
Discursive Practices of Identity among the Arsi Waata: A Critical Discourse Analyses

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Abstract

This article analyzes the discursive practices of identity pertaining to the Waata. It employs qualitative method of data analysis. The snowball sampling technique is used to select informants from the Arsi and the Waata groups. Data were collected using key informant interview and focus group discussion, and analyzed thematically following Fairclough's tri-dimentional model critical discourse analysis. The findings show that the Arsi and the Waata use discursive practices since antiquity which define the current Waata as descendants of a forefather cursed by God, and their occupations (hunting, cleansing, blessing, cursing, etc.,) as the compensation given to the man, and transferred to them. It is believed that the Waata's participation in occupations other than these occupations leads to punishment. The expressions 'God ordered the Waata to live on the given activities; education and farming were not meant for the Waata, etc. used by the groups are potent to naturalize the alleged given livelihood to the group. These discursive practices are oriented by the reductionist ideology latent to control the discursive, mental, and physical spaces of the Waata to confine themselves to these non-productive types of occupations. The reductionist ideology embedded in the discursive practices may negatively implicate the Waata's well-being, and create asymmetrical power relations between the Waata and the Arsi.

Keywords: [Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse, Discursive Practices, Identity]

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1. Introduction

The *Waata*², one of the minority groups dwelling in the Arsi Zones of Oromia Regional State, share ethnic, linguistic and religious identities with the Arsi Oromo. The *Waata* believe that they are one of *Sadan Ilmaan Arsee* ‘the three Arse children’. They are native speakers of the Arsi-Bale dialect of *Afaan Oromoo*. They are also Muslims like most of the Arsi Oromo. Unlike these shared identities, the Arsi *Waata* are unique in their food habit and occupation. They eat the meat of hippopotamus – called cattle of the *Waata*. They cleanse blood when the Arsi kill each other, and they make pot to earn income. These unique practices of the *Waata* are salient to define them in their locality.

The rationales for conducting this study include my childhood experience, the existing body of literature and my observation of the *Waata*. In my childhood, I grew up hearing and perhaps saying ‘Only the *Waata* eat alone.’ It used to be a widely accepted practice to hear children in my birthplace (East Wellega) saying, “We are not the *Waata* to eat alone.” No child knows, for sure, who the *Waata* are and whether or not they eat alone. No one knows the origin of the saying and the time people of the village started using it. No one also bothers, even today, to ask and know about the *Waata* in the area. No *Waata* lives in my place of birth or its surroundings, but the customary saying and the underlying beliefs are as old as the community of the place.

In the existing literature, the genealogy of the *Waata* is blurred. For instance, Alamaayyoo (1996) pointed out that the *Waata* are one of the minority groups living with *Sikkoo* and *Mandoo* who are called Arsi. Most writers stated that the Arsi say *sadan ilmaan Arsee*, but in their works the writers mentioned *Sikkoo* and *Mandoo* as the only moieties of Arsi (Gemedu, 2016; Abbas, 2012; Mohammed, 2005 and Husseen, 2000). In all these works, the kinship line of the *Waata* appears to be moving from getting blurred to being rejected. The writers did not categorize the *Waata* as *Arxi* or a clan of another ethnic

² The *Waata* live in and out Ethiopia. In Ethiopia the *Waata* live in Borana, Guji, Jimma zones of Oromia Regional State. Outside Ethiopia they live in Kenya (Ayehu, 2005 and Anessa, 2004).

group. Abbas (2012) stated that to claim Arsi identity, a *gosa* of individuals should be connected to either *Sikkoo* or *Mandoo* moieties of the Arsi. This indicates that any group not connected to the moieties, cannot be an Arsi. Seemingly, keenship line of the *Waata* was intentionally blurred and disconnected from the Arsi for customary reasons.

Apparently, the *Waata* live in the historically constructed context which forced them to pick up the non-productive livelihood sources tabooed by the majority of the people they live with. Based on the above reasons and the result of the data analyses made in the result and discussion, the *Waata*, in an era of better exercise of rights and respect for humanity, did not get both national and international attention. As one of the ways to attract attention to the *Waata* case, this article examines the discursive practices of antiquity related to the group

2. Literature Review

2.1. Discourse and identity

In the existing literature, discourse and identity are defined in different ways. Discourse is defined formally, functionally and pragmatically. Formally, discourse is defined as a unit of linguistic analysis above a sentence or clause (Stubbs, 1983 and Leech, 1983). This definition disregards the functions of verbal discourse, and the non-verbal discourses as a whole. Functionally, discourse is seen as utterances that are inherently contextualized (Schifrin, 1994). This excludes written text and non-verbal discourse from the concept. Pragmatically, discourse is defined as “The ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, speaking, reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities by specific groups” (Gee, 2008: 3). Gee’s definition reconciles the formalist’s and functionalist’s views of discourse. In this study, discourse is seen as both textual and non-textual forms that people use to comprehend, constitute and legitimize realities.

At the macro level, discourse can be categorized as verbal and non-verbal modes. The verbal mode of discourse includes written and oral texts whereas, the non-verbal mode is graphs, pictures, activities, etc. which people use to

communicate their sociological and cosmological needs. At the micro-level, discourse can be categorized as gender, political, economic, identity, etc. discourses, (Van Leeuwen, 2008 and Vandijk, 1997). The current article falls with social identity discourse focusing on the *Waata* case.

Etymologically, identity is derived from the Latin word ‘*idem*’ meaning ‘the same’. However, identity is often seen in terms of both similarities and differences. Dundes (1989: 6) wrote that “It is impossible to speak of sameness without reference to difference, and there is no identity of a group without the identity of other groups” Emphasizing this relational view, Deng (1995:1) stated that, “Identity is the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others based on race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture.” More explicitly, Kidd (2002:7) discussed identity as “How we think about ourselves as people, about other people around us, and what we think others thought of us”. These sources define identity in terms of intra- and inter-group similarities and differences based on insiders’ and outsiders’ perceptions which can be primordial and situational from their very nature.

The primordial view sees identity as given, and static, whereas, the situational view views identity as a process of construction, negotiation and change. Identity construction is a process of differentiation through which people identify and define themselves individually or as a group. Identity negotiation takes place between and within groups through social interaction to develop a sense of oneness by assimilation and integration, and to retain their difference by resistance and maintenance. Identity change, on the other hand, brings alteration in all or part of the multilayers of identity (Weedon 2004; Stets and Burke, 2000 and Povova, 2012).

Identity is multilayered in terms of its macro-level demographic and micro-level ethnographic categories. The former deals with the correlation between social structure (age, gender and class) and language structure (accent, dialect and register). The latter focuses on the claimed and ascribed native cosmology, healing practice, ritual practice, etc. These are mainly related to

resistance and socialization for cultural maintenance, and acculturation and marginalization to show inclusion and exclusion (Hall and Bocholt, 2005). Both the macro and micro-level identities are dynamic, and viable to (re)construction through discursive practices salient in a given context.

To summarize, discourse is the ways of comprehending, reflecting and constructing realities in which identity is a part. Identity is a relational notion constructed and negotiated in social interactions. A person or a group may have multiple identities serving in different contexts. In the national context, similarity is expected for unity whereas, at a local level, differences are inevitably created. In both cases, identities can be claimed and ascribed based on emic and etic perceptions.

