

## **The Pragmatics of Blessing Expressions in Sidaama Culture**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to reflect the pragmatics of blessing expressions in Sidaama culture. The method employed to conduct the study was qualitative so that collected data were analyzed qualitatively. The data was gathered through in-depth interviews conducting with a total of 8 individuals (four clan leaders, two village cultural leaders, and two elders). In order to gather accurate and full information about the topic, the participants' age was ranged from 45-85 and selected through purposive sampling method. As a result, blessing could be expressed as a strong tool that ties the people to live together respecting each other and keeping healthy generation. Therefore, this study mainly reflects the situations that blessing takes place and categorizations of blessing accompanying with morphological analysis and the descriptions of meaning. This also enables to present that the pragmatics of blessing is a display of culture, life style, and social norms of Sidaama people. The situation of blessing refers to the condition that blessing occurs; the type of blessing reveals who can and cannot make blessing on whom; and the categorization of blessing betokens that for what purpose the blessing could be done in the society.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background**

Sidaama refers to the people and the land they live in. The language is alternatively called as Sidaamu Qaale' (previously) or 'Sidaamu Afoo' (currently). Geographically, Sidaama as Sidaama Zone and Hawassa Self-administrative Town is located in the south-central part of Ethiopia. In spite of the variation of the statistical reports, the current population might be above 3,000,000 because of the rate of population growth indicated in the report of the 2007 Census Commission in Ethiopia. Of the total population, more than 2,530,000 is monolingual, and more than 101, 000 people speak the language as a second language (Kawachi 2007: 2; the Ethnologue, 2017). Sidaama is marked by three climatic zones: lowlands, midlands, and highlands that all supporting different activities and lifestyles.

Sidaamu Afoo belongs to the Cushitic (Highland East) language sub-family. Cushitic is among the three major language sub-families of the Afro Asiatic phylum that are found in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Cushitic languages are divided into four: North Cushitic, Central Cushitic, South Cushitic, and East Cushitic. The group East Cushitic is sub-divided into the Highland East Cushitic and the Lowland East Cushitic (Kawachi 2007: 4). It is closely related to Kambaata, T'embaro, Halaaba (Alaba), Hadiyya, Kabeena, Gedeo, and Burji. Among these languages, Sidaamu Afoo has a close affinity with three of them. According to Ethnologue, it shares lexical similarity with Halaaba-Kabeena (64%), Kambaata (62%) and Hadiyya (53%). Burji and Gedeo are closer to the Language by 41% and 40 %, respectively (Ethnologue, Mathewos, 2010:2). According to Bender (1976), Sidaama is the widely spread language of the Highland East Cushitic Cluster. It is less differentiated into dialects though there are minimal differences in different areas of the zone. Comparatively, Sidaamu Afoo is the fifth populous language in Ethiopia after Afaan Oromoo, Amharic, Tigrinya and Af-Somali (Kawachi 2007: 2).

#### **1.2 Problem Statement and Objectives**

According to Fromkin (2011:167), there are two kinds of context that are relevant to understand language. The first is linguistic context – the discourse that precedes the phrase or sentence to be interpreted; and the second is situational context – virtually everything non-linguistic in the environment of the speaker and hearer. Situational context includes the speaker, hearer and any third parties present; along with their beliefs and what others believe. It includes the physical environment, the social environment, the subject of conversation, the time of the day and so on.

Though there are few descriptive works by missionaries and scholars, there are no visible works that reveal the pragmatics of blessing, its categories, its values in language development, and its sustainability. This

work, thus, is expected to have several contributions such as preserving the indigenous culture for the generations and using as further descriptive works on the culture and traditions.

Therefore, this article aims to describe how the pragmatics of blessing is being exercised in the society in answering the following questions: Who has the mandate to bless? When do people bless? Based on such a ground, the general objective of the paper is to provide a descriptive account of blessing at different socio-cultural settings in the Sidaama. Hence, it is specifically expected to meet, firstly, in identifying who is/are in charge of blessing and, secondly, in describing when people do bless in the organization of the society.

### **1.3 Methodology and Design**

The study focused on Wonsho Woreda, Hula Woreda, Bursa woreda and Boona woreda. Though there is some dialect difference, the study is based on the variety used as a standard around Hawassa. So, the description is limited to language use irrespective of dialect variation.

The study is conducted through a qualitative approach and cross-sectional descriptive design. This approach is intended to discover experiences, thoughts or behavior as claimed by Dawson (2007: 21). The researchers had used interview and participant observation as the main data collecting methods. The tools are interview guides and notes recorded during observation. For the interview guide, unstructured questions were mainly used because the researcher wanted to collect plenty of data without any restriction. There is a prepared guiding checklist to focus on the target issues which were happenings on occasions during observation.

