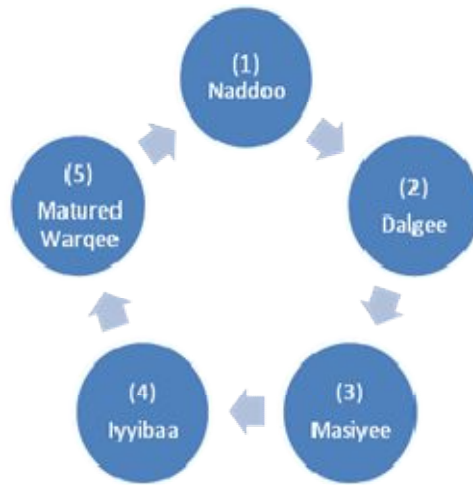


Fig. 4 Life cycle of warqe – (for producing naddoo iyyibaa should had been cut and buried)

6. Production process and tools

In the culture of *warqe* farming, the planting stage is followed by the production stage, which includes cutting, scarping or scratching the sheath of *warqe* upper stem (inner leaf) with tool called “sibisa”. Sibisa is made from bamboo plant.



Fig.5 Sibisa

Chopping and beating the corm part of *warqe* with the tool “Jaawga” is also another *warqe* production process. The rest is squeezing the scraped and the chopped corm together. Through this process the starchy type of *warqe* dough locally called *Hamxiixii* is obtained. The other production activity is fermenting. For fermenting *warqe*, yeast is necessary. For preparing this yeast, different spicy and medicinal plant leafs are collected, sliced, and mortared. Then, the stem of matured warqe fruit stem, which resembles

banana and locally called “firee,” is added and mixed together. The mixture is left for a month placed in the hole of corm, where the corm is uprooted and covered with warqe leaf tightly.

Starting from the stage of food preparation and taking to market stage, every duty demands women’s full participation. There is no men’s involvement, since touching *warqe* dough is taboo for men. Because at the study area, touching *warqe*⁸ dough is equivalent to baking it in kitchen; baking is work division given for women according to the culture they perform. But those men, whose life is based on *warqe* trading, do their business after the *warqe* is wrapped well (tying in “jambi” form) by women, carrying it on horse and donkey backs.

