

Research Paper

Military Organization, Structure and Performance among the Karrayyu Oromo

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Article Info

Article History:

Received 30 April 2023

Received in revised
form 28 August 2023

Accepted 29 August
2023

Keywords:

Military,
Conflict,
Karrayyu,
Pastoralists

Abstract

The Karrayyu have been varyingly portrayed as people wandering to confront others or who lived in conflict hotspots and were sympathetic to military violence. Other scholars who have shown positive compassion to the Karrayyu have not dared to tell us how their military performance scaffolds their exit strategy from violent conflict and for maintaining them resilient. The Karrayyu maintain their views that the conflict in the valley land largely emanated from the Karrayyu's opposition against repressive multilayered actors, who are assaulting them, confiscating their lands, and raiding their livestock. Among other issues, this study aims to reveal the Karrayyu military organization, structure, and performance succumbing to the gadaa system and what this will contribute to understanding them in humanity. The study was conducted by undertaking a historical research approach of analytical narrative and descriptive protocols. The study findings indicate that Karrayyu has formulated that their military systems are shaped by their local contexts and martial principles, codes, and taboos observed for all humans embedded in the egalitarian Gadaa system. Results of the study also indicate that, beyond the pastoralists' stereotypic imaginary representations, the Karrayyu practice of military performance is an agency for mitigating circumstances and intermediating their resiliencies for maintaining survival. The researchers recommend such a study on the Karrayyu vantage point will contribute to bridging the existing gap and address prevailing flaws in the area.

1. Introduction

The Karrayyu are the predominant pastoralist group of Oromo who, for many centuries, derived their livelihoods from livestock on the banks of the Awash River. Since their incorporation into the Ethiopian empire state beginning in the 1890s, the Karrayyu have been put under state centralization policy as opposed to their decentralized *Gadaa* polity. Karrayyu and the state relations are determined by several incompatible factors embedded in the different cultures of production (pastoral vs. agrarian modes of subsistence), a varied belief system (*Waaqeffannaa* vs. Orthodox Christianity), *gadaa's* power diffused vs. stratified hierarchal feudal system, lowland mobile vs. highland sedentary life, etc.

The prevailing data indicate that relations with the center also remained complex because the state conversion efforts of the Karrayyu, who adhered to *Waaqeffanna's* belief, into Orthodox Christianity religion only became feasible after the inauguration of the first church in Matahaaraa town in 1970. Above all, since the 1960s Karrayyu has become the victim of land eviction by the state for the development estates from the Awash Basin, and as of the 1970s the area has transformed into susceptible to drought, famine, and disease. On the other hand, the Karrayyu land is characterized by conflict hotspots as competitions over resources and feuds between their neighborhood

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<https://doi.org/10.20372/ejssdastu.v10.i2.2023.660>

agrarians and pastoralist groups were rampant (Ayalew, 2001; Buli, 2006).

The Karrayyuu Oromo have also had conflicting relations with their neighborhood people of the Amhara, Argoba, and Afar for a long period. Drivers of the conflicts with Amhara and Argoba have mainly arisen from their longtime ambitions and interests at least since the 18th century to displace the Karrayyuu and loot their livestock. The Shawan Amhara kings raided the Karrayyuu for land and cattle to meet their agricultural labor draughts. The Karrayyuu and the Afar are both pastoralists competing over natural resources and raiding each other's cattle. Conflicting actors, deriving motives, and time extent made the subject complex (Assefa, 1997).

Middle Awash Valley is a converging place of different actors from varied historical, ethnic and development practices. This valley land is increasingly known for pastoralist violent conflicts that have embedded within other forms of social interactions and mainly manifest themselves in the form of cattle raiding or homicide (Asnake, 2011). The first report on Karrayyuu's military performance is the work of Abba Bahrey, the 16th-century Ethiopian author, who described the Karrayyuu as the most powerful and aggressive group (Mohammed, 2012; Getachew, 2022). His description regarding Karrayyuu was their military performance before their enemy. We have no such discretion made on other branches and groups of Oromo made by the author at that time.

The bulks of works in different disciplines focusing on Karrayyuu have concentrated on conflict (Markakis, 1994; Ayalew, 2001; Asnake, 2011; Buli, 2006; Ayele, 2016) associating with the scarcity of resources, aridity of their ecology, and associated environmental factors. This literature narrates Karrayyuu's military activities, victories, and achievements in different ways and perspectives. Few of these authors (Ayele, 2016; Asnake, 2011) treated the Karrayyuu varyingly as people wandering to confront others or who lived in conflict hotspots and were sympathetic to military violence. Other scholars (Ayalew, 2001; Buli, 2006; Assefa, 2000; Assefa, 1997; Mulgeta, 2016) have shown positive compassion for the Karrayyuu's endurance under multilayered suppressive actors' pressures. All of the authors have commonly agreed on and illuminated

the causes, scales, and effects of the conflicting parties and their consequences on a peaceful existence. They also argued that the state's negligent policy and its evictions of pastoralists from their land providing sufficient pasture for their main production system since the 1960s aggravated the conditions. Their works are thematically, conceptually, and methodologically relevant varied from history to anthropology and developmental studies. The conflicting pieces of literature have suffered from duplication of data and information. However, they do not dare to tell us about the Karrayyuu military unit and its organization under their *Gadaa* system.