2.2. Discursive Practices of Identity

Sociologically, practices are what people do. Bourdieu (1991), discussed that what people do is the summation of habitus, field and capital. Habitus is considered as the system of thinking socialized during childhood. Field refers to intellectual contexts where institutional practices are performed by domain-specific rules (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Capital refers to resources. It is categorized as economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals. Economic capital is the fortune and revenues convertible into money, and institutionalized in property rights. Cultural capital shows the relative positions within a social field. It can be transferred by family and education. It also exists in incorporated, institutionalized and objectivized forms. The incorporated form of cultural capital presupposes the inculcated and assimilated process of embodiment in any social field. Institutionalized capital takes a formalized academic qualification of an institution. The objectivized form exists in the form of materials to be transferred to a physical state (Bourdieu, 1991).

Social capital is about social networks and relationships to have a legitimized access to resources for members of a group. The positive intra- and inter-group relationships facilitates, and the negative deter the access to use resources (Van Dijk, 1997). Symbolic capital, on the other hand, is related to honor and recognition. It is not an independent type of capital by itself, but

economic, social and cultural capitals are converted to symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). These elements of practices are established and legitimized through discursive practices used in a given context. According to Fairclough (2003), discursive practices link texts and contexts to make context-specific realities. Gee (2008) also argued that realities are discursively constituted. This article is oriented with multiple realities where identity is one of the realities open for negotiation and change through discursive practices.

Discursive practices are the processes of text production and consumption. The processes include every-day interactions and actions of people in a given context. Thus, discursive practices are determined by social norms and conventions (Van Leeuwen, 2008). The discursive practices of a group identify and define it based on the group's own perceptions, its perceptions of the other groups, other group's perceptions of it, and the group's perception of the way others perceive it (Gee, 2008 and Kid 2002). Thus, discursive practices are central to the construction and regulation of social identity. This article examines the ways the discursive practices of antiquity were used in the context of the *Waata* to legitimize their social cultural, economic and symbolic capitals.

3. Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

Theoretically, the article employs Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory and Bourdieu's (1991) Practice Theory (PT). The former frames the social aspect of language i., e., what people do with their languages in their discursive practices. This includes Autin's (1962) speech act theory. The latter helps me to analyze the sociocultural practices of the *Waata*. Both theories are social constructivism in their orientation to often make knowledge claims based on the ethnographically established realities (Creswell, 2007).

The methodology used for data collection and analysis is qualitative. In the process of data collection, first I made rapport to have close relationships with the *Waata* and the Arsi groups living in the Arsi and West Arsi Zones of Oromia Regional State. This is to understand the discursive practices and

values pertaining to the *Waata*. Out of the districts in the two zones, Ziyaw Dugda, Arsi Negelle, Kofale and Shashamane were selected using a purposive sampling technique. After identifying relevant districts, further search was made inside the districts, and Alelu Ilu, Sambaro, Dawe Kushe and Sayimanna Kebeles were selected using the same sampling technique. The use of the sampling technique is based on the presence of a relatively large number of the *Waata*, the *Waata* in the areas call themselves *Waata Aslii* ‘the original *Waata*’ and, the presence of exclusive practices of the *Waata* in their respective areas. Samples were taken from the four kebeles selected using snowball strategy.

Data were collected from the *Waata* and the Arsi men and women including youths and elders through overt participant observation, in-depth interview and focus group discussion. With the help of the checklist, I prepared on aspects of the *Waata* identity, sociocultural practices of the groups in all the selected kebeles have been observed using frequent fieldworks. Key informants from both the *Waata* and the Arsi have been interviewed in their local vicinities based on the favorable conditions they chosen for the interview. Likewise, focus group discussion was also conducted with the informants at three sessions each having 6-8 members. The data obtained through these methods were recorded using a tape recorder, and changed to written *Afaan Oromoo* using a line-based transcription system following Gee (2008) where data are put in clause or sentence form. Finally, the data were translated into the English language. The *Afaan Oromoo* and the English versions of the data were presented side by side and analyzed using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach.

According to Van Dijk (2001:352), CDA is “A type of discourse-analytical approach that unveils the ideology (re)enacted through textual and contextual practices.” Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) also stated that CDA uncovers the ideology embedded in the discourses produced and regulated in a given context. Hence, this article used CDA to explain the ideology veiled in the discursive practices pertaining to the *Waata* following Fairclough’s (1992) discourse as a social practice, and Wadak’s, (2001) discourse-historical approaches of CDA. The first approach supports data

description, interpretation and explanation. Description is made on the formal properties of the transcribed and translated texts. Thus, in this article, lines were grouped into stanzas, and stanzas were presented under different themes following Gee (2008). The data described were juxtaposed to sociocultural contexts for interpretation following the analogy principle of (Wodak 2001) in which diachronic and synchronic information is used to interpret the discursive practices of the groups. Data explanation deals with the underlying beliefs about the discursive practices related to the *Waata*.

4. Results and Discussions

The findings of this study are presented and discussed in two themes. The first theme examines the discursive practices of antiquity pertaining to the *Waata* identity. This theme deals with how and why discursive practices of antiquity legitimize livelihood sources of the *Waata*. The second theme explains the nexus between discursive practices and ideology in connection with the *Waata* identity. It unveils the interlocking nature of discursive practices of antiquity and ideology to determine who and what the *Waata* and their livelihood sources are. Both themes aim to attain the objectives of this study.

4.1. Discursive Livelihood Practices among the Arsi *Waata*

In the context of the *Waata* and the Arsi, it is an acceptable belief and a popular practice that the *Waata*'s livelihood practices are God-given. The belief about the given livelihood is established in the myth *Waaqaan Morkuu* 'rivaling with God' narrated by both the *Waata* and the Arsi informants. The themes around which the myth was established include the prosperous time of the past, the capacity to compete with God, the lost property, the victimized personality and the compensated properties of *Aagaa* 'forefather of the *Waata*'. The myth depicts that *Aagaa* is said to have lost all his animals due to his alleged boastful behavior which is believed to have offended God. He had been given livelihood practices as compensation for the animals he lost in the competition with God during immemorial time in the past. The Arsi and the *Waata* believe that the given livelihood practices of *Aagaa* are

transferred to the current *Waata* without change. This belief could have been situated in the primordial view where identity is seen as the products of some presupposed essential features that cannot be changed across time and space (Hall, 1996).

In situational view, identity is neither a given nor a product, rather it is a process viable to change and negotiation. Discursive practices are potent to constitute and legitimize both views of identity (De Fina, 2006 and Hall and Bucholtz, 2005). The *Waata* seem to have a claim for the given and static livelihood practices by which they are known in their locality. Seemingly, the discursive practices of antiquity related to the *Waata* are the ascription inculcated into their minds through the myth.

The livelihood practices that the *Waata* believe to have been descended from their forefather to them are called *Ittiin bulmaata kennaa* 'given livelihood'. This given livelihood includes *roophii adamsuu*, *dhiiga miiccuu*, *waa mara eebbisuu*, *faara dha'uu* and *du'aa awwaaluu*. The Arsi and the *Waata* believe that deviation from the given livelihood practices results in punishment. The livelihood activities and the corresponding discursive practices will be described and interpreted in the next subtopics.