⁸ The word *Warqe* is the common name given for *warqe* plant, dough and bread

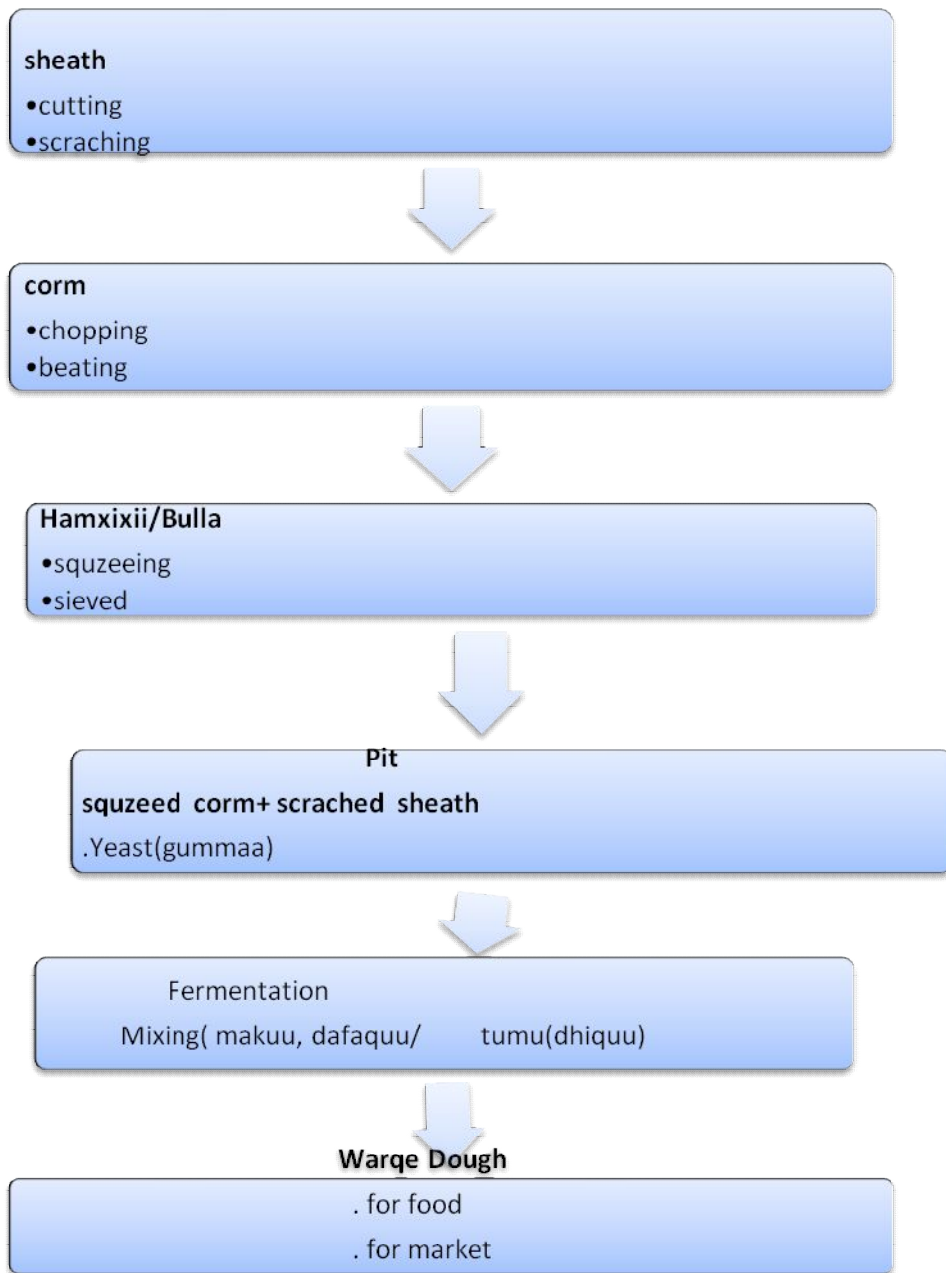


Fig.6 Warqe Dough production process

7. The Role of Women in Production Performance

Warqe dough production is a labour and time-consuming process. Before planning production time, first the matured *warqe* plant should be identified. Identification is done based on the maturity indicator, which is the emerging of *warqe* plant in the same way a fruit emerges from banana. As mentioned above, the main activity at the dough production stage of *warqe* belongs to women. For this job, women always plan because it cannot be done alone. It needs a cooperatively organized body. Culturally, the production of *warqe* at the study area is performed in the months of May, June, July, August, September and November. Therefore, women should take these months in consideration while planning their *warqe* dough production duty.

According to informants, all *warqe* farmers at the study area have cooperative organization called Daadoo. The members of Daadoo make a decision on the month they prefer to produce *warqe* dough through discussion.

When the proposed day comes to close, the owner prepares food and coffee to serve to the *Daadoo* members and reminds them of the date of production.

On the production day, in the home of the owner, all activities focus on the programmed *warqe* production, especially children and female family members need to cooperate with *Daboo* members. The activities will be performed as follows:

The first main activity is cleaning and preparing the working area. This includes lining the pit, decorticating and thumping *warqe*. This pit is used as depot and fermenting container. This is done for protecting it from any contamination and leakage.

Preparing production instruments, such as Waatani, Sibissaa, Jawgaa, Aaduu/ Billa, different containers like bucket, and filtering materials locally called Gingilchaa, division of work: well experienced women in

decorticating are identified and grouped with their assistants, and the assistants do the cutting and peeling of the outer cover of warqe sheaths.

Three to five young girls are grouped together for beating/ thumping the corm part of warqe: “ammichoo”. One or two women will be assigned for digging the part under the stem of corm from the hole, from which matured warqe is uprooted. This is done by the instrument jawga. Its output is amicho, which will be mixed with decorticated warqe sheath, and the hole can be used for fermenting the yeast which is called Gammaa.

During the production of warqe, I observed that the leader of all activities was the owner of that programme. She participates in every activity. Providing working instruments, uprooting the matured warqe, participating in the above-mentioned groups as an assistant, and providing food and coffee at lunch time are under her responsibility.

After assigning participants, as stated above the practical production work will start. At the plot the researcher visited, the Daadoo members are comprised of ten women and the owner. The first activity was uprooting one of the matured *warqe* and pulling it to the production area. This is very difficult because the uprooted *warqe* plant is weighty and the space between each *warqe* plants is very narrow making it difficult for movement. Then, the upper part of the sheath is removed and gathered in one place for as animals forage, and the next two layers are peeled and given to two women for decorticating job. Their two assistants prepare these sheath layers/pseudo stems (*qalchaa*) by uncoiling and splitting the sheath leaf longitudinal so as to fit it to *Watani*.