This article mainly focuses on primary data so that native speakers were used as primary sources. During the interview, the native language ‘Sidaamu Afoo’ was used as a target language since most of the respondents were local language speakers. The second source is introspection. Since both of the researchers are natives and familiars to the culture of the target society, they used indigenous experiences to collect data. The other source is observation. The researchers had been participated in different occasions such as the celebration of ‘*Fichee Cambalaalla*’ the new year of Sidaama, mourning, and weddings and collected the primary source data. Eight interviewees were selected purposefully based on their rich experience in indigenous cultures and traditions, and their age. Elders can be reliable sources because of their long-lived experience. Their geographical location (highland, lowland, and middle) was also taken into account.

In this study, the Leipzig Glossing Rules have been used in order to transcribe native words. The Rules are intended to reflect common usage, and only very few (mostly optional) innovations are proposed. From these rules, the word-to-word correspondence was used to transcribe each blessing utterance. Sidaamu Afoo is transcribed in the first line; word-to-word correspondence is placed in the second line; and the English version is written in the third line. Moreover, the phonemic transcription was used to transcribe Sidaamu Afoo. Besides, the IPA was used for native words throughout the paper and the words were italicized except the language name and the translated interviews.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Definition of Blessing**

Doing good by fulfilling the expectations of own for individuals or for society leads to blessing; a mechanism of inclusion, which can be individual or collective in its manner of execution. Blessings are a universal phenomenon although they vary across one society to another in terms of linguistic expressions and manner of practice. The executive agents are individuals or social constructs. It means that it occurs when an individual or group does well in playing out its role to the satisfaction of and in the interest of the society as a whole or to those within the immediate context of the individual or group in question (Baye, 1998). In addition, a blessing is something that is welled with people’s belief and that is something people wish to happen on their or other’s life from God or good spirit originated from the truth so that they believe it as God’s help and protection (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8<sup>th</sup> edition CD-ROM, 2010). Furthermore, a blessing is the invoking of favor upon a person. It is wishing something well up on somebody. It is speech acts related to some future actions. Blessings often function as performatives, which when uttered alters some state of affairs in the world (Eba and Ashenafi, 2017).

### **2.2 How People Communicate One Another and Enculturation**

Communication is a very important issue in human experience. People pay out much time to exchange information on social, political, economic and cultural issues. Based on the nature of communication, it is possible to say that without communication the existence of human being is questionable. Communication is necessary for a healthy society so that people exchange their culture from generation to generation through communication. In anthropology, culture is further defined as the patterns of behavior and thinking that people living in a social group learn, create and share. Culture also teaches one how to *think*, conditions one’s how to *feel*, and instructs one how to *act*, especially how to *interact* with others in other words, how to communicate

(Nevlier, 2012). Ogwezzy (2009) emphasizes that culture is the belief, custom, tradition, practices and social behavior of a particular nation and its people. Based on this argument, it is possible to say that culture distinguishes one human group from another.

In the contemporary Ethiopian context, traditional institutions refer to those informal institutions that serve the community at the local and grassroots level dealing with socio-economic and political matters. In Sidaama, there are indigenous social and political institutions whose influences have been declining since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in regulating socio-economic and political lives of the society. However, they still have sizeable numbers of adherents despite the diminishing trend in their potency (Hamer, 1987).

Another issue that the scholars raised is about the way people communicate one another in a certain culture. As Saville-Troike (1996:363) points out:

Communicative competence extends to both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to speak and when to remain silent, whom one may speak to, how one may talk to persons of different statuses and roles, what nonverbal behaviors are appropriate in various contexts, what the routines for turn-taking are in conversation, how to ask for and give information, how to request, how to offer or decline assistance or cooperation, how to give commands, how to enforce discipline, and the like – in short, everything involving the use of language and other communicative dimensions in particular social settings.

Sidaama society has distinct tradition and cultural life as regards marriage ceremonies and arrangements, resolution of problems between individuals and groups, religious practices, celebration of culture-based holidays and ceremonies like New Year festivals (*Fichee*), classification of generational system or *Luwa*, adherence to the *yakka* institution serving as Ombudsman for women, customary norms, and mourning rituals (Markos, 2014:58).