4.1.1. *Roophii Adamsuu* 'Hunting Hippopotamus'

The essence of hippopotamus hunting as an activity of the *Waata* traces back to the myth *Waaqaan Morkuu* 'rivaling with'. The myth presents that a bull and a heifer escaped from the beasts and got into a river during the mythical competition held between God and *Aagaa*. It is believed that both domestic animals become hippopotamus, and were given to *Aagaa* as a compensation for his vanished properties. They also believe that a compensation is passed down to the current *Waata*, and taken as their cattle. The groups commonly agree on the mythical reason for the relationship between the hippopotamus and the *Waata*. The expression *adamsadhuutii ittiin buli!* 'Live on it by hunting' used in their myth legitimizes the divine sources of the animal as one of the *Waata*'s given livelihood practices. Consider the following expressions taken from the myth to illustrate the case in point.

(1)	Stanza 1: Ordering	Gloss
	<i>Kormaafi goromsa bishaan buute sanaan jiraadhu!</i>	‘Live on the heifer and the bullock that got into a river’
	<i>Jaran siif hirphee</i>	‘I made them compensation for you’
	<i>Adamsadhuutii ittiin buli!</i>	‘Live on them by hunting!’
	Stanza 2: Claiming	
	<i>Roophiin loon Waataati</i>	‘Hippopotamus is cattle of the <i>Waata</i> ’
	<i>Buddeena keennaa</i>	‘It is our food’
	<i>Beenyaa keenya</i>	‘It is our compensation’
	Stanza 3: Deciding	
	<i>Gogaa roophiirraa alangeefi waanteetu tolfama</i>	‘Whip and shield are made from hippopotamus skin!’
	<i>Alangeen seera fixxi</i>	‘Whip implement decision’
	<i>Alangeen seera tumtii</i>	‘Whip makes decision’
	<i>Alangeen seera murtii</i>	‘Whip legislate decision’
	<i>Gaachanni meeshaa ittisaati</i>	‘Shield is a protective weapon’

The extract emphasizes that God ordered *Aagaa* to live on the heifer and the bull got into a river and became a hippopotamus as a compensation for his lost animals using the expression *siif hirphee* ‘I compensate for you’. This proves that the hippopotamus is considered as remnant of the ancient *Waata*’s destroyed animals. Hence, my informants of the *Waata* and the Arsi stated that God accomplished His order to the *Waata* using the phrases *sanaan jiraadhu* and *ittiin buli!* ‘Live on that’. These are discursive justifications for which the *Waata* are made to claim hippopotamus as their cattle and their food (stanza 2). Thus, the hippopotamus and its products are claimed by the *Waata* using the pronoun *keennaa* ‘It is ours’ and eating the meat of a hippopotamus is not taboo in the culture of the *Waata* group.

The *Waata* make artifacts like *alangee* ‘whip’ and *gaachana* ‘shield’ from the skin of hippopotamus and sell them to the Arsi. *Alangee* is held in hand to play various roles in different discursive situations such as reconciliation, meeting, mediation, marriage and blessing. *Abbaa Gadaa* ‘Gada leader’ cannot decide on cases of any kind in the absence of *alangee*. He holds a whip as a symbol of power. Thus, the whip provides executive, judicial and legislative functions. The *Waata* and the Arsi emphasized these functions of

alangee by using parallel expressions *fixxi* ‘executes’, *tumti* ‘legislates’ and *murti* ‘decides’. They mentioned that holding the Whip is mandatory in all the customary situations among the groups.

The pejorative meaning attached to the *Waata* because of using hippopotamus and its products which is totally avoided in the culture of the Arsi is impurity, The concept of impurity attached to the *Waata* using the labels *warra battii nyatu* ‘eaters of dead’ and *hafilannee* ‘not selective. They are also metonymically substituted with the animal they have a close relationship for using the term *ilmaan roophii* ‘children of a hippopotamus. However, the *Waata* reject these negative labels and call themselves *Waada'a* ‘promise’ to mean that they are the promise given to the Arsi to cleanse them and to bless their properties.

The speech acts ordering, claiming and deciding used in (1) accentuate the relationship between the *Aagaa*, God and hippopotamus. Agents of the speech acts are God and *Aagaa*. God informed *Aagaa* that He allowed him to live on meat of a hippopotamus and its products. This could be a mythologizing strategy through which the current *Waata* is made to claim hippopotamuses to be their cattle. The *Waata* emphasized that they have no land to produce crops and rare animals. They live around the bank of lakes where they have no alternative other than using aquatic animals for their daily living. It is reasonable to think that such a claim might be covertly ascribed, and overtly forced identity of the group. This could be done by the majority groups for certain customary values and practices the minority groups are expected to respect and perform, which actually is a form of social control as mentioned by Van Dijk (2009) and Povova (2012).

4.1.2. *Dhiiga Miiccuu* ‘Blood Cleansing’

Cleansing is the ritual practice performed in different cultures of the societies cross the world. The practice is aimed at purifying the spiritually and physically spoiled fate of a person or a group. It involves bathing, smudging, salt baths, to remove perceived negative energy. Blood cleansing is one of the ritual practices performed in the homicidal cases (Habtam, Grum, Indris, 2025 and Bell,2009). Blood cleansing ritual is a popular practice among the

Waata and the *Arsi*. and the *Waata* are responsible for the practice when an *Arsi* person kills his or her fellow *Arsi*. In their discourse, informants from both groups repeatedly used the expressions ‘*Waaqni dhiiga Ambaa miiccuun jiraadhu!*’ *jedhee abboome* ‘God ordered the *Waata* to live on cleansing the blood of *Ambaa*’ to emphasize that blood cleansing is the sole practice of the current *Waata*

The blood cleansing ritual the *Waata* are expected to perform contains series of activities. The activities are *mirkaneeffannaa* ‘confirmation’ ‘*dhiqannaa* ‘washing’ and *fixannaa* ‘completion’ stages. The *Waata* are responsible only for cleansing the spoiled blood of the *Arsi* at the first two stages for the belief that no *Arsi* is allowed to see another *Arsi* whose blood is spoiled by the sprite of killing. This exclusive construction of the role-based identity of the *Waata* is legitimized by their expression *Dhiigni Ambaa si hinkukkutin* ‘Let the Amba’s blood does not hurt/cut you’. The *Arsi* and the *Waata* informants highlighted that this expression is a command given to *Aagaa* as compensation from God at the end of the mythical competition, and descended without change to the current *Waata*. The last stage, i., e., *fixannaa* is left for *Abbaa Gadaa*’ Gada leader ‘who should be from the *Arsi*. The following speech acts are taken from the myth told about the *Waata*.