The military is a performance through which fighting skills, capacities, technologies, and memory of victory, vanquish and suffer by the groups and individuals told and celebrated. In this regard, there are indications as to how that military character is directly linked to lowland physical and natural ecology. Lowland ecology is open plain land that exposes the dwellers to an easy attack by an enemy as compared with highland. Pastoralists share the characteristics of high mobility, efficient logistical organization, praxis of the outdoors, and cultural incentives that value courage and manliness. They largely preferred expansive plain lands and zones to graze on their herds of livestock and plausibly relied on military protection and mobility to secure their precious animal resources and sustain their livelihoods. The pastoral practice was also an easy way out of a conflict that the herders could take a retreat to the mountains and defensive areas with them (Isenberg and Krapf, 1843; Harris, 1884). This shows that the mode of subsistence for livelihoods and the strategy of defense influenced each other. Efforts for survival have relied on the military capacities required to wage war and defend opponents. On the other hand, different modes of subsistence and cultural perceptions among the varied occupational groups and livelihood practitioners along with environmental change affected relations with other groups (Assefa, 1997; Mulgeta, 2016). These factors are the source of discrepancies in perspectives and focus on the conflict between Karrayyuu and their encounters (i.e. state, development estates, and individuals of state actors) in the past. From their encounter perspective, warfare in the pastoral area is directly linked to pastoralists' "warmonger" characters (Assefa, 2000;

Buli, 2006). They also depicted the Karrayyuu as "undiscerning creatures and irrational murderers" who do not identify between enemies, friends, and non-involving parties. The critics have also considered them a "merciless", unstructured, and disorganized group. However, the Karrayyuu elders rejected such a view as a cheap allegation used to undermine and blacken their names. The elders also explain that "we were born in and into a war lifespan" and wish to breathe peaceful air. Pursuing further they maintain since we knew ourselves, the Karrayyuu have been held in prolonged feuds and fighting with the neighboring people, the Ethiopian state, and later since the 1960s with Awash Valley Development Estates administrators. A prolonged adversary relationship has also culminated in an escalation of drought, hunger, famine, and conflict since the 1960s (Assefa, 1997). Elders underscored particularly in the pre-1990s Karrayyuu had "no friends" except themselves that in the faces of many opponents who sometimes allied to attack them, self-dependence was compulsory to mitigate the circumstances.

As indicated in the aforementioned, military stout has direct connections with pastoral livelihoods, and that served as a way out of conflict. Information at disposal also supported this premise. The stamina to stand in lowland ecology, and the protection for precious livestock from humans, beasts, and other predators qualify a stout defense system for mitigating the circumstances. This must be understood as a core element of their local adaptations and dynamics. This hypothesis is corroborated by study findings that the military system in Karrayyuu is bound to self-defense, confront the enemy, raid for the economy, and test of manhood. Campaigns of both offensive and defensive activities have aligned with *Gadaa's* military mottos and codes. The *Gadaa* system's human rights dimensions, particularly on females, children, and aged individuals are its integral part (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

The stereotypic imaginative representations of "warmonger" characters have abused their military system and moralities for self-defense to mitigate the circumstances. Thus, the roles and purposes of the military as a performance for resistance against invasion and oppression, protecting human solidarity, valuable social and natural assets, as associates of ecological resilience, etc. have been molested (Waday, 2015). To

address the weaknesses, this research probed into what particular forms of military performance achieved them durable stamina to stand against and resist longtime precarious attacks and counterattacks. The study approach is dedicated to exploring the Karrayyuu military performance in their way rights and novel findings regarding Karrayyuu and to contributing to the fields of military discipline and indigenous martial in the *Gadaa* system. The discussion will also help to understand the military unit organization under the *Gadaa* system among the Karrayyuu and related to the broader pan-Oromo *Gadaa* wisdom.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted by undertaking historical methodology. The research, like most studies in social sciences, has dealt with a culture that involved claims of values, and it is inclined towards employing a qualitative research approach of analytical narrative and descriptive protocols. The data were largely generated from primary, secondary, and oral sources, mainly through data collection techniques such as interviews, observation, document analysis, and internet browsing. Reconstructing the history of one of the least studied themes demands a diligent and systematic collection and analysis of the available data. The approaches to getting sources depended on systematic empirical data collection and the information gathered from all sources has been cross-checked to overcome and reduce possible mistakes of interpretation. The information on the topic under study was also tested and analyzed in light of the research approach. Attempts were made to catch the changes and continuities in synchronic (occurring at the same time) and diachronic (change over time) approaches.

The Karrayyuu Oromo are only slightly covered in studies including Oromo historiography. As a result, the literature on the Karrayyuu is very scanty, so the dominant sources for the present study were oral accounts and traditions collected from key informants. Ample data were generated through interviews and focus group discussions on oral tradition and oral history of the Karrayyuu. The Karrayyuu elders have a high level of attachment, dedication, compliance, and relationship to the *Gadaa* system. Their memory regarding past encounters with the state actor and neighborhood people are still fresh. The Karrayyuu

elders and informants are good at telling encounters and happenstances counting along the *gadaa* timetable. The Karrayyuu establish accounts of their experiences within revolving five *tuutas* (parties) of the *gadaa*. They like to narrate issues fixed within 8 years reigning time for every *tuuta* since they are the living witness of their history (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023). Thirteen (13) informants for interviews were organized at Olancitii, Adaamaa, Finfinnee, and Matahaaraa held with Warra Bokkuu, *Qaalluu*, *Qondaalaa*, women and *lubaa* (retired class). The historical study approach of thematic narration must overcome the problem of scarcity of written sources on the Karrayyuu & their *Gadaa* system.