Fig.7 watani

These layers, as the researcher observed, are different in colour; as the locals call it, those colours are white and light brown, locally named as *Adiifi magaala* (white and brown). The so called *Adii* has strong fibre, which is exposed when decorticated with the instrument *Sibissaa*. The *Magalaa* one is soft and has no fibre as that of *Adii*; they call it *hoffaa*. Those two women assigned for decorticating work share or divide these two colour sheaths for each other, while doing their jobs separately. The woman who decorticates the *Adii* one produces fibre which is called, “*Qaancaa*” in addition to “future warqe dough.”



Fig.8 During decorticating and pulverising time

The remaining fragile interior sheath and attached corm locally known as *amichoo* is pulverised by the instrument *jaawgaa*; this work is very hard and done in group by younger girls.



Fig. 9 *Jaawgaa*

The other two women will tamp the unmoved corm part of warqe with jaawgaa and make a hole for fermenting yeast in it.

The other group of women put the decorticated Adii and pulverised corm in to sack and squeeze for producing the liquid part of warqe production, which is known in Afaan Oromoo as Hamxiixii (Bula in Amharic). The squeezed solid part, the remaining adii, the pulverised corm and the decorticated light brown– Hoffa– are together placed in a well-lined pit and wrapped tightly with warqe leaf.

One or two women prepare yeast for fermentation purpose. The ingredients collected from different spicy and medicinal plants will be chopped and mixed with pulverised amicho. Then, it will be wrapped with warqe leaf tightly. The yeast that is used in this process is locally known as Gamma.

This *warqe* dough production process might be done in just one or two consecutive days by one family. In these days, 10 to 15 warqe plants might be decorticated. The main works that have to be done in general are cleaning the working area, cutting and pulling the matured warqe plant to the decortivating area, pilling the sheath for decortivating, decortivating in different places according to the colour of the warqe sheath, pulverising and thumping amichoo, squeezing bula, preparing the yeast “Gammaa” and other supportive works. One family usually does the same work twice a year, but there are also some families that do it once.

After the above-mentioned duty has been accomplished, the produce, which had been filled in the pit and kept as yeast, stay there for a month until they ferment. In general, the output of this production is the future warqe dough, bula /hamxiixii, and ammichoo. Ammicho can be eaten at the time of its production by boiling it.

When the fermentation process is over, the warqe which is placed in a pit and corm hole that contain gamma should be opened. After the covering part is discarded, the gamma is added to the warqe dough in the pit, mixed well, and wrapped tightly with new warqe leaf. This mixing performance is known by the name *warqe makaa*. Again, after two weeks, it will be opened

and allowed to mix; at this time, it could be baked and eaten. This second time mixing performance is also known by the name *warqe dhiita* (*dafqu*), which means thoroughly mixing. Preparing it for baking needs another process. This process is beating the dough with slaughtered ox's right hand bone, which is known locally as "Ceekuu." This is done to separate the *warqe* dough from fibre, and again for removing the remaining dough from the fibre. It should be washed with pure water and filtered. This process is locally called "takasaa dhiquu."

The separated and filtered dough is poured together in a plastic sack and kept upside down for slow going squeezing, or it is placed in well lined and wrapped pit. These types of production can keep on happening for a year.

In general, from this laborious *warqe* dough production, the farmers yield: *Amicho* (instant food at production time), *Bullaa*⁹ for porridge, and *warqe* dough which could be accumulated for a year or above for the purpose of making the *warqe* cultural foods- *Qumusii*, *Hollata*, and *Unkuroo*.

8. *Warqe* as material culture

In folklore classification, food is one genre of material culture. It is the basic necessity for every living thing to survive, grow and strengthen physically and mentally. Every society has its own food menu depending on its culture, religion, ethnicity and ecological system. In Ethiopia, there are different ethnicities, and they are used to various types of cultural and ecological based foods which are different from each other. Oromo is among these ethnicities. Oromo accustomed food culture is mainly based on animal dietary and cereal. People in the centre and south west of the Oromia region and high and medium land areas cultivate *warqe* in addition to different cereals. From this multipurpose plant in these areas, there are different daily and occasional *warqe* cultural foods that are prepared.