(2)

Stanza1: Introducing	Gloss
<i>Ani Waaticha</i>	‘I’m the <i>Waata</i> ’
<i>Ani ayyanticha</i>	‘I am the spiritual man’
Stanza 2: Interrogating	
<i>Harkatu si nadaa’ee?</i>	‘Was your hand spoiled/infected?’
<i>Ati diinticha?</i>	‘Are you the enemy?’
Stanza 3: Promising	
<i>Hirmiin sirraa baasa</i>	‘I will make you free from the taboo of death’
<i>Ambummaa siif deebisa</i>	‘I will restore your Amba identity’
Stanza 4: Disinfecting	
<i>Hadhooftuun si arge</i>	‘I saw you with sour liquid.’
<i>Hadhaan sirraa haaba’u</i>	‘Let you be free from poison.’
<i>Bishaniin si arge</i>	‘I saw you with water.’
<i>Dhiigni sirraa haaqabbanaa’u</i>	‘Let the blood get cool.’
<i>Biyyeen si arge</i>	‘I saw you with soil.’
<i>Abiddi sirraa haadhaamu....</i>	‘Let the fire get extinguished from you...’

<i>Saala si haade</i>	‘I have shaved your genital hair’
<i>Nyaara si haade</i>	‘I have shaved your eyelashes’
<i>Bobaa si haade</i>	‘I have shaved your pubic hair.
<i>Gurraattii sitti qale</i>	‘I have slaughtered black ship for your seen’
<i>Dhiiga isheen si miicce</i>	‘I have washed you with the blood of sheep’
<i>Bishaan buusee si qulqullesse</i>	‘I immersed you in river water’

As demonstrated in (2), the *Waata* begins cleansing the spoiled blood of an Arsi by introducing himself to the killer using ritualized terms *Waaticha* ‘the *Waata*’ and ‘*Ayyaanticha* ‘the spiritual man’. This forces the killer to accept and obey all the courses of actions to be taken by the *Waata* in the cleansing process. For instance, the killer should tell the truth when the *Waata* interrogates him/her; whether s/he killed intentionally or accidentally. This determines the compensation expected from the criminal for the victim’s family. If the killing is unintentional, the compensation may be proportionally little, while intentional killing requires more compensation.

The objective of the cleansing ritual at the beginning is to make the person free from the taboo of death. It is believed that once a person from Arsi kills another Arsi, s/he is automatically conquered by the spirit of death which is associated by the group to poison. Next, the *Waata* promises to the killer that he is going to restore his/her *Ambummaa* saying ‘I will restore your Ambaness identity (stanza 3). The *Waata* does these activities looking at the killer from the distance. The speech acts, introducing, interrogating, promising and disinfecting; the *Waata* uses at the beginning of the cleansing ritual emphasize the activities sequentially and interdependently performed. For the criminal to accept the *Waata*, for instance, the *Waata* is expected to introduce himself. The introduction is expected to be followed by an interrogation that forces the criminal to tell the truth. Thus, the speech acts and the corresponding commitments expected to be performed by the *Waata* follow a strict order of activities.

The *Waata* approaches the criminal holding water, sour liquid, soil and fire. The objects are prepared for the physical acts that accompany the speech acts with the intention to make the person free from the spirit of killing as a result of which s/he has become an enemy. According to the customary law of the

Arsi, killing a human being makes the individual an enemy (Gemechu, 2013; Gemedu, 2016). Apart from their usual functions sour liquid, poison, or fire symbolizes the spirit of killing in this case. It is expected that once a person kills someone, s/he can be identified by these symbols. That is why the *Waata* man is expected to go to the killer carrying water, sour liquid and soil. Then, the *Waata* informs the criminal that he saw him/her with water which implies pacifying the hot blood of the dead person, and washes the killer off his impurity. He also informs that he saw the killer with a sour liquid that made him free from poison.

The *Waata* splashes and throws these materials at the killer to extinguish the killing spirit s/he has been possessed by. This appears to agree with Pederson's (2002) argument in which performances of speech acts such as ordering, interrogating, giving promise etc. create situations in which physical actions follow them to help someone achieve what is expected of him/her. The roles that the *Waata* play in the cleansing ritual among the Arsi could be empirical evidence for the illocutionary notion of speech acts established by Austin (1962). The speech acts and the accompanied physical acts the *Waata* perform are used as the sources to coin the derogatory term *waa haatuu* 'thrower of some harmful thing on a living being' and the loaded negative attribution to refer to the *Waata*

The *Waata* continues cleansing by washing the killer with the blood of a black sheep which the Arsi and the *Waata* believe that the blood of black sheep is used to cleanse impurity and make someone free from sin. In this case, sheep symbolizes innocence, and black symbolizes mercy. The Oromo in general and the Arsi and the *Waata*, in particular, say *Waaqa gurracha* 'the black God' to refer to His mercifulness (Gemechu, 2013). Thus, washing with the blood of a sheep is a practice of hope that the merciful God is with the blood of the innocent animal to forgive the sinned person. After washing with the blood, the *Waata* immerse the killer in the river water. The belief behind immersing the killer in the water is cooling down the emotion and the blood that forces the person to kill his fellow mankind. Similarly, taking the person out of the water after immersing him/her in the river symbolizes that the

guilty person has left his/her old sinned experience in the water, and has become a new person.

One of the old experiences expected from the killer to leave it under the water is killing. Next, shaving his/her hair from the face; head, under the armpits, etc. with *cabbi* ‘agate’ commence. The Arsi and the *Waata* believe that agate is given to the *Waata* by God as a sign of the ritual role the *Waata* are expected to play. Shaving the hair from the body of the killer with agate symbolizes putting him/her in deep sorrow. The shaving that is done to show the grief during the cleansing process is expressed using the collocations of ‘*nyaara/saala/gaara haadeera* ‘I have shaved eyelash, genital hair and pubic hair’. This could be seen as part of the public knowledge in which the Ethiopians shave hair to show their grief for a dead person.

The *Waata* finalizes his part of the cleansing ritual by reporting the activities he has performed to Abba Gada using the following speech act.

(3)

<i>Onaa baaseera</i>	‘I have brought him/her out of a deserted house
<i>Rifeensa haadeera</i>	‘I have shaved hair’
<i>Hirmii baaseera</i>	‘I have cleansed him from the taboo of death’
<i>Xurii baaseera</i>	‘I have cleansed him from impurity.’

With those expressions, the *Waata* reports the completion of his part of the cleansing ritual. He began the report with the phrase *onaa baaseeraa*. The term *onaa* ‘deserted’ symbolizes isolation and inconvenience; while *baaseeraa* ‘I have taken out of’ implies breaking the state of isolation and starting the move to join people. Next, the *Waata* is expected to report that he shaved all the hairs from the body of the guilty person using *haadeeraa* ‘I have shaved’, and its collocation *nyaara*, *rifeensa*, *gaara*, etc. In his final report, the *Waata* uses the phrase *hirmii baaseeraa* which indicates avoidance of the spoiled fate of the criminal. After reporting part of the cleansing activities completed, the *Waata* hands the killer over to Abbaa Gadaa for the final reconciliation which the informants call *fixannaafica baasaa* ‘completion of the conflict with compensation’. He also confirms that the person made an enemy became an Amba through the ritual practices he has performed. The cleansing role of the *Waata* cannot go beyond this stage. The

price used to be given to the *Waata* for blood cleansing, as mentioned in the myth, is heifer and bull. The expression ‘Let the Amba (Arsi) give you calf and heifer for blood cleansing’ rationalizes that blood cleansing is given to the *Waata* by God, and it is one of the livelihood sources of the group.