Enculturation is a gradual acceptance of another culture: the gradual acceptance by a person or group of the standards and practices of another person or culture (Encarta® 2009). Moreover, enculturation happens when people migrate or people come to one's area with different missions. They could bring their own culture and traditions to those people who accept the guests. As Laurenti Magesa, (2004) stated in title of *Transforming the Church in Africa, from the Christian theological perspective*, enculturation is understood to be the process whereby the faith already embodied in one culture encounters another culture. In this encounter, the faith becomes part and parcel of this new culture. It fuses with the new culture and simultaneously transforms it into a novel religious-cultural reality. In practical terms, this process involves the interaction of mutual critique and affirmation. It entails acceptance or rejection of thought forms, symbolic and linguistic expressions and attitudes between the faith-cultures in question. This process is usually primarily instinctive and popular, without much systematic planning and arrangement to it. But it can also be promoted and enhanced by institutional study and direction. During enculturation, people may leave their indigenous traditions and culture and receive the new one. If it is not kept well and documented in a standardized way, the indigenous knowledge will be in danger. As P.N. Wachege, cited in (Njururi, N.1983: IV), "the handing down of proverbs from one generation to another orally is a tribal custom closely linked to the education of the youth and to the social interchange of conversation..." Consequently, "children are traditionally brought up on proverbs which are significantly directed to them for their instruction and which are casually around them in daily conversation...proverbs form a comprehensive code of law and morals which has not been obliterated or changed by the impact of Western culture.

### **2.3 Types of Blessing**

Blessing type may be different as a party who do it. In the first place, there is a divine intervention party who has power beyond what is possible for a human being can do blessing over to all living creatures. For instance, Holy Bible in Genesis (chapter 1: verses 22, 28) states that God blessed creatures including man after He created them saying be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. In addition, people believe that God for Himself is blessed because of his power of protecting people from their enemies (Genesis, chap. 14: ver.20). In the other case, an individual or a group who has deserved the respect of dignity in a society can bless others, for example, elders (elders of the tribe, the village elders, older people in a family, etc.). According to Holy Bible, for instance, God speaks that people can bless one another saying that He will bless them whom bless Abram (Genesis, chap. 12: ver.3). The Bible also tells us that parent can bless their children at the end of their life (Genesis, chap. 27, 48). As mentioned in Markos (2014:62), elders may have a full mandate to bless others because they are considered as graceful people by the grace that they receive from God. In Sidaama, according to Markos (Ibid), elders have the upper hand and increased influence in dealing with issues that range from family matters to broader societal concerns. Therefore, the above discussion may contribute a lot to the topic which the researchers had selected to study.

### III. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Blessings are speech acts which have linguistic features of formal and formulaic structures. Despite their prevalence in all religious activities, they are highly associated with ordinary expressions and politeness formulas of daily conversations. Pragmatically, they are accompanied by specific linguistic/nonlinguistic features; such as gestures (holding hands, looking up, sitting in circle, sitting on green grasses, etc.), objects (clothes, grasses, leaves and branches of particular trees) and substances (butter, milk, food, coffee, honey, etc.). After all requirements are fulfilled, elders from local religious or cultural leaders utter out the linguistic expressions which the blessed individuals/groups receive and respond in some patterns- *hamiizni* means “I receive, let it be upon me”.

In Sidaama society, there are different types of blessings which are being practiced within man kinds such as biblical blessings and non-biblical blessings. The biblical blessings are usually expected from divine power and are believed that the divine power can bless the people/individuals according to their or his/her acts. Non-biblical blessings are also categorized in different types such as collective (group) blessings and individual blessings. Each of them has its own speech acting processes. For instance, collective ones can be done in a group. There are also special occasions to utter blessing; whereas individuals are usually unexpected and unplanned. Each individual can bless wherever good situations meet or the good act happen. There is a number of reasons for society to practice blessings. To point some of them, performing well as innovative aspects of the society, the individual who help others, respect social values and elaborated rituals are more taken into account. In the next place, the paper presents individual blessings and collective blessings as social council’s blessings of Sidaama in detail.

