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## The Economic Implications of Wolaita Proverbs: Functional Analysis

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*Keywords:* wolaita proverbs, indigenous wisdom, economic realm of life, social interactions.

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# The Economic Implications of Wolaita Proverbs: Functional Analysis

Meshesha Make <sup>α</sup>, Abraham Kebede <sup>σ</sup> & Fikre Alemayehu <sup>ρ</sup>

**Abstract-** The purpose of this study was to collect and analyze some selected Wolaita proverbs for their implications of Wolaita's economic realm of life. The subjects used for the current study were 100 theme-relevant proverbs collected by interviewing systematically selected 24 elders and through conducting participant-based observation being part of social interactions taking place in different villages. The descriptive research design was used to conduct this study using the qualitative method of data analysis. The result indicated that Wolaita proverbs embody Wolaita's economic realm of life such as scarcity of resources and how Wolaitas manage it, unwise and wise use of resources, sources of wealth and economic inequality among people. Based on these findings, therefore, deep and series studies that promote the frequent use of Wolaita proverbs reflecting Wolaita's economic realm of life in all adequate contexts of interaction, awareness enhancement training for young generations of Wolaita for effective use of those proverbs in the proper interactional situations, making proverbs as part of language curriculum in all levels of education and maintenance of Wolaita proverbs as vehicles of transferring indigenous wisdom to the next generation are recommended to be implemented by the all concerned bodies across the nation.

**Keywords:** *wolaita proverbs, indigenous wisdom, economic realm of life, social interactions.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Wolaita is one among Southern Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopia. The people of Wolaita lived independent being organized in socio-political and economic realm of life starting from the Stone Age (C.H.Stinger, 1910). Wolaita people have owned indigenous culture, beliefs, traditions, rituals, civilization and social identities that define them and make them distinct from other people in Ethiopia. These socio-political, economic and cultural realities of Wolaita have been transferred from generation to generation solely through oral tradition (Hailegabriel, 2007). Among those oral traditions, proverbs remain a veritable tool in depicting the overall values of Wolaita people. For instance, Wolaitas use their proverbs as a form of literary expressions to encourage, admonish, mock, advise, consol and generally to establish the verbal

convention that is significant to their economic situations, social order and historical circumstances.

Among other facets of life, Wolaita's economic realm of life is highly embodied in their proverbs. For instance, using their proverbs, Wolaitas reflect the way how individuals or a group solve their basic economic problems of scarcity, the specific techniques people use for maximum production, the guiding principles for saving properties and ways of making choices being opt to the given item than the other. Supporting this theme, Girardi (2012) states that proverbs may be a source of knowledge about human behavior, primarily the economic behavior which is not probably mainstreamed in the mere assumptions of economics. As to the same author (Girardi, 2012), proverbs can shed light on the complicated human behavior of economic thinking without scientifically analyzing primary or secondary data. However, the base for such the thinking is from accumulated human wisdom; that is directly or indirectly reflected through proverbial wisdom. That is why the authors of the current study were initiated to collect and analyze some selected proverbs of Wolaita for their economic implications and publish them as an article for transferring indigenous wisdom and other social realities of Wolaita to the next generation.

## II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

### a) *Design of the Study*

The descriptive research design was used for this study. This is because; it is suitable to describe the existing economic realities of life embodied in Wolaita proverbs. For the analysis, 100 proverbs were selected as sample based on their thematic relevance to the current study. For collection of those 100 relevant proverbs, two tools of data collection were used: interview and observation. Then the proverbs collected were analyzed using qualitative method of data analysis.

### b) *Description of the Research Setting*

Wolaita is among thirteen Zones in Southern Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopia commonly known by its oral tradition and population density. According to the regional statistical abstract of 2007, the average population density of Wolaita is 385 per square kilometers. The zone has twelve Woredas and three City Administrations. The major economic activities of Wolaita are mixed agriculture and trade. The Zonal city of Wolaita (Sodo) is located 330kms from Addis Ababa

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through Hossana and 160kms from the Regional Capital (Hawassa).