The Arsi and the *Waata* believe that the blood cleansing practice is hierachal and exocentric. This means that an individual who is lower in status and is an outs-group member is responsible for cleansing blood during homicide. For instance, the Arsi do not cleanse blood at all. The *Waata* cleanse the Arsi, and are cleansed by *Bukkee* ‘hermaphrodite’. When a hermaphrodite kills someone from outside the Arsi, blood cleansing is expected to be performed by *Farra* – a dwarf who has no child or property, and is believed to be below human beings. In case a dwarf kills someone, there is no blood cleansing because no one is lower than a dwarf in the locality. It is taboo for the *Waata*, *Bukkee* and *Farraa* to kill an Arsi, and it is also taboo for an Arsi to kill a person from these groups. Thus, the cleansing responsibility is expected to go from the *Waata* to the Arsi, from *Bukkee* to the *Waata*, and from *Farra* to *Bukkee*.

4.1.3. *Eebbisuufi Abaaruu ‘Blessing and Cursing’*

As reported by most of the Arsi and the *Waata* informants, the *Waata* seem to have accepted the belief about the given livelihood and claim that blessing and cursing are their unique practices. The following expressions regulate the claim.

(4)

<i>Ebbistu baay'isi!</i>	‘Make things plenty with your blessing’
<i>Abartu balleessi</i>	‘Make things disappear with your Curse.
<i>Ta ati eebbiste nan baayisa</i>	‘I will multiply what you bless’
<i>Ta ati abaarte nan balleessa</i>	‘I will eliminate what you curse’
<i>Waa mara eebbisi</i>	‘Bless all things’

It is believed that through His commandments, God gave blessing and cursing practices to *Aagaa* and ordered him to multiply things with his blessing and to eliminate things with his cursing. It is also believed that God promised to make what *Aagaa* blesses plentiful and to destroy what he curses. This may

agree with Prince's (1990) observation that the expressions that people use to bless and curse may be charged either by the power of God or by the power of god, and the expressions impose fear upon people's lives. The informants narrate that blessing every aspect of the Arsi is meant only for the *Waata* by God. Thus, they bless cattle to be plenty; soil, air and plants to be free from diseases; they also bless barren women to give birth. As one of the discursive practices, the blessing follows different steps and has various features based on the types of entities to be blessed.

4.1.3.1. *Biyyee, Qilleensaafi Biqiltuu Eebbisuu*

'Blessing Soil, Air and Plant'

Soil, air and plants are given assets. It is hardly possible to live without them. The Arsi and the *Waata* believe that protecting soil from erosion, air from pollution, and plants from disease and deforestation is equal to protecting human beings from disappearance. In their beliefs, the *Waata* have vested power to make these essentials of life protected and conserved from catastrophes and avail them convenient for life through their blessings. The following extract illustrates this point:

(5)	<i>Biyyeerra harka kaa'ee eebbisa</i>	'He puts hand on soil and blesses it'
	<i>Lolaan sin hinargin!</i>	'Let no erosion affects you'
	<i>Qilleensatti bishaan facaasa</i>	'Spray water into air'
	<i>Jiidha qabadhu!</i>	'Let you hold moisture'
	<i>Gogsaan sin argin</i>	'Let no drought affects you'
	<i>Ija godhadhaa</i>	'Let you give seed'
	<i>Muraan sin hinargin'</i>	'Let no cutter gets you'

As shown in (5), the *Waata* place their hands on the soil with the belief of avoiding barriers (infertility and erosion) and keeping fertility to produce crops, fruits, and vegetables. The *Waata* who are responsible for blessing soil is *Waata Biyyoolee* 'the *Biyoole Waata*'. The *Waata* also spray water into the air during drought seasons to symbolize rain. The *Waata* do this using contrastive expressions 'hold moisture' and 'avoid drought' wishing conducive weather for living things. After blessing soil and air- the inanimate things-, the *Waata* blessed plants and animals- the animate entities. The blessing order goes on to plants which consume soil and air. They bless plants

wishing them protected from being dry, or cut by consumers. All the expressions are speech acts wishing convenience for all the inanimate entities blessed.

4.1.3.2. *Ganda, Maatiifi Loon Eebbisuu*

‘*Blessing Village, Family and Cattle*’

It is believed that blessing the village, family and cattle of the Arsi is taken as the role of the *Karara Waata*. The *Karara Waata*’s blessing goes from general to specific. They first bless a village which encompasses families, and then go to bless a single family, followed by cattle of the family. This order of blessing is dependent on their importance. The following song shows the blessing.

(6)

Stanza 1: Blessing village, family, offspring	Gloss
<i>Rrrrrrrr. Dhii! Dhii! Jedha....</i>	‘The Waata said irrrrrrr Dhii! Dhii! ...,’
<i>Gandaa-maatiin nagayaa</i>	‘Let village to family be peace’
<i>Maatii-waatiin nagayaa!</i>	‘Let family and offspring be peace’
Stanza 2: Blessing cattle and their owner	
<i>Nagayee warri loonii nagahee</i>	‘Peace, peace to, cattle owners’,
<i>Hoo burriyyoo loonii galee-galchaan nagayaa</i>	‘May cattle with varied colors and their shepherd come back to home peacefully’
<i>Eee, warra loonii eebbissee</i>	‘Yes, I blessed the cattle owner’
<i>Hoo burriyyoo loonii falee Waaqaan dhagayaa</i>	‘The Waata solve problems of cattle with various colors by praying to God’
<i>Eee, warra loonii eebbissee</i>	‘Yes I blessed cattle the owners’
Stanza 3: Cattle blessing activities	
<i>Loonitti aannan biifa</i>	‘Spray milk on cattle’
<i>Loon botowaan tuqa</i>	‘Touches cattle with botowa’
<i>Loon nidammaqxi</i>	‘Cattle became turtled’
<i>Mooraas cabsitee yaati.</i>	‘Broke out their barn’

The *Waata* use the signal *Rrrrrrrr! Dhii! Dhii!* to inform their coming to bless the village and family of a given place. It seems that the Arsi and the *Waata* communicate with each other based on their background knowledge about the signal and the *Waata*’s role in blessing cattle. The informants stated

that as soon as the Arsi woman heard the signal, she should take crop, butter, milk, etc., and should go to the gate of her house to accept the *Waata*. After that, they continue blessing the environment wishing peace for the village where the people live. They also wish peace for the family who owned the baby and calf. The informants repeatedly use the word *hunduu nagayaa/nagayee* (stanza 1 and 2) to emphasize the constitutive relationship between village and family where the peacefulness of one influences and is influenced by that of the other.