Data were also obtained from research works/books by various national (Addis Ababa University and Institute of Ethiopian Studies) and international scholars and from electronic records on various websites. Written documents from books, journal articles, graduate theses and dissertations, and other sources browsed from the internet were used for this particular study. The observation was also used to derive meanings and cross check information obtained through other tools on the past scenarios. This technique was used to cover the roles of *gadaa* officeholders on peace and security issues, *qondaalaas* military spectacles, the general historical-cultural landscape, etc. Data collected from these sources were identified, organized, examined, and corroborated for analysis. The analyzed data were presented in descriptive and analytical styles.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Karrayyuu Military Organization & Structure

The Karrayyuu military performance was first mentioned in the work of Abba Bahrey, a document written in the sixteenth century on the Oromo population movement, in which he described them as “the most aggressive and powerful group” of Oromo. The Karrayyuu's aggressive nature and powerful character were because of their military courage before their enemy (Mohammed, 2012). The author mentioned the name “Karrayyuu” several times for their very “ferocious military characters” uniquely different from other branches/groups of Oromo at that time.

An institution among the Oromo must have succumbed to the *Gadaa* system which is an all-encompassing system of the people (Ayalew, 2001;

Mulgeta, 2016). The *Gadaa* system is made from or constitutes several structures, organs, offices, and bodies, which brought it into a complete scheme of its own. Some of these structures are governance/administration, military, justice, economy, religion, etc. The military is one of its major component structures commonly headed by *Abbaa* Duulaa (commander-in-chief of the army) which is led under the *Abbaa* *Gadaa* or *Abbaa* Bokkuu. Military is a performance to fight the enemy, defend against aggressions, and maintain peace and security. In the Karrayyuu *Gadaa* system, the *Abbaa* Bokkuu (father of the scepter) spearheads all existing structures and coordinates organs working and functioning on various issues (sociocultural, economic, religious, etc.) and bringing to reinforces the laws, rules, customs, and norms of the *gadaa* system on the people (Mulgeta, 2016; Buli, 2006).

In Karrayyuu, the military system is directly led by *Abbaa Waraanaa*, who is in charge of coordinating and leading the fighting affairs with accountability to the *Abbaa* Bokkuu (Mulgeta, 2016). In Karrayyuu, fighting is the role of all males varying from young to mature men as far as he is not much aged, physically disabled, and mentally impaired. All males have the social and moral duty to be engaged in fighting led under *Abbaa* Waraanaa. *Abbaa Waraanaa* has the role of mobilizing the fighting force named *Lolee* as to requirements and when and where self-defense or attack was required. The *Lolee* constitutes the backbone of the *Gadaa* military system, for maintaining peace and security of the people. From all physically able men, the *Abbaa* Bokkuu and the *Qaalluu* (religious head) are prohibited from directly partaking in any feuds that they are only believed to fight through rites and spiritual taboos that prohibited deploying them to the war front. They fight by providing rituals, prayers and spiritual blesses for victory and success over an enemy. Besides, children, females, and the very old male classes remain in herding roles (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

The Karrayyuu *Gadaa* structure under the *Abbaa* Bokkuu comprises three important organs operating on military and peace and security issues, which encompass *Abbaa* Waraanaa, *Warra* Jajjabii, and *Warra* Toomaa. *Abbaa* Waraanaa leads the general military division, the *Jajjabii* maintains peace and security while *Warra* Toomaa guards *Abbaa* Bokkuu and the

seat/center of political administration. *Abba Waraanaa* is equivalent to *Abbaa Duulaa* in the Tulamaa Oromo *Gadaa* system (Mulgeta, 2016). A person leading all three offices would be chosen for the role based on his past good experiences as a fighter. If the *angafas* exist among the group they will be most likely elected for the post. However, if the senior men are not qualified for such a position they might be chosen as good fighters and blessed and leave the position for them. The individuals leading these offices vary with changes in *tuutas* every eight years (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

The *Jajjabii*s are accountable for ensuring peace and order during the various *Gadaa* celebrations, festivities, and ceremonies. They play their roles at various *Gadaa*

rites with encampment centers elected by members of every party from within the group depending on their best performing experiences. They are analogs to the police force and are responsible for the task of maintaining peace and security matters. The *Karrayyu Abbaa Bokkuus* vary for the five parties and might have established their period of governance administration center at different places. Every *Abbaa Bokkuu* recruited his personal and office guards (*Warra Toomaa*) from the bravest men of *Karrayyuu*. Particularly, the competition for the post of *Warra Tomaa* is so tough and carried out publically that only the braves could fit in the position (Mulgeta, 2016).

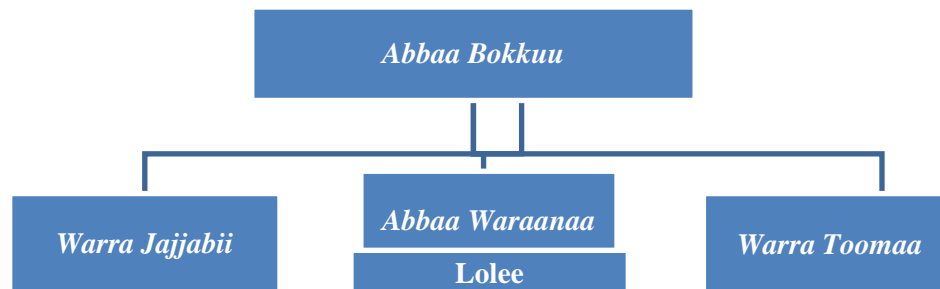


Figure 1: Military organization and structure in the Karrayyuu *Gadaa* system: Own interpretation

3.2. Military Descriptions and Technologies in Karrayyuu

The military is the roles and duties of men that are represented with masculinity and manhood. Huntingford expressed the Oromo young warriors were hot-blooded and hardened by their military apprentices' expedition experience and they were emotionally set aflame with the burning desire to qualify as brave warriors. He also argued every young male took fighting as a duty as well as pride in society to establish himself in a worthwhile social standing (Huntingford, 1969). Harris also described that the Karrayyuu fighting squadron caused dire alarm for their enemy (Harris, 1844).