#### 3.1 Individual Blessings

An individual can bless either the individual or the group as the situations/occasions meet. An individual can be different according to age or gender. Most of the blessings are the same that male/female can utters. However, some of them are completely different from the way an individual's speeches. Based on their age or sex, individuals may be categorized as fathers, mothers, sisters, mothers/fathers-in-law, and non-relatives. These categorizations show below how each individual bless in the tradition of society:

##### Father’s Blessings:

In Sidaama culture, there is a tradition which the father blesses his children when they act well to him. These blessings take place according to their age, and the act and the situations which the activities take place. For example, there is a slight difference between the child and the mature enough. However, there are some common speech acts for males and females. Not only the age of the child is considered for the seriousness of the blessings, but also the age of the father matters how the power of the words is workable. The father should be old enough to bless his children and also the children should be mature enough to understand what is said. Father blesses his children when they fulfill all that they are expected to him, like respecting his words whenever he speaks in any condition, dressing or feeding him at his old age, supporting him wherever he needs their help, etc. See the following examples that describe how the father blesses when the expected requirements fulfill:

- (1a) *sumuu ji-ino zoos-iff'o kaliik'i zo-o-zne*  
 agree say-PR PRF children-3P LORD give-JUS-ObjAGR:2P  
 ‘God may give you children who be obeyed for you’
- (1b) *hadzadz-an-t-o-he duufffa*  
 command-PASS-3P-JUS-ObjAGR:2S all  
 ‘Let all things be under your command’
- (1c) *godow-i-zja maass-i-?r-o-zne*  
 ‘stomach-NOM-POSS:1S bless-EP-BEN-JUS-ObjAGR:2P  
 ‘May my stomach (internal body) bless you’
- (1d) *zandz-i-iff-i-zja zatoote zikk-o-he*  
 saliva-EP-DIM-NOM-POSS:1S prosperous be-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 ‘Let my saliva be prosperous for you’
- (1e) *zafizr-a-tenni zado-tenni gedezn-i*  
 wealth-INF-PP milk-PP long last-IMP:2S  
 ‘Long last in success and with plenty of cattle’
- (1f) *beetto-zja man-na jor-tooti; jor-r-anna (<jor-n-anna) heezr-i*  
 child-POSS:1S man-P beg-IMP:NEG beg-P-SUBF:PROG live-IMP:2S  
 ‘My child, let you never beg others; let the others beg you’

According to the elders, a father blesses his children in different ways. He might focus on the issue he got them or the future he wants to be on his children. For instance, if the child obeys him whenever, he will say

*hadzadzantohe duuffa* as in (1b), (*meaning*: I order all things to be under your foot; nobody says no if you speak). The other (1d), for example, says that the father gives his saliva to the children. The saliva, *zandza*, has vast meaning in Sidaama culture. Not only father gives saliva to an individual, but also anybody else (elders) can give their saliva to a person who acts well. It symbolizes a great prosperous, health, success or everything which are important for human life. During the time a father is uttering blessing words to his children or anybody else, he may spit saliva, *zandza tufa*, with the words. Even though a father has no properties to offer to his children, he gives his saliva — *zandza* — as great wealth. The blessing recipient also believes that the father's saliva will be big wealth in his future life. There is also a belief of a silent blessing in the culture that a father's heart may bless the person who did well to him even if he does not utter a blessing word during an act. That is why he is saying *godowizja maassi'rozne* as in (1c), (*meaning*: I have no word to say, but my stomach (heart) may speak what I thought). Therefore, respecting fathers and obeying them are preconditions to get their blessings in society.

### Mother's Blessings

Mother blesses her children as a father does in the society though the ways mother blesses and father blesses are slightly different. Most blessings are nearly common; however, mothers are able to see things in different directions before they speak a word of blessing. Most of the time, a mother should be old enough to bless her children or anybody of the same age and the children or any blessing recipient body also should be mature enough to understand what is said. Consider the following mother's blessings:

- (2a) *beetto-zja k'ans-u-mm-a-he zunuun-i zel-o-he*  
 Child-POSS:1S feed-PFV-SubAGR:1S-1SF-ObjAGR:2S breast-NOM favour-JUS-ObjAGR:2S 'Let the breast that I fed favor you'
- (2b) *wot'a-zja kaa?l-i-t-o-he*  
 spirit-POSS:1S help-EP-3F-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 'Let my spirit help you'
- (2c) *maahojj-am-anno beetto wot'a-zja zuj-t-o-he*  
 Obey-PASS-IPFV child spirit-POSS:1S give-3F-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 'Let my spirit give you the obedient children'
- (2f) *zandz-i-ffo-zja zoy-oo-mm-a-he*  
 Saliva-EP-DIM:NOM-POSS:1S give-PR PRF-SubAGR:1S-1FS-ObjAGR:2S  
 'I gave you my saliva to you'
- (2h) *beett-u sey-o-he*  
 child-NOM be good-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 'Get good children'
- (2i) *gedeno biif-i*  
 later beautify-IMP:2S  
 'Your later life be joyful'