The *Waata* also wish peaceful life for cattle and their owner using the phrases *nagahee loonii*, *nagayee warri loonii* ‘peace for cattle, peace for cattle owner’. They wish that the owner may release their cattle from the barn in peace, and bring them back to the barn in peace. The *Waata* sit in the barn and utter the phrase *galee galchaa* to refer to the peacefulness of the cattle and their shepherd. For the blessing ritual, the owner of the cattle should give milk in *kurree* ‘a container’ to the *Waata*. Then, the *Waata* sip the milk and spray it on the cattle repeatedly to symbolize the multiplication of the cattle. This ritual performance is done only in the morning or in the afternoon when the cattle are still in the barn. At this time, the *Waata* touch the animals in the barn with *botowaa* (the ritually vested stick) and startle them. The startled cattle break the barn and go out. This symbolizes over reproduction of the cattle, and the enlargement of their barn.

There is a deep-rooted belief among the Arsi and the *Waata* that those who have been blessed by the *Waata*, would have many cattle, and the mating seasons of their heifers and bulls could not be interrupted. Thus, the karara *Waata* regularly say *Waata bore borichaa, Waatni looniif qorichaa* ‘the Bore *Boricha Waata* are a solution and responsible for cattle breeding’. When doing this, they carry *botowaa*, a ritualized instrument made of stick and cattle skin, considered as one of the compensations given to ancient *Waata*, used for blessing cattle. It is widely accepted that God ordered *Aagaa* to prepare a stick and decorate it with the skin of his eradicated animals during the time of the alleged mythical competition.

4.1.3.3. *Dhabduu Eebbisuu ‘Blessing Barren Woman’*

The *Waata* also bless barren women to get children. To perform this role, the barren woman either goes to the *Waata* or calls him to her home. The *Waata* lineage is responsible for performing such ritual roles is called *Waata Falaa* ‘the solution *Waata*’. The next extract focuses on this point.

(7)

<i>Beerri qullaat taati</i>	‘A woman will be with her bare body’
<i>Dhiiga hoolaa gurraatiin mica</i>	‘The <i>Waata</i> washes the woman with the blood of black sheep’
<i>Akka kormaa hii, hii hii, jedhaan</i>	‘He uses the sound of a bull at a mating time’
<i>Harmaa aannan sin gu’in</i>	‘May your breast be productive to yield milk’
<i>Mucaa guddatu da’ii</i>	‘May you deliver a growing child’
<i>kadhaa Waataatiin da’ii</i>	‘Let you give birth by the <i>Waata</i> ’s prayer’

Blessing barren women is believed to be one of the *Waata*’s domains of blessing that is given to them by God. My informants emphasize that the *Waata*’s blessing opens the closed womb of a barren woman. As seen in (7), when blessing, the *Waata* orders a barren woman to be in her bare body. Being a bare body symbolizes that the woman reveals all her *cubbuu* ‘sins’ to God and also shows that she has no child who will help her in the future. It is a widely accepted belief among the Arsi and the *Waata* that practicing *cubbuu*, such as lying, killing, disobeying God, etc. results in sterility. It is also popular among my informants that being in a bare body in front of the *Waata* for a sterile woman is believed to be in front of God. In this case, the *Waata* makes the woman ready to be blessed, and his blessing be heard by God.

The *Waata*, then slaughters black sheep, and he washes the body of the barren woman by its blood. As my informants mentioned, a black sheep is generous and innocent. Slaughtering this innocent animal symbolizes sharing God’s quality to get her sins removed. Washing the woman with the blood of the sheep indicates cleansing from sins she might have committed in her life. It is believed that a woman who gets her sin removed is equally getting accepted by God. After that, the *Waata* makes himself as a bull during a mating season of a cow. He steps land repeatedly and says hii...hii... hii... hii...to imitate

the sound that a bull uses before hitting a cow. This analogy symbolizes a season for the woman to conceive. Kicking under footstep repeatedly symbolizes downing the evil spirit which influences her to commit sin that interrupts the natural order of giving birth. In the last three lines of the extract, we find the *Waata*'s prayers for the woman to have a child. In his prayers, the *Waata* wishes her to have a growing child and a productive womb and breast with the expressions *Aannan hingu'inii* and *mucaa da'ii*. Thus, speech act blessing and the corresponding physical act the *Waata* makes are the discursive practices the moiety is known by, in a similar way Shiferaw's (2010) and Gemedha's (2016) observations which reported that blessing cattle and person is reserved for the *Waata*. The expressions in (7) attach their blessing role to the static notions that contradict the dynamic situations of contemporary society.

4.1.3.4. *Abaaruufi Abaaramuu ‘Cursing and Being Cursed*

It is the common belief that blaming the *Waata* for eating hippopotamus, cleansing blood, blessing, etc. results in being cursed. Thus, the Arsi, especially their women, fear the *Waata* for their cursing. The women believe that the *Waata* curse because they have been cursed. Consider the following data taken from the Arsi.

(8)

Stanza 1: Cursing	Gloss
<i>...botowaa ishii gadi gombiftee abaarti</i>	‘...they curse making their <i>botowaa</i> down’
<i>Alangee dachaaftee seera uumaa dabsiti</i>	‘They distort natural law by folding their <i>whip</i> ’
<i>Buuphaa duudaa awwaalti</i>	‘They bury egg’
<i>Waatiifi maatiin hinbuliniif,</i>	‘Let the infant and the family die,’
<i>Ardaan isaanii haramaa haaweeraramu</i>	‘Let their farm yard conquered with weed’.
<i>Kormi gaana haawallaalu....</i>	‘ Let their bull be unconscious of the mating season’

Stanza 2: Being cursed	Gloss
<i>“Rabbitu abaare,” jedhan.</i>	“God cursed them,” they said
<i>Kanumaaf nama abaarti</i>	‘That is why they curse people’
<i>Qubanni kee tokko hinta ‘in!</i>	‘Let you not settle in one territory’
<i>Sooromtee Amba hintarin</i>	‘Let you not rich and exceed the <i>Amba</i> ’
<i>Qacceen kee hindheeratin</i>	‘Let your generation not extended’

As presented in the extract, the *Waata* use *alangee* ‘whip’, *botowaa*’sticke decorated with skin’ and *killee* ‘egg’ when they curse. However, they use the

materials not in the same way they use them in the normal situation. For instance, unlike the blessing time, the *Waata* make an upside which is decorated with cattle skin part of *botowaa* down to symbolize the eradication of cattle. Both the *Waata* and the Arsi believe that making *bottowa* upside down has a negative effect on the cattle and cattle product of the one to be cursed. They express this using the phrase *botowaa gadi garagralchitee* ‘making *botowaa* upside down’. This assumption could be related to the popular expression ‘*Gadi garagali* ‘Let you be down’ which most of the Oromo use to wish misfortune against the one who is an obstacle to their socio-cultural practices. Thus, the *Waata* can make things scanty with the material they use to make them plenty.

Likewise, the *Waata* fold their *alangee* to curse something. Unlike the legislative and judiciary functions of *alangee* where it is always stretched to symbolize giving the right decision, the *Waata* fold *alangee* symbolizes the wish for inappropriate decisions from both human beings and God against something/somebody. In addition, the *Waata* bury eggs when they curse things. My informants of both the *Waata* and the Arsi pointed out that the *Waata* bury solid egg which symbolizes deafness and blindness. Therefore, all the symbolic elements used by the *Waata* to curse someone are against rearing many cattle and children. The informants stressed that the *Waata*’s curse makes infants and calves not grow, families not stable, yards full of weeds, and bull and heifer not conscious of mating seasons. Thus, the Arsi women give what the *Waata* want for fear of being cursed.