The Karrayyuu fighters are known for wearing and using their cultural weapons such as spears, shields, blades, knives, arrows, clothes, etc. which are the characteristics of masculinity. *Abba Bahrey* described that the Oromo warriors adopted cavalry and ox-hide shields to protect themselves against the dangerous enemy arrows (Mohammed, 2012; Getachew; 2002). The

Oromo used to wear shields made from cowhide, buffalo hide, and wildlife skins and armed with them. The Oromo treated their horses like their children (Bairu, 1987). C. Harris described his observation of the Karrayyuu military performance during his visit in the 1840s as “dismounted men and a large body of their cavalry grazing while prepared for fighting”. He also stated that the fighting men of Karrayyuu had scouts running eagerly with intelligence (Harris, 1844). Karrayyuu used fighting horses at least until the 1970s. The evictions of Karrayyuu from Awash Valley and subsequent ecological change brought about their owning and use of horses for fighting. Particularly, the Jillee Oromo were raising horses chosen for fighting from whom the Karrayyuu themselves got through an exchange in cattle (Ayalew, 2001).

Thesiger (1935) described that the Awash Valley pastoralists' warriors' military decorations & technologies that they "wear a tinted loincloth, a feather in their hair and decorate their knife and rifle with brass or silver" distinguished them from the rest of the

society. This military dress was used until each killed at least twice and then entitled to slit one's ears. He also said that when "a fighter counts ten trophies he would be celebrated as a hero by wearing an iron bracelet". The people provided animals for the feast organized in honor of the killer. Men who have not killed are subjected to the scorn of womenfolk on their return home from a raid and their clothes soiled and cow-dung rubbed in their hair. According to L. Nesbitt (1935), the traditional enmity had given rise to the emergence of cultural values in which honor and respect were accorded to individuals, who killed enemies. A killer often brought his trophies to members of his group and the tradition of killing potential enemies entitled the wearer to take a feather stake in his hair.

These Karrayyuu cultural weapons have, however, been transformed over time into guns and machine guns since the 1920s. Nesbitt (1935) described when he visited the valley land in the 1920s rifles were only recently introduced to the area and became the most valued weapons carried by Karrayyuu and Afar pastoralists. The Italian administration (i.e. in the middle of the 1930s) had brought too many firearms and bullets to the Fantallee area (Jacobs and Schloeder, 1993). The introduction of modern guns and the use of firearms changed the nature of taking trophies into the enemy gun itself. As the military is part of the *gadaa* system, the training of cavalry, spears, shields, and knife constituted their indigenous wisdom. Today, they start learning at around ten years and when they turn sixteen or older the family buys them a gun (Mulgeta, 2016). Nowadays, it is almost a common practice for every family to buy a gun for their young male. The new weapons lately integrated into the Karrayyuu cultural expression have brought new symbolism of manhood and bravery. The uses of guns and machine guns have supplanted spears, knives, and shields (Ayalew, 2001).

3.3. Military Training and Apprentices

With all its risks, fighting is the source of fame and the construction of masculinity. Manliness is manifested in the ability and capacity of males to hold and use weapons including the gun. In the *Gadaa* system, the fighting section consists of young men who are above the third age grade (24 ages). The informants mention when a son reached a youngster, he began to imitate what his elders taught them to become a good fighter. The training

starts at an early age sets of the *gadaa* system and includes around residence and then to nearby sites. It commences with impersonates and the use of arrowed sticks and then eventually to the manipulation of spears, knives, shields, and horses. The Karrayyuu youngster uses pieces of sharpened and pointed wood to imitate wild animals before handling iron metal-made weapons. Young boys learn from older men about fighting and in their conversations, they acquire how to attack and hide in dealing with an enemy (Waday, 2015).

The military preparation incorporated apprentices at herding, hunting fields, and marveling in the lowland and disease-infected areas for acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences and developing stamina. Hard military training and discipline such as raiding are received as the test of manhood. From what is written on the subject, the East African Cushitic linguistic groups had age-set fighting methods and fertilized strategies for producing effective guerilla and conventional war tactics (Asmarom, 1973). By custom, pastoralism pursues transhumant life activities for the economic mainstay, adaptation strategy, and test of manhood for livelihood and survival. Transhumance reflected the mobility feature of predominant pastoralists such as the Karrayyuu Oromo who are still generating their livelihoods from livestock herding. The concept of a "wanderer" conveys who moves from place to place sticking to the noble tradition of pastoral life. Expeditions are mentioned with different names such as *fora* in Boranaa, *darabaa* in Maccaa, and *godaansa* in Karrayyuu. While on expeditions, the young men had to protect themselves and their cattle from enemy raiders and wild animals (Asmarom, 1973). The young men on the expedition spent several months in the jungle with the cattle and on hunting.

According to Oromo's belief, a brave warrior was expected to spend some time in his youth roaming at a distance place and for several days living on game, milking and dressing in the skins of the hunted wild beasts. In the Oromo tradition, this aspect was known as "practical schooling" that the trainees learned offensive and defensive tactics to use in any situation. The hardship and endurance in long-distance walking and the practice on expeditions enabled a person to acquire the qualities of a warrior. Through the expedition, young men established their image in the eyes of society by killing

either an enemy or a dangerous animal. This was an essential quality for success in the society (Dereje, 2012).