A mother is a very respectful and lovely individual in society so that everybody act in a good manner in front of his/her mother. Anybody who respects all expectations would be blessed by his/her mother. During she blesses her children, she can use different speech acts in order to symbolize the blessing, like her spirit, breast, womb, saliva, etc. Consider few of the above examples (1c) and its pragmatic meanings: *maahojjamanno beetto wot'a-zja zujtohe* — here, she is asking her spirit to give an obedient baby to her son/daughter; means that the spirit becomes obedient to her commands. Though the spirit is unseen, people in the society believe that there is always response for all the proposed begs or commands of elders. In addition, example (2b) implies that the spirit of a mother provides any good support for a recipient as proposed by the mother. In cases of (2a), a mother symbolizes her breast to offer a strong blessing for a recipient. On the other hand, she calls/raises her breast to bless the children because she primarily gave life for her children feeding breast milk. As a belief of the society, breastfeeding is a long life gift that the mother could offer to her child in early childhood development. Moreover, the mother's saliva is also expected as a powerful agent to do a blessing as in (2f). She gives it as if she gives objects/properties to her children saying, *zandzifffozja zoommahe*. This implies that she has nothing to hire to her children, but she can give them saliva that would make them wealthy. There is a belief that if a mother or anybody else blesses spitting slight drop of saliva from her mouth repeatedly in a fast manner, she released irreversible and unabrogated truth of blessing out from her soul/spirit. This means that what uttered once will happen in the recipient future life. Therefore, everybody needs mother's blessing, even she is not a true mother (= s/he is not born from her), respecting her or performing well-doing before her.

### Sister's Blessings

Sisters among their brothers also do have the mandate to do the blessing in the society. This is because there is a consideration that the source for human being foundation is a woman. Even a man comes to rule this

world through a woman so that women should be given deserving respect according to society's belief. On such a ground, a sister blesses her clan and family when they do good things to her during her visits after she got married. During her blessing, she uses different utterances according to her feelings. Consider the following examples:

(3a) *ledo gont'-u-mmo (<got'-n-u-mmo) godow-i maass-i-zr-o-he*  
with sleep:P-IPFV-SubAGR:2P womb-NOM bless-EP-BEN-JUS-ObjAGR:2S

'Let the womb that we slept bless you'

(3b) *ledo k'an-n-u-mmo zunuun-i zel-o-he*  
with feed-P-IPFV-SubAGR:2P breast-NOM favor-JUS-ObjAGR:2S

'Let the breast that we fed together will favor you'

(3c) *zani zate nafara beetti-kki-ra randiffjo zikk-oonke-he*  
I your doorstep child:NOM-POSS:2S-PP sister be-JUS:NEG-ObjAGR:2S

*Literal:* 'Let me not be the sister for your son at your home'

*Figurative:* 'Have a daughter in addition to your son/sons or your wife gives birth to a daughter'

(3d) *zille-nniha waahino-nniha randiffjo-te magan-i k'iif-o-zne*  
eye-REL hate-REL sister-POSS:3F God-NOM mislead-JUS-ObjAGR

'Be saved from whom look you bad eye and hate you by the spirit of sister'

(3e) *zama-zja zanni-zja mudukk-i hagiidd-o-he*  
mother-POSS:1S father:NOM-POSS:1S navel-NOM pleased:BEN-JUS-ObjAGR:2S

'Let my mother's and father's navels be satisfied with you'

As considered, sisters bless either their brothers or sisters referring to the different her mother's body parts (as mother uses her own), like breast and womb (or navel) because the breast is that they fed together and the womb is that they slept while they were an infant. She refers to her mother's breast wishing to bless them as in (3b), *ledo k'annummo zunuuni zelohe*. Culturally, the society accepted a breast as a powerful agent to transfer blessing from mother's spirit to her children (*see* also explanations about *breast* under the subtopic 'Mother's Blessings'). Similarly, sisters during their blessing utterances can refer to their mother's womb. It is the place where they were created and lived for nine months. That is unchangeable truth everybody in the society should accept not to deny it so that it has the power to bring blessings on individuals (recipients) for their good act to deserved parties who have the mandate to do blessing. For example, this is reflected as in (3a) like *ledo gont'ummo godowi maassizrozne*; through these words, she says that she and her brothers and/or sisters are born from the same mother so that the truth of that reality brings blessings upon them for their good kinds. Besides, as presented in (3c and 3d), she may utter blessings believing in her spirit that it can give a daughter for her brother (3c) and can escape her clan/brothers/sisters from evils (3d), *zillenniha waahinonniha randiffjote magani k'iisozne* (*meaning:* let my spirit lead evil things in misdirection when they come towards you or hide you until evils pass). As in (3e), she refers to her mother's and father's navels to bless so that the navel can be always satisfied by them because of her blessing words though they could not act well to their parents. In general, the sisters are respectful in society and have the mandate to bless people around her.