The Arsi hold contradicting beliefs about why the *Waata* curse. On the one hand, they believe that the *Waata* curse because it was given to them by God as compensation. Though the *Waata* themselves accepted the belief, the benefit they could get for their daily consumption from cursing is insignificant. On the other hand, the Arsi believe the *Waata* curse because they are cursed by God (stanza 2). The stanza shows that the *Waata* are cursed not to settle in one area, not to be rich and not to have a large population size. Practically, we may not find a group cursed by God. It is part of our behavioural makeup, because we do curse to react to certain psychological,

social, cultural, and personal contexts (Prince, 1990). Therefore, the *Waata*'s curse is not merely the role left for them as mentioned in Gemedu (2016), rather it is one of the ideological weapons that the group uses to fight entities that are against their socio-cultural practices. However, cursing as a unique and given role of the *Waata*, seems ascribed to them by the dominant group with whom they live in order to stop them from sharing resources like land.

4.1.4. *Faara Dha'uu* ‘Pottery’

The myth ‘Reviling with God’ the *Waata* and Arsi informants recited shows that clay is given to the foremother of the *Waata* in response to the questions she asked God at the end of the competition her husband had with God. The informants believed that the compensation is given to the current *Waata* women as it is. The next data taken from the *Waata* is about the duty:

(9)

Stanza 1: Request and order	Gloss
“Wantan elmadhu narraa fixxee maalan ta’aree!”	“Since you eradicated all my milkable animals, what shall I do?”
“Ee, dhaqitii faara dhahi” jedheen.	“Yes, go and make clay,” God said to her”
“Ati kana hujii buli,” jedheen.	“Live on doing this,” He said’
“Kana beenyaa siif baaseera,” jedheen.	“I gave you this in compensation,” He said’
Stanza 2: Training	
“Biyyee kana qicii!” jedheen Waaqni.	‘God said “take a small amount of this soil”
“Ol haadhi gumeessi,” jedheen	“Scratch up and make it round” he ordered’
“Ottee guddaa kan bookaa boci!”	“Make a big pot for mead”
“Ottee xixiqqaa ka aananiifi ittoo, boci!”	“Make a small pot for milk and stew!”
“Ottee irra xiqqaa kan bishaanii boci!”	“Make a relatively small pot for water!”
Stanza 3: Evidence for breakability of pot	
Jalaa cabsee atis cabsi jedhee ajaje	‘God broke it and ordered her to break it’
Akka iseen amma amma cabdu, akka isaanis sirraa bitaniifan cabse	‘I broke it so that it will be broken again and again, and they will buy from you again’
Stanza 4: Reason to make pot today	
Waaquma santu horii nurraa fixee kana ammoo ittiin bula nuuf tufe.	‘It was God who got rid of our cattle and gave us this as livelihood’

As given in (9), the relationship between the *Waata* women and their occupation, pottery is mythologized. It is alleged that the *Waata* woman made God accountable for the eradicated *milkable* animals of her, and requested Him for compensation by which she survives. In response to the woman's request, God gave her clay as a compensation. The phrase *faara hujii buli*

‘Live on making clay’ shows the command for the women to pick up clay as a static livelihood source. After giving the command, God trained her on how to make a pot. He ordered the woman to take a piece of clay, pile it up and soften it. Finally, God asked her to give it a round shape. He ordered the woman again to make different varieties of pots. As a result, the varieties of pots that the woman was able to make at the end of the training were *ottee guddaa daadhii* ‘big pot for mead, *ottee xiqqaa kan bishaanii* ‘relatively small pot for water’ and *ottee baay’ee xiqqaa* ‘very small pots for milk and stew’. Nowadays, the *Waata* woman makes all these varieties of pots with their shapes and sizes.

The other focus of the mythical training God gave to the foremother of the *Waata* is on the breakability of the pot. God ordered the ancient *Waata* woman to break the first pot from all the varieties she made. The assumption is that, unless the first pot she made is broken, it becomes permanent. If one pot is permanently used, the livelihood of the woman would be stopped somewhere. It is believed that God ordered the women to break for the sustainable making, selling and buying of pot as a means of livelihood of the women. Nowadays, the *Waata* women are making and selling pots, the *Arsi* women are buying, breaking them and buying them again to cover the daily expenses of the *Waata* women. However, this study argues that the *Waata* women are forced to pick pot making as their sole work with the mythologized discursive construction of the given livelihood assumption.

Gemedu (2016) also states that the pot the *Waata* women make is bought by the *Arsi*, and this keeps mutual interdependency between the groups. This conclusion might be true for the exchange that takes place between the *Waata* and the *Arsi*. It might be wrong when considering *Waata*’s pot-making as given and static. Because considering pot making as given and static limits the *Waata* women’s livelihood sources. This, in turn, makes the *Waata* dependent on the income generated from diversified sources rather than keeping mutual interdependency between the groups. This agrees with Van Leeuwen’s (2008) ideas in which members of the majority group control the

perspectives of the minority group members by allocating works and inculcating them into the mind of the group.

4.1.5. *Awwaalcha* ‘Interment’

The Waata and the Arsi believe that the people who died of communicable diseases are often buried only by the *Waata*. In their beliefs, the groups consider that the committal role of the people who died of tabooed disease was passed down to the current *Waata* from their ancestors. They emphasized that God anointed the *Waata* with an anti-evil spirit. The following data illustrates this role of the group.

(10)

Stanza 1: Committal role	Gloss
<i>Ka golfaan ajeeese nutu awwaala</i>	‘We bury people who died of typhoid’
<i>Nama qakkeefi qurcummaan ajeeesse awwaaluuuf ...ayyaana qabna</i>	‘We have the spirit to bury people who died of tuberculosis and leprosy’
<i>Isa rakkate awwaaluufilee numa yaamu</i>	‘Even to bury the dead body of the poor, they call us’
Stanza 2: Reason for the committal role	
<i>Nuun dhukkubni laguu nu hindanda’u</i>	‘Communicable disease cannot attack us’
<i>Akka nu hindandeenye ayyanni nuuf kenname</i>	‘Spirit is given to us not to be attacked by it’
<i>Gaafa loon nu harkaa fixe kanas nuuf tufe</i>	‘He gave us spirit at the time he eradicated our cattle’

It is an acceptable belief among the Arsi and the *Waata* that the diseases meant to be taboo for the Arsi are not taboo for the *Waata*. The *Waata* buried an individual who died of communicable diseases such as *golfaa* ‘typhoid’, *qakkee* ‘tuberculosis’ and *qurcummaa* ‘leprosy’. Similarly, the group is responsible for burying when poor individuals have died though the disease, they died of is not communicable. It is socialized among the Arsi and the *Waata* that God has given *ayyanaa* ‘spirit’ which protects evil spirits from the *Waata* to handle the case of people dying of communicable diseases. Other than identifying themselves with the burial roles, the *Waata* get no advantage from the role. However, it could be reasonable to think that the *Waata* are forced by the people with whom they live to accept the committal role as their God-given livelihood source. It also sounds right to think that the

works feared and contempt by the non-*Waata* groups have been inculcated into the minds of the *Waata* as given to them by God.