Karrayyuu tradition underlies that bravery has the characteristics of inheritance. It expresses that superman is said to have been naturally born and heroically died he is also buried at a special place and particular site. In their belief, his burial site has grown grass that their cattle graze and gives milk which is being drunk and grown another hero of his kind. In Karrayyuu's wider belief, a hero is inherited through a recycling cultural pattern (Waday, 2015).

3.4. Military Principles, Codes, and Ethos

The Karrayyuu military system is said to have adopted certain principles, ethos, and values upon which it has laid and established itself. One of the first governing principles is that “Karrayyicha never withdraws from an enemy and subdues his position to rival” (Karrayyichi *ori'arraa hin dheessu*). This ethos is said to have been installed in every Karrayyuu fighter and defined degrees of his devotion and commitment to defending the Karrayyuu land. Karrayyicha is an exquisite term the Karrayyuu used to name another Karrayyuu (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

The military motto also further indoctrinates every man as “*madaa qomaan du'uu*” (fights enemy anterior and dies straightforward) (Waday, 2015). Every fighter must be bound and affirmed to always battle to eliminate his enemy if not preferring to die in fighting and retreating enemy is a sign of cowardice and insane. If he retreats and attacks his back, he becomes matchless insane, causing his family and clan insulted because of his cowardice, and has no girl to marry from Karrayyuu (*ibid*).

Above all, it is said that “the Karrayyicha never retreats an enemy from *Tarree* assembly unless to die on it” (“*Tarreerra diina hinbaqatan irratti du'an malee*”). This character is said to have been encoded in everyone as a motto because the Karrayyuu often encountered and faced an enemy attack when celebrating and congregating for *Gadaa* rites and rituals. For Karrayyuu several attacks have targeted them at *Gadaa* gathering deliberately to scatter and break the backbone of their unity and stamina (*ibid*).

The other military code is the custom that as elsewhere among the Oromo and in several traditional practices fighting and feuding are exclusive roles of males and that symbolizes the idioms of masculinity. In

the Oromo tradition in general female is prohibited from wearing military weapons such as spears, knives, shields, and guns, and engaging in any fighting or feuds (Mulgeta, 2016). This is bound to the Oromo worldview which asserts women are life-giving (reproducing and caring) beings who are never involved and partake in any life-taking (fighting and killing humans, hunting and slaughtering beasts) roles. It is rather believed that the life-giving being always makes peace standing between feuding classes using and through their *siinqee* (stick of female emblem used to fight injustice, violations of rights and maintaining peace), *ateetee* (rite and spiritual prayers), etc. As such military is gendered and gendering feuds means positioning females and males to separate but balanced opposite social spaces, occupations, and tasks rather than partiality (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

Fighting is thus the exclusive prerogative of the male class (Yacob, 2000). Sturdy muscular aptness is believed to control the outcome of continuous military practice, physical exercises, and hardships experienced at herding and mobility. According to the existing custom, the masculine could stand resilient to fighting and fitting in life-taking as opposed to the feminine. The Karrayyuu custom associates the male's resilience in fighting with one of the tree species strongly surviving in dry ecology called *dhaddachaa* (acacia). The Karrayyuu tie a removed white color string of this tree's fresh leaf rounding on their head as an expression of masculinity. They say that *Dhaddachaafi dhiirri tokko* (the male and *dhaddachaa* tree are the same. They also added saying *Dhaddacha gaafa kora dhiira gaafa lolaa* (Dhaddachaa during the assembly male for fighting). The Dhaddacha tree is much more resilient to dry ecology (Waday, 2015).

In Karrayyuu, male and masculine also represented the custom of slaughtering animals and touching one's forefront with blood. The one who has conducted the slaughtering is identified by making blood on his front and wearing *medhicha* on his hands. The one who has *medhicha* from his hands never shakes another person that is a sign of protecting one's position, land, and country from the enemy. As a sign of protection, they also smear their children's foreheads with the hot blood of the bull. Touching one's forehead with blood is known as *biillachuu/jilfachuu* and it is a way of pleading for unyielding stamina, standing firm before one's enemy, and victory in life career. The Oromo prayer in the area

goes “*Adda jabaadhu, addikee adda Leencaa haa ta’u*” (May you have a strong forehead; may your forehead be like that of the lion) (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023)

Masculinity is the dominant subject in Karrayyuu’s notion of protection, resistance and resilience. The Karrayyuu wear their long blade fighting equipment on their waist (*gillee*), spear, small knife, and shields worn in the long past as a sign of masculinity. For the Karrayyuu the blade is used for defending their enemy and animal’s predator. However, a fearsome perception of the Karrayyuu’s blade (*gille*) and their fastening reason the strangers related to slaying “the outsiders or civilized highlanders”. Particularly, the Karrayyuu are seen among its close neighbors in the stereotyped imagery given by the reputation of “ruthless warriors”. For example, the Karrayyuu cut off the testicles of their enemies once they killed them as a war trophy to show among their peers. This was a practice sometimes in the past and before the introduction of guns to the valley land pastoralists’ in the 1920s (Waday, 2015).