### Mother-in-law's/Father-in-law's Blessings

Mothers-in-law or fathers-in-law are other parties who have the mandate to do the blessing in Sidaama community. This paper mainly focuses on the blessings that they do on their sons-in-law and/or daughters-in-law so that the following examples are common both to mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. However, the way mothers-in-law blesses calling mother's spirit, *woxa*, could remain differently as in (2b), ...*woxa?ya kaa?litohe*, and (2c), ...*woxa?ya ?uytohe*; or wishing successes in all the way of their sons/daughters-in-law, they say *wot'azja zeltohe* (*meaning:* Let my spirit favor you).

(4a) *ballo zikk-i*  
mother-in-law be-IMP:2S

'Be mother-in-law/father-in-law or give birth'

(4b) *zane gede faar-i*  
me like get-many-children-IMP:2S

'Be mother/father having many children like me'

(4c) *beetto zil-t-o-he f'iir-t-o-he*  
child give birth-3F-JUS-ObjAGR:2S get seedlings-3F-JUS-ObjAGR:2S

'Let your wife be fertile'

Above examples present different contents through blessing words mainly revolving around the issue that having children is very important in life. Mother-in-law or father-in-law utters blessing her/his daughter/son-in-law gets a chance of being mother/father-in-law in turn in their life as in (4a). This indirectly shows that the blessing primarily can give a potential of giving birth and healthy family to them. In addition, the blessing presented as in (4b) reflects that only giving birth and having limited children is not enough. Based on

such a belief, mother/father-in-law utters words of blessing that lead to having a number of children around. Moreover, another blessing that focuses on daughter-in-law, as in (4c), indicates that in the first place being blessed towards giving birth is very important. To conclude, people in this culture accept mothers-in-law's or fathers-in-law's blessing as a workable one so that they must always be respected in an appropriate way in the society.

### Non Relative Blessings

Under individual blessings (cf. 3.1) we could consider that blessing is done among family relatives. Out of that line, non-relatives can also bless wherever an individual performs well in front of one who invokes blessing from the true spirit or God. The common blessings and the way non-relatives blesses is depended upon the action which an individual acts. For examples,

- (5a) *tu! tu! lopp'i baa bajifffo ziill-i*  
 spitting saliva grow-IMP:2S destination reach-IMP:2s  
 'Spitting saliva-let you grow up, be successful and reach destination'
- (5b) *kaazl-anno-ha hoog-g-ooti (<hoog-t-ooti)*  
 help-IPFV-REL(m):ABS miss-2S-NEG  
 'Be helped wherever you need help'
- (5c) *maahojje ji-t-o-he zooso*  
 okay say-3F-JUS-ObjAGR:2S children  
 'Let your children be obedient for you'
- (5d) *bufuri soʔr-o-he, danfuri tim-o-he*  
 bad thing:NOM miss-JUS-ObjAGR:2S good thing:NOM over flow-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 'Let bad fortune miss you, and good thing over flow up on you'
- (5e) *kul-l-oonni-tenni (<kul-n-oonni-tenni) gat-i*  
 told-P-PR PRF-what being save-IMP:2S  
 'Be saved from what is told'

These blessings (5a-e) approach different level members of society using different expressions/language or different blessing contents. For instance, either young people or adults should carry blessings that fit their age level in society. Based on such a ground, blessing (5a) addresses children level young spitting saliva upon them wishing that it may make their growth normal and successful. Blessing (5b) denotes that it is for either youngsters or a married person. The meaning conveyed for youngsters is that they will never miss help for their everlasting life. The meaning on the married person side is to wish that a person will have children who can help him in the same way. According to blessing (5c), a person who have children, focusing on an adult, should have them who always obey and provide all desirable helps to him/her. Blessing (5d) serves for all level of society members wishing to have a life of good fortune being escaped from bad fortune. Blessing (5e) seems that refer to all level members wishing them to be saved from the bad lucks told by the direful body because of the envy s/he bears upon them. Finally, these blessings conveyed the meaning that blessing one another is not a limited culture for only among family members; rather it is a limitless action for all level of human creatures.