As discussed in 4.1.1 - 4.1.5, the *Waata*'s current practices, hunting, cleansing, blessing, pottery, etc. are believed to have been given to their ancestor by God. The practices are also considered as unchangeable identities of the group across time and space. Thus, the *Waata* are represented in these practices as a group with static identities. However, the static view of identity is highly challenged by the dynamic view in which identity is fluid and dynamic. This view informs that identity is neither a given thing nor is it a product. It is a social construct and group preference (De Fina, et al. 2006 and Hall and Bucholtz, 2005).

Seemingly, these occupational identities of the *Waata* have been ascribed by the majority groups the *Waata* live with. This forced the *Waata* to limit themselves to these non-productive and undiversified livelihood sources. Had it been the *Waata*'s own preference, the selection would have been more productive activities such as farming, education, administration, etc. Actually, they have been denied access to these activities by the alleged given livelihood sources. The *Waata* represent themselves abeavkently. On the one hand, they call themselves messengers of God whose livelihood sources are limited by God. On the other hand, they blame the majority group they live with for denying access to activities other than the given livelihood. The Arsi have paradoxical representation of the *Waata*. On the one hand, they call the *Waata Wayyuu* 'respectable' for the ritual practices the *Waata* perform, on the other hand, they represent the group as non-selective and ipure.

Apparently, the types of food the *Waata* consume, and their occupation are the main reasons for self and other's representations the *Waata*. In both cases, the representations discourage the *Waata* from participating in diversified livelihood sources, and deter their inclusion into the mainstream society of their surrounding. Thus, the strategy is reductionist in whivj the ingroup good and the out group representations are emphasized to devalue and minimize the values of any powerless group. Thus, it is stereotypc in attitude and

reductionist in orientation (Van Dijk, 1997 and Povova, 2012). Most minority groups across the world have fallen victim to the situation in which the *Waata* live. For instance, the Buraku community of Japan were forced by the non-Buraku to pick up tanning as their main occupation, and had designated residential areas outside town for their occupation. This circumstance has led the Buraku to develop inferior self-concept to participate in education, administration, etc (Dike, 2002 and Saikia, 2014). Likewise, the Osu community of Nigeria pacifies village deity and controls misfortune of members of the Igbo community by cutting a small part of their own ears or finger. However, the Igbo despised the Osu, for the Osu perform to cleanse members of the Igbo group who have fallen victims to misfortune (Onwubuariri, 2007 and Igwe and Akolokwu, 2014). However, governments of the two counties have changed the cases by creating awareness delving into the sociocultural norms of the majority-minority groups Igwe and Akolokwu, 2014 and Saikia, 2014).

The Manjo group living in South West Regional State of Ethiopia are also suffering from local discrimination for the types of food they consume. The Keffa discriminated the Manjo for eating the meat of colobus monkeys and porcupine. In the cases of the *Waata* and the Manjo, even though the Ethiopian government has developed indiscriminatory policy, the social norms with whom the minority groups live are perpetuating the discriminations by mythologizing their livelihood sources which are the play ground to regulate discursive practices the group.

4.2. Discursive practices and ideology in the context of the *Waata*

The discussions made so far on the discursive practices of the *Waata* show that hunting, cleansing, blessing, cursing, pottery, and interment are assumed as God-given and static sources of income. This divine source assumption has been regulated through the myth *Waaqaan Morkuu*. The myth portrayed the *Waata* as descendants of the man cursed by God, and their current livelihood sources as the compensation given to their forefather for his lost properties, and descended down to them without change. The ‘God-given and static’ mythical assumptions attached the *Waata* and their livelihood sources to the

absolute power of God that cannot be questioned. Seemingly, this appears to have been ideologically motivated in the ways it manipulates the mental, discursive and physical spaces of the group. This agrees with Punchiest's (1999) argument that mythologizing is one of the ideological operations of majority groups to distance the minority groups by ingraining the assumptions in the discursive practices of the groups.

Following Fairclough's (1992) dialectical concept, it could be argued that the God-given and static livelihood assumption of the *Waata* legitimizes and is legitimized by their discursive practices. Burton (2005,) emphasizes that ideological assumption is constituted (if it does not exist) and legitimized (if it already exists) through discursive practices. The ideological assumption embedded in the discursive practices pertaining to the *Waata* tends to determine their positions. For instance, the images of the *Waata* reflected in the phrases children of hippo, thrower of harmful things on living being, deviant, non-selective and cursed constructed dating back to the mythologized antiquity legitimize their present livelihood practices and their lower/inferior position in the society.

In harmony with Povova's (2012) view, meaning being constructed by a social group through discursive practices is worth noting that what is not said about the type may be significant. It could be said that these 'meanings by omission' which emerge through analysis also look for representation. For instance, in the discursive practices, if the *Waata* come to equal to the children of hippopotamus, then what they are not equal to, by implication, is 'children of human beings'. By the same token, if the *Waata* become equal to thrower of some harmful things through the practices, then what they are not equal to, by implication, is thrower of some useful things. Similarly, in the discursive practices if the *Waata* are represented as cursed, and non-selective, then what they are not equal to, by implication, are blessed and selective respectively.

Consistent with Althusser (1971), it is learned that ideological power relations, by their very character, are always asymmetrical. The asymmetrical

relations of ideological power are negotiated and perpetuated through discourses and discursive practices. Therefore, since discursive livelihood practices are the commonest form of social activities, studying the given livelihood practices pertaining to the *Waata* can disclose the ascribed identities and the ways they constitute or naturalize the asymmetrical social, economic and cultural power relations which profoundly affect well-beings of the *Waata*.

5. Conclusion

The discursive practices pertaining to the *Waata* have been mythologized. The myth ‘reviling with God’ portrayed the group as descendants of the man with given livelihood practices such as hunting, cleansing, blessing, cursing, making pottery and internment. The *Waata* and the Arsi believe that the current *Waata* are doing these activities descended down to them from their ancestors. These overarching discursive antiquities are ideologically charged to define who the *Waata* and what their livelihood sources are and who and what they are not in their locality. With the given livelihood assumption attached to their forefather and the mythical discourse regulating the assumptions, the *Waata* have been forced to pick up the non-productive productive occupations that negatively implicate their well-being. It can be concluded that the current *Waata* are living in ideological trauma which profoundly deterring them from participating in diversified activities to generate sufficient income, and negatively affects their efforts for a better life in their localities.

To change the *Waata* case, which actually works for the other minority groups’ cases in the country, the Ethiopian government need to prepare integrated intervention programs in collaboration with local and international non-governmental organizations to create awareness and change the mind set of both the *Waata* and the Arsi. The intervention programs to be designed need to have the power to create counter discourses and discursive practices that magnify the positive values of the *Waata*, and minimize injustice of any kind (re)produced in public and the media so that social equality, and justice can gradually be achieved. It should also convince local officials that the

Waata can perform well like the Arsi in all public domains, if given opportunity. The officials convinced can be used as agents to create further awareness concerning sociocultural equality between the Waata and the Arsi in every public context such as worshiping, association, meeting, reconciliation, schooling, marketing, etc.

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