In the olden days, the killing of an enemy or a big and dangerous animal was considered to be an act of great courage, which qualified the killer to shave his head like a hero. However, the killing of women children, or animals, which were not considered as strong and dangerous, was a cowardly act that disqualifies the killer from “making his head” (Mohammed, 2012). Even someone who is not recognized to be a member of the

feuding group could never be targeted. Their military tradition forbids women to wear war weapons and slaughter animals because of the belief that life-giving could never take life. The wider belief that if women are involved in life-taking tasks it will result in the termination of normalcy and a healthy order of life-giving and sustaining generation. Thus, Karrayyuu applied the philosophy of keeping females from and behind the war zone to save them aware of the devastating and destructive consequences of battle (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

3.5. Military Hierarchy

Fighting is the prerogative of all males’ ranging from young to old ages and this common fighting regiment is named *Lolee/Lituu*. The *Lolees* are those who confronted their enemy as a fighter. The *Lolee/Lituu*s have no distinctions but they might contain individuals of superheroes. They are deployed and mobilized to warfare organized under *Abbaa Waraanaa* (commander-in-chief) who is accountable to the *Abbaa Bokkuu* (head of the *Gadaa* assembly). During the battlefield, the *Abbaa Waraanaa* is assisted by *Jajjabii*, who is acting as deputy chief of the army. Their military structure has four hierarchies such as *Lolee/Lituu* (common fighting), *Leenca/ota* Karrayyuu (the Lion/s of Karrayyuu), *Qondaalaa* and *Abbaa Bitawoo* (Figure 2).

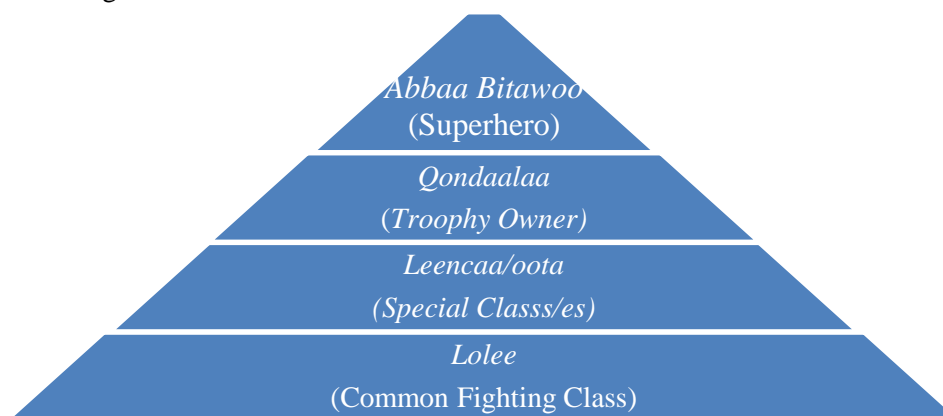


Figure 2. The Karrayyuu Military Hierarchy

Traditionally, *Lolee* is a name given to honor bravery in facing his foe. Opposed of the heroes’ men is *dabeessa*, a man who ran away from the enemy and was ridiculously recalled for his cowardice. The military ladder starts with a special class of warriors and braves

named *Leenca/ota* Karrayyuu (the Lion/s of Karrayyuu). They are young warriors led by senior officials among themselves and from their group; whose stamina and bravery tested powerful. The lions always make surprise attacks on enemy camps without the

necessities and presence of the common fighting class. The term *Leenca* designates bravery, fearlessness, and the power to make an easy attack, subdue, and kill one's contender. The Karrayyuu expressed in the analogy of the lions that they are always 'thirsty for their enemies' blood' and kept them always in fear, tension, and dread. The name of "the Karrayyuu Lion" is mentioned in the work of Atsme as "Negasi being appointed by Atse Iyasu [r. 1687-1706 cut the lion of Karrayyuu into two: half of them to the north and the other to the south" (Bairu, 1987). On the other hand, Ayalew mentioned *Leencota* Karrayyuu constituted scouting men and special fighting forces, which opened up the present historical pastoral landscape of Mt. Fantallee following the 16th-century Oromo population movement (Ayalew, 2001). They are almost analogs to modern state commandos.

The third military ladder contains *Qondaalaa*, a status and entitlement attributed to the best warriors who killed an enemy in fighting and brought their possessions mainly weapons and guns as trophies. The term *qondaalaa* has the meaning of a strong young man full of energy and a well-built soldier. The historic term and role of *Qondaalaa* were first mentioned by Abba Bahrey, in the 16th century, as a daring class of warriors and fighters. In the conventional *Gadaa* age grade, *Qondaalaa* represents the fourth class (age range of 24-32 years) of age sets which Astme (Bairu, 1987) himself agreed. It has also analogously manifested in the age grade of the Tulamaa *Gadaa* system. In Karrayyuu, the term stands for a class formed by a warrior and brave section among the people (Ginbar & Amenu, 2023).

According to Abba Bahrey, the *Qondaalaa* grade made strong engagement in warfare (Mohammed, 2012; Getachew, 2002). Atsme has made a vivid description of the Oromo sons' socio-biological development a small child *Mucaa*, the young old *Gurbaa*, and the third *Qondaalaa*, who used to be engaged in fighting (Bairu, 1987). *Qondaalaa* were the young men who were not yet circumcised, unmarried, and dressed their hair like soldiers. They are warriors who killed a man, an elephant, a lion, a rhinoceros, or a buffalo and shaved their heads leaving a patch of hair on the top. The class was different from those who have killed neither man nor animal and do not shave their heads in the same way (Mohammed, 2012; Getachew, 2002). Historically,

before the 1970s, Karrayyuu land was dried up in wild animal resources as one that killed strong beasts such as lions, buffalo, giraffes, etc. used to get a right to be named a *Qondaalaa*. Yet, the status as *qondaalaa* for lion and buffalo was higher than the latter. The other means for this nomination was killing an enemy. If one kills an enemy and cuts the genital organ of the dead he gets a better status in the group of *qondaalaa*. Being a fighter and warrior alone can never grant the title unless the person has rightly killed and brought the enemy's weapons back home as evidence (*mirga*). This is expressed as *kan ajjeesee irra ga'eefi meeshaa irraa hiikkatetu qondaalaa jedhama* (only the one who killed and seized enemy's spear or guns could become *qondaalaa*) (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

The highest rank in the military entitlement is *Abbaa Bitawoo* (the owner of a bracelet known as bitawoo). *Abbaa Bitawoo* is distinguished by his bracelet which could be deserved when the hero person counted ten trophies. *Abbaa Bitawoo* is the last title next to *Qondaalaa* in Karrayyuu's military ladder and he is considered as the superhero of all fighters. He is always senior to all fighters and heroes. He is much respected by the people and is the symbol of resistance and resilience. *Qondaalaa* and *Abbaa Bitawoo* are the two highest military titles assumed through one's bravery performances (Figure, 2). Persons of such the highest titles have dress codes that distinguish them from other members especially males among the people.