⁹ Bullaa can stay for a year or more after it is changed to powder through concentrating process

In Wonchi district, five kinds of cultural foods could be prepared from Warqe. These are: 1) Amicho 2) Qummusii 3) Hollataa 4) Unkuroo 5) Marqaa Hamxiixii (Bula porridge). These foods have their own cultural places and time or occasion (of consumption). Let us see them below in detail:

Amicho: is an instant food product which is prepared from *warqe's* lower part of corm at the day of production. Its preparation is very simple. The corm is cut into small parts and boiled in pottery jar/pot or in a pan with little salt and is then eaten with pepper spices. As informants told me, amicho is obtained from the sabbaraa type and is needed for its medicinal quality. For example, according to my informants, the one who has broken his/her bone, eat sabbaaraa warqee's amicho with spiced Baaduu (skimmed milk) and fill up his/her stomach well and suck pepper smoke and sneeze out. Then the broken bone is believed to come back to its place. Amicho is not a permanent or stable food; it is eaten just at the production moment for one or two days. It is an unusual food in that respect.

Qummusii: this food is eaten everyday in the study area. Before describing the content of this food, the word "Qummusii" should be defined. Qummusii is an Afaan Oromo word. It means mixed. This name is given for the food Qummusii based on the characteristic of the ingredients of the food. That is warqe, as mentioned above, is a time and labour consuming product; it cannot be produced simply now and then as it needs saving. Therefore, the people in the study area are involved in the saving of the warqe product for a long time so as to use it for their daily use baking; they mix warqe dough with grain flour especially with barley. They can use the warqe bread which is baked at once to be used for a long time from three days to a week; for example, for students who will learn in towns far from their village, they add to their luggage the same bread. So for preparing this type of warqe bread, Qummusii in addition to grain flour is added and mixed with different spices and salt. If the chance of getting stew is improbable, they can eat qummusii barley and drink water. When it is baked, there is no need of covering it with warqe leaf as Hollataa.

Hollataa: this food is occasional; it is prepared for guests and different occasion participants, for instance marriage, funeral, get-together and other main cultural activities. The warqe dough of Hollata should be well prepared and kept, and its colour should be white. Its baking also demands rich knowledge of cooking warqe bread and careful attentions. When it is baked, it is wrapped well by warqe leaf. After baking, it has two colours; that is, the outer cover seems watercolor and the interior part becomes pure white. These characteristics show its quality.

This quality type of warqe food is eaten with well prepared minced beef, which is called kochee in Afaan Oromoo and kitifo (in Amharic). The ingredients of Kochee are minced beef, clarified butter, cardamom and *Daabbusee*. Boiled beef stew is also another cuisine which could be eaten with *Hollataa*.

The second stew eaten with *Hollata* is the spicy cottage cheese. It is known in the study area in different names according to its mixture. Those are 1) “*Arafrafaatii*”: cheese with spice, butter and powdered cabbage, 2) “*Argoo*”: cheese with butter, spice and shiroo powder, 3) *Ittoo*: cheese with butter and *daabbusee* or without any spice.

The third stew eaten with *Hollataa* is cabbage spiced with butter. This type of serving shows the status of the server.

Unkuroo: This warqe food is also occasional. It is prepared for guests in the previous time. Most of the time, it is prepared for husbands as breakfast. Nowadays, all family members can feed it for occasions. Unkuroo is prepared from the mixture of warqe dough and bula. The ways of cooking Unkuro is different from baking hollata. That is, after warqe dough and bula are mixed together, the mixture is poured on hot plate and would toast thoroughly by string. Then, different spices like cardamom, mitimita, spiced butter, and cheese or cottage yogurt are added. As informants told me and as I also know from previous experiences, the one who eats it in the morning can stay for a full day without additional meal. This food, most of the time, is prepared for breakfast.

Marqaa Hamxiixii (bulla porridge): As stated above, bulla is obtained from decorticated white milky warqe inner pulp and chopped or pulverised corm through squeezing and concentrating. Hamxiixii (bulla) porridge is cooked most of the time with milk, and at the end butter should be added. It is prepared for breakfast for children, elders, and nursing mothers. It is also served for patients who have digestion problems. In porridge cooking, it can be mixed with other types of flours for its softening characteristics.

Warqe as income generating for women

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the worlds (FAO, 2011). According to FAO research paper, the roles women play in agriculture are varying and change rapidly because of the transformation of social and economical forces in agriculture sector. But in developing countries, especially in Africa, where rural life has become miserable, women always manage complex and difficult households. Every activity in the house and out in the field needs to be accomplished through poor technology by women; almost everything is done by hand. Especially at the study area, according to the information researcher gathered, women in any agricultural activities including *warqe* cultivation participate tremendously without rest; their activities include assisting men during ploughing, and at the time of weeding and harvesting. They can carry out full jobs independently in addition to assisting.