### 3.2 Songo's Blessings

The word 'songo' refers to a 'elders' or social council' in Sidaamu Afoo. There are different level songos – social councils – traditionally in Sidaama society which have authority to resolve problematic issues, to make decisions on communal issues of society, and to bless or curse over individuals and groups based on their acts in the community (Markos Tekile, 2014:112-116).

When Songo bless, there are different requirements to be fulfilled before the blessing action; for example, place selection of meeting for Songo, occasions or ceremonies of the process, the provision of animals for slaughter, and the preparation of drinks like *malawo*-‘honey’. After all these are prepared properly, either of the level leaders slaughters the animals and tastes the honey first then starts to bless the people, nations or country.

During the blessing, the elders open the inside part or folded part of *seemma* —‘the cultural clothe of Sidaama’ which is clean and white. This implies that the blessees to be like *seemma*. During Fichee Chambalaalla which is the most celebrated Sidaama cultural holiday of the new year also the *songo* will bless the society wishing that the new year would be blessed, peaceful, full of prosperous and full of health uttering as follows:

- (6a) *gobba geʔ-i ; gobba-te keere zuj-i*  
 land stable-IMP:2S land-PP peace give-IMP:2S  
 'Let land be full of peace' ; 'Let peace be for the country'
- (6b) *gaʃfoote-ho, gadaann-i-ra garo-te geelo-ra keere zuj-i*

- government-PP leader-NOM-PP leader-PP leader-PP peace give-IMP:2S  
 ‘New year, give peace for all clan leaders’
- (6c) *zurde gedeni-ra hig-i; zurde mundee hool-i-nke*  
 war backward-PP return-IMP:2S; war bloodshed debar-IMP:2S-Obj:1P  
 ‘Let war be back’; ‘Avoid war and bloodshed’ (LORD, Protect our land from war and bloodshed)
- (6d) *gobba-te t'eena zuj-i; gobba-te duuwo k'ol-i;*  
 land-PP rain give-IMP:2S; country-PP satiety bring back-IMP:2S;  
*loos-izn-i-hu (loos-inz-i-hu) mis-o; hude duumba-ra*  
 work-PR PRF:BEN-PFV-REL(m) productive-JUS famine back-PP  
*qol-o-he*  
 sway- JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 ‘Let the rain come’; ‘Let the country be full of food’; ‘Let the garden be fruitful’; ‘Let the famine be back’
- (6e) *ḍibba t'idda hool-i-nke; buṣa dag-g-ooti (day-t-ooti)*  
 disease grief protect-IMP:2S-Obj:1P; evil come-2S-NEG;  
 ‘Get back disease and death’; ‘Let bad things be back’
- (6f) *gobba-te gosa-te t'aado zuj-i*  
 countries-PP people-PP concord give-IMP:2S  
 ‘LORD, let you give accordance to the countries and peoples’ (May accordance is among countries or peoples)

Blessing (6a) focuses on the stability and peace of the country or land of people whereas blessing (6b) focuses on the peace of government and leaders of people. Blessings (6c) and (6d) imply the war’s destructiveness in economic development so that blessing is important overall people in order to avoid that destruction from their land. Blessing (6e) reflects that any evil and disease cause death and carnage to the people’s life should be avoided because of this blessing. The blessing uttered by Songo as in (6f) reflects that the relationship between peoples should be strong and effective to live in peace. Finally, these kinds of blessings maybe belonging to clan, nation or country.

However, when the elders bless individuals, s/he (who receives blessing) is expected to do some preliminary as a criterion, for instance, food and/or drink ceremony that is namely called ‘wozma’. A material provided for drinks is called ‘malawo’ – ‘drinks made of honey’ and a drinking tool is also called ‘boowe’ – ‘a drinking cup’. As a ceremony took place, the elders (Songo) call an individual in front of them and ask him/her to open his hands’ palm toward them. Then they hold the hands and utter blessings over individuals as follows:

- (6g) *buṣa buubb-e saz-o-he; dantfa dant-e dag-g-o-he (day-t-o-he)*  
 evil fly-CVB pass-JUS-ObjAGR:2S; good over-CVB come-2S-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 ‘Let evil things pass over you’; ‘Let all good things overflow you’
- (6h) *koo beetto ?il-i, f'iir-i, sir-i simakko zikk-i*  
 you boy be father-PFV burgeon-PFV multiply-PFV seedling be-PFV  
 ‘You man, get children, be fruitful, and multiply’
- (6i) *gobba bat'-t'-o-he (bat'-t-o-he)*  
 land love-3F-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 ‘Let the land that you live accept you’
- (6j) *zajjaan-i-nke maass-i-zr-o-he*  
 Spirit-NOM-POSS:1P bless-NOM-BEN-JUS-ObjAGR:2S  
 ‘Let our spirit bless you’