3.6. Military for Test of Manhood & Source of Bravery

The military is an activity of defending and fighting against the enemy. Among the large fighting class, few could achieve much bravery performance which is demonstrated by killing a "conspicuous enemy" and killing dangerous wild beast. C. Harris had recorded the killing of wild animals for bravery in some parts of the eastern Shawa including Karrayyuu at the beginning of the 1840s. He remarked that the hunters dance and howl around the carcass of the dead beast to affirm their action was the deed of genius, supernatural, and supreme braver (Harris, 1844). Hunting games, cattle raiding and fighting were/are the major requisites for military apprentices and testing manhood. The major sources and grounds for fighting are to test manhood and masculinity, raid for the economy and above all, foster

bravery. These characters have complementary relations and are reciprocal to each other (Ayalew, 2001).

Having and developing demonstrable specific military character and fighting skills in the field is the most rewarding for Braves. Bravery is the ultimate character of a warrior and a fighting regiment finally all men desire to attain and practically acquire in life. There are two types of braves in the Karrayyuu which are called *Qondaalaa* and *Manjoolaa*. *Qondaalaa* and *Manjoolaa* are the men of champions who "come back with the spoils of war" after fighting and raiding into enemy territory. These deeds of bravery could be achieved, scored, and attained through continuous testing of one's power and by raiding into a group defined as their enemy. Yet, the two are different in the categories of reward. While *Qondaalaa* refers to someone who brought property from the fighter on the battlefield, *manjoolaa* is one who raided enemy livestock camps and drove their animals back to his residence. A man, who spends and stays around home; never goes raiding and to grazing areas or borders with other neighboring groups is called *dabeessa*. He is ridiculed for spending his time watching his concubines (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

Raiding into enemy territory was carried out for economic, as retaliation, and as a test of manhood for *Gadaa* practice. Raiding was the major source of conflict between the Karrayyuu and their neighborhood people who have records of such relations. For instance, the Karrayyuu had been raided by the Amhara and Argoba. Harris reported King Sahle Selassie's (r. 1813-1847) two different campaigns against the Karrayyuu collecting immense booty of 43,000 and 37,042 cattle (Harris, 1984). On the other hand, the Karrayyuu raided each with the Afar. The Karrayyuu is used to refer to an organized form of invading neighboring groups of people's cattle for taking the cattle forcefully as *oriisa/ori'u* (Ayalew, 2001; Buli, 2006). Organizationally, the raiding group elects its leader to direct the invasion. Men in the group assume different roles, such as scouting and leadership, to maximize their efficiency. Scouting (*gaaduu/abuuruu*) has been a main strategy to facilitate cattle raiding of rivals (*duttuu*). The group that quickly launches the raid could comprise four to eight men. The other men guard the *Gaaddu* (spying) to ensure their victory over their enemies planned and

carried out carefully with intensive excitement and morale. Young men were given proper education on how best to defend their cattle and carry out raids. The raiders were named in their role as *Manjoolaa*, a man who goes straight to the cattle camp of the enemy and raids cattle after killing the enemies who defend them (Waday, 2015). The title was earned only if the individual engaged in repeated cattle raiding and succeeded at launching an attack on the enemy camp or leaving fearsome on them. Raiding is a practice bringing the raider to the status of hero and the one who raided into enemy camp is regarded as brave and upon which the group builds confidence in the future for securing them against threats. Raiding practice could also amount to killing those who are defined as enemies for testing one's power. The group also tested the power of their men to build self-confidence through successful raiding practice. This has been evident among the Karrayyuu, where local warfare with neighboring groups was not separated from cattle raiding. Raiding practices declined since 1980s as it has become much more costly (*ibid*).

According to the Karrayyuu informants, long in the past, there was an element of *Gadaa* practice named *korma didha* (wild bull) obtained through raiding. It is a bull that someone slaughters bringing it from an enemy camp in the form of booty. Elders say that, in the past, when one completed active class power and was ready to hand it over to the next person, he had to bring a bull from the enemy's camp for slaughtering at the *Gadaa* celebration. This enemy's bull was called *korma didha* (wild bull) and its possession denotes the courage determination, and toughness of the plunderer. Its appropriation was an obligation for the person and he could bring this bull using whatever means at his disposal. By the *Gadaa* custom, when the Karrayyicha celebrates an event at the *tarree* center, he ropes the bull before his son to show his completion of *Gadaa* power and to honor his replacement by the new generation. The process of tying *Korma diidhaa* which was named *korma gara hidhuu* (tying the abdomen of the bull) had been a test of bravery and courage before the public. It is a contest shown before the public as a test of manhood and a championship of one's bravery for *gadaa* power (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