When we come to *warqe* farming, all things except soil preparation, plantation and transplantation are done by women. The tedious works of weeding, harvesting, and processing for food and sale are the responsibilities of women. In addition to this tough work, they are also expected to nurture the day-to-day life of their family: they plan food budget for the year based on their warqe yield. In this case, if they have surplus, they will bring some of it to the market for selling. The money and materials they collect from trading warqe sponsors them for fulfilling their needs, for example collecting raw materials for stew such as salt, oil, spices and their yearly costumes and others.

In this study area, women use warqe as money. That is, I have observed that in the small market areas of *Darian* and *Warabu*, women who want to buy salt, spices, coffee, soap, oil and other small amount of necessary things do not need to have money; they carry some amount of *warqe* dough to the market and put a small amount of it on their hand and will ask traders in market for exchange in a bartering way with the material they want. This type of marketing is traditionally known by the name of *Qexoo*. This way of trading goods has transferred from generation to generation, and it is still an active marketing system for the study area regarding warqe dough. Through this system, the traders collect warqe dough from different small sellers and will prepare in *Jambii* form for extensive markets.

The women who are experienced in decorticating, pulverising and assisting in different ways of warqe production are employed for daily labour under those women who have the warqe production programme. This is also another income generating system for the poor women of the study area. This type of women's activity has dual purpose; one is earning money, and the second is covering that day's cost of their meal. This is because the one who employed women for warqe production daily labour should cover their meal in addition to the payment they give.

Regarding warqe trading, as mentioned above, women traders of the study area whose trade is based on warqe products head their job in different ways. They do this by trading different spices and cereal they assemble for warqe/enset dough in large quantity from different women by bartering system, and they sell it for other merchants.

The women who produce surplus warqe dough and bulla beyond their family consumptions sell for traders at their home garden or by taking to the market for money. Those who bought bulla and warqe dough from garden yard sell it again by adding value, meaning after they have changed it to powder through different cleaning and drying process, they laminate it with plastic and take it to city markets. This is especially done for bulla. Then the material is provided to supermarkets. In the case of warqe dough, after they are collected from different rural small market through bartering and buying

by money, they are prepared in “jambii” form- big pack of warqe for larger markets like Waliso and Merkato.

Others, who have mini restaurants near their home, which is located at small town, prepare warqe bread, Hollataa, with different spicy stew like Kochee (kitifo), Ittoo (cottage cheese) and Rafuu (cabbage). Customers can be served according to their interest and their capacity to buy.

According to the information that has been collected, nowadays, in the study area, some women have started trading in the same way as mentioned above in the place called Darian (in rural small restaurants).

In other way, women of the study area could be involved in other ventures in addition to taking warqe dough and bulla to market so as to fulfill their daily needs. Those who have the talent of making different type of mat and basket from warqe part- oficho and qacca (fibres) – could produce and sale with the aim of improving their income.

In the production processes, other than obtaining warqe cultural food raw material, warqe fibre could be yielded, which is used for making rope, mate, and basket. In addition, its leaves can be used during production time for wrapping the warqe pit, for covering chat or “jimaa”, for baking traditional bread (*Difo*) and warqe *Hollata* and also used as plate at ceremony of *koche* eating (minced red meat). Its outer part can also be used for animals’ food, constructing and separating interior fence, as well as its dried outer part which is known by the name Qoqosa can be used as firewood.



Fig. 10 Fence done by qoqosa (dried part of warqe sheath)

9. Conclusion

As this research indicates, *warqe* is very significant in guarding the lives of the inhabitant of the study area and the poor holders of the small plots. Women, especially, can manage themselves and their family life by nurturing and praising it as their lives depend on this backyard field farming. They plant and transplant according to their tradition, which is transferred from generation to generation, and produce *warqe* dough for different cultural foods. At the study area, women have full rights on processed *warqe* products; basically, those who have surplus products can sell and make money. Those who have scarce money in hand can fulfil their daily need through bartering *warqe* dough with the material they require, specifically small amount of spices and stew raw materials, salt, oil and coffee for daily use.

In general, for the betterment of the life of the *warqe* producing women of the research area, there is a need to train, and improve instruments and ways of production in order to minimize labour consuming factors and upgrade outputs in quality and quantity.

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