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Conclusions

A culture is a way of living and certain people have experienced in common. Likewise, these long-lived cultural traditions have served various functions. Some of them are keeping a good relationship between individuals, controlling evil acts and promoting good acts. Blessing is the culture which Sidaama people have been practicing for a long time. The people bless anybody who does something good which builds ethics and moral aspect in any communication level of society. It means that blessing follows the activities like obedience, respectation, and support provide for any respected body in society. The action of blessing may be processed by using different substances like breast, womb, saliva, honey, milk, green land, and others. Raising breast and holding womb, during the blessing, are only the mother’s act. Songo will go to green land and spray honey/milk to make a blessing. Spitting saliva as great prosperity is the act of almost all blessers.

In this study, the researchers have discussed the pragmatic of blessing in the Sidaama culture and its socio-cultural value. Blessing is found as a very important tool to tighten the relationship between individuals and peoples live together in society. The study revealed that the people of Sidaama perform this cultural practice



in different ways. For instance, individuals/groups who bless others should be adult enough in their age such as mothers, fathers, sisters, and elders of any level. However, children cannot bless the elders or their parents. The age matters to understand whether the utterances are blessing or not even for both bodies. On the other hand, the beggars blessing is not fruitful or does not work according to the belief of society even the reason should be researched more in the future.

As the informants explained, the individuals bless can be spoken everywhere whereas the group blesses needs special places to be accomplished. For example, the green area would be selected for blessings with a great implication that it supports the effectiveness of blessing. The pragmatic meaning of blessing varies according to the situation, context, personality, or activities. The level of understanding between the individuals also may be depending on age, maturity, and gender. A few words carry many message to be interpreted. Sometimes the meaning of the blessings might be multiple rather the speaker thinks.

#### **4.2 Recommendations**

This culture is one of the most valuable assets that the Sidaama people have been experienced for a long time. It is performed to create peaceful co-existence among the people and preserve the good culture of helping one another. However, according to the findings of the study, a blessing is facing a great challenge that could be from external or internal pressures. The elders fear a lot because it looks that blessing does not continue as culture and tradition to the coming generation because the young generation does not seem to feel a responsibility in preserving the culture in order to transmit it to the next generation. Besides, the expansion of modernizations and enculturation may affect the existence of this culture and its pragmatic context in the language. The recent generation is not using the language properly. That by itself may lead them to the situation of missing the past context of the language.

These days, in concluding, since this long-lived public culture has faced a tremendous challenge, the researcher would like to recommend the following points addressing elders, youngsters, religious body, scholars, and government. Elders' contribution to preserving the blessing culture is vital so that they have to teach the youngsters and share ideas on what they should do to protect their culture from foreign culture mix-ups. The young generation is also one of the most responsible bodies in preserving their culture. In the first place, they should give more values to their indigenous culture and then ask and build their indigenous cultural knowledge from elders. In the second place, they must learn and appreciate their own culture using modern education to enrich their culture. Religious figures (leaders) should promote their faith respecting the traditional cultural identity and practices of the indigenous people. Moreover, scholars should conduct research in different indigenous cultures to save from extinction and should find out contextually applicable scientific methods which are helpful in solving culture-related problems. As the last point, the government is expected to protect cultural practices from destruction taking initiatives to invite elders, religious leaders, elites, and all the concerned body from the society and opening discussions on ways of maintaining cultural heritage. In general, we believe that the blessing culture should be integrated into the education system as significant values based on the levels of students.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

### ABBREVIATIONS

- 1- first person  
1P - first plural  
1S - first singular  
2 - second person  
2P - second plural  
2S - second singular  
3 - third person  
3F - third feminine  
3M - third masculine  
3P - third plural  
AUX - auxiliary  
BEN - autobenefactive

COMP - complementizer  
CVB - converb  
DIM - diminutive  
EP - epenthetic  
F – feminine  
FS – feminine singular  
IMP - imperative  
INF - infinitive  
IPFV - imperfective  
JUS - jussive  
M(m) - masculine  
NEG -negation  
NOM - nominative  
ObjAGR – object agreement  
P - plural  
PASS - passive  
PFV - perfective  
POSS – possession  
PP - preposition  
PR PRF - present perfect  
PROG – progressive  
REL - relativizer  
S – singular  
SubAGR - subject agreement  
SUBF - subordinate former  
s/he – she or he

**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

(< ) - underlined form

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