Among the Karrayyuu, one of the most difficult cultural tasks is to bind the belly of a bull, and the

strongest and bravest Karrayyuu male can perform this difficult task. Tying bull was the major requirement for individuals' bravery to compete for important posts in the *Gadaa* system to be held by bravery. The bull would be tied and sacrificed before the public by someone of the bravest person who competed by his courage for the office of *Abbaa Tooma*. Such an individual was supposed to be blameless and the finest among all males in the community. This requirement should be confirmed by the agreement of the members and should receive their acceptance. Whenever this evaluation of performance and paramount qualities is undertaken, people would start roaring (*bookkisu*) to express and appreciate the person's extraordinary achievement in front of the mass. However, those who withdrew from fighting or failed to protect property from being looted are blemished as unfit (*ibid*). After the final test, the person who is identified as unblemished is made to tie the bull. This person has much respect and he should maintain such statuesque by avoiding retreating whatever adversary encounters him. Such a person always fights face-to-face and he will not back down from any fight. A person who is identified with such excellent bravery and determination is also recruited as a guardian of *Abbaa Bokkuu (Warra Toomaa)*(*ibid*). If he is found retreating from the enemy, it will be a disgrace to the entire party members and particularly to *Gadaa's* class in power. The Karrayyuu have now dropped *korma didha* practice for its laboriousness, costs and risks.

According to the informant, one of the commonly known sayings in Amharic አባክህ ቡራ ከረዩ አታብዛ (sir, do not over recap yours enchant) is used by their neighborhood Amhara and that depicted the Karrayyuu bravery in the past. He said that while Karrayyuu combated their enemy, they uttered the word *Burra* (enchant term) three times which was used to sign having a trophy.

3.7. Bravery Reinforcing Agencies

For the reason that a good warrior is adorned with several rewards, every man's dream is to become a renowned fighter. The rewards offer the son to become aggressive, fearless, virile, and dominant males as important. Men and women also publicly praise good fighters in their songs and prayers. Above all, when he returns from a fight after having been killed, a woman

of his clan will put butter on his head and the warrior's friends' clan members and in-laws will give him animals (cattle or camels) as a reward (Waday, 2015). It is made to enjoy some major rewards and prerogatives as distinguishing features of this class.

For this reason, the ways through which boys socialized to heroism and the role that men-as-men play in Karrayyuu society show the significance of preparing young males to be fierce and aggressive so they will risk their lives fighting for their people (Mulgeta, 2016). From a Karrayyuu point of view, in everyday life, social interaction and ideological constructs are closely associated with the waging of war. This principle is along which the definition of what it means to be a man (in contradiction to a woman) is socially constructed. The physical and spiritual characteristics make a man a warrior whether he engages in combat or not (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

Narratives about bravery in the villages often describe them as taking place at night. Bravery is expressed and encouraged through praising (*faarsaa* and *geerarsa*) songs, rewards, and gifts organizing grand feasts. During the feasts songs' stirring heroes set aflame with pride in the members of their groups. The powerful songs reincarnated the dead and elevated the living heroes of the nation to a higher plane. The *geerarsa* of individual warriors won their lovers' hearts and the respect and admiration of the participants (Waday, 2015). The praising of heroes through songs is commonly carried out in public and encouraged for another round and others to carry out the same task. A song describes a joyous welcome to a valiant warrior after his return from a successful raid. The meat eating and milk drinking, the dances, love songs, and above all boasting war songs intoxicated the joyous participants. Successful hero's achievements are recited and move both young and old with tears of joy. The feast and emotionally charged war songs prepared the ground for an immediate offensive. High virtue bravery was ritual in form, economic in content & almost worshipped (*ibid*).

In the Karrayyuu except for loss by death, wounds were extensive, and curing fared through indigenous medical healing and therapy. In Karrayyuu, scars are the source of pride for someone stabbed and wounded on the battlefield. Most fighting men have scars of

usually knife or spear cuts but sometimes traces of bullet wounds. Scars are praised when they belong to a famous warrior because in this case, people know exactly how the wounds were caused and for what reasons happened. For medication and healing, he was given to drink animals' blood and made to finish slaughtered bull leg meat. Having wounded and counting many scars on the body is also part of military pride. It is the indication of how severely and sundry the person fought for the people, and the land and enabled them to respect before one's opponent (Ginbar and Amenu, 2023).

4. Conclusion

The Middle Awash Valley is a converging place of different actors such as the state, several ethnic groups, and development agencies. Since the Karrayyuu Oromo were first brought under the Ethiopian State with the conquest of Menelik around the 1890s, they have been struggling to survive through the state and its allies' persistent repression. The Karrayyuu experienced the state and its allies' victimization, land confiscation, looting of livestock, and slaying of their great fighters. They are also struggling to survive the dry ecology of the Fantaallee following their evictions from Awash Valley in the 1960s. In the faces of multiple actors' pressures and challenges, it must not be underestimated that their resilience has heavily relied on their military performance succumbing to their *gadaa* system. The need for ensuring

and maintaining peace and security deem the instruments like law, rules, and orders. Maintaining one's territory and precious livestock from predators must be established on defense and military power. The military is a performance for restoring peace, order, and justice.

Survival became possible through the reliance on *Gadaa's* strong institutional support and stout determination, their adherence to *Waaqeffannaa* and consciousness for *Oromummaa*, and strong internal solidarity, drawing on proven military organizations and strategies. However, the Karrayyuu's stamina has faced a challenge since very recently because of increasing state annihilation, drought, and change in the agency. One could capture that the yielding conditions must have shaped the Karrayyuu military structure and organization which is quite different from what we knew in the *Gadaa* system and presumably in other branches of Oromo in the past. A hierarchical system and line of communication are not as familiar in the *Gadaa* system and it must be driven by the yielding situation. The title like *Abbaa Bitawoo* seems to be analogous to modern highest military rank.

In the Oromo history of resistance against prejudices and discriminations, the Karrayyuu would come in the first line firmly sustaining *Oromummaa*, unyielding to alien influences that must be due to their military organization.

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