#### c) *Subject of the Study*

The major population of this study is all Wolaita proverbs reflecting their economic realm of life. However, for the manageability and thematic relevance, the sample of 100 proverbs were drawn from the sea of many thousands of Wolaita proverbs reflecting their economic life.

#### d) *Sampling Procedure*

For this study the researchers used purposive sampling procedure to come up with 100 proverbs having thematic reflection of Wolaita economic realm of life. From the total sample of 100 proverbs, two-third (67) were collected through interviewing systematically selected 24 elders from various groups of Wolaita communities based on their deep knowledge of Wolaita socio-economic realities of life. For collecting the remained one-third (33) of the entire sample, the researchers went to the remote villages of Wolaita and conducted participant-based observation being part of social occasions taking place in those villages.

#### e) *Tools of Data Collection*

In order to achieve the intended research objectives by gathering valid, relevant and reliable proverbs from the pertinent sample of the target population, the researchers used two tools of data collection: interview and observation.

#### f) *Data Analysis*

For this study, the researchers used the qualitative method of data analysis. The entire data collected through both interview and observation were analyzed using narration; in a qualitative approach. Then, it was presented in a systematic approach of describing, analyzing and interpreting the proverbs.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Economic Implications of Wolaita Proverbs

##### a) *Scarcity of Resources*

As common to all other generations in the world, there is a scarcity of resources in Wolaita. Whenever people get demanding situation in their interaction, they frequently use proverbs that imply the scarcity of resources to strengthen their ideas and easily convince their interlocutors. For instance, they say "*Abbaa pinttiya wozanay de'ishin abee son ashees,*" "*How much wise a person is, he/she can't go further in any activity/business without his/her economic capacity*". This proverb implies that resources; financial or material play a key role for the accomplishment of any action in human life. On the other hand, this proverb also implies that the wisdom of an individual can't work if it is not accompanied by his/her economic capacity.

With similar theme, Wolaitas also say "*Ikka uuttee ikka guuttee!*," "*Is it enset and smaller in amount?*". This proverb is most frequently used when Wolaitas encounter the situation of handing (receiving) smaller amount or number of any non-precious item. Here 'enset' is a food item in Wolaita which is not liked by majority when it is presented merely cooked (not as its other processed food items: 'muchchoo', shenderaa, 'goddeeta'). By similar talking, Wolaitas also say "*Ixeetay gixetuwa garxxissees,*" "*Scarcity enforces one to borrow unsuitable clothe items*". Both of these proverbs depict how much powerful scarcity is to fully close the door of one's choice and give the proverbial meaning "*Godaree namisettidi bari uawaa anhaa mees,*" "*The hyena eats the carcass of its father when it is in hunger*" to mean one loses his/her usual positive quality when he/she become enforced by scarcity.

There are also additional proverbs that imply the power of scarcity in closing the doors of choice. For instance, "*Saa'ay ixinni shareechchoy deeshaa mees*" "*When he/she encounters scarcity, the magician eats flesh of a goat*". This proverb indicates that there exists serious traditional law in Wolaita that bounds magicians not to eat flesh of goat. However, if magicians face scarcity, they break their traditional law and eat flesh of goat. Similar to this, Wolaitas also say "*Sa'ay iitin sa'aappe maxeettees,*" "*It is scarcity that makes one collect items of consumption from garbage*". This proverb is used when people get someone doing something without his/her choice to mean one doesn't get any opportunity to differentiate good and bad when he/she is in scarcity.

Similar to the above proverbs, Wolaitas also use proverbs like "*Koshay bashiyappe poonissees; saamoy shafiya xunxxissees,*" "*Hunger imposes one to eat the food with incomplete cooking process and to drink unclean water from ground*". Wolaitas proverbially reason out why one fails in the down trajectory of life without his/her choice due to scarcity saying, "*Qumi mal'o gidenna, namisi mal'o,*" "*Delicious is not the food one enjoys rather it is scarcity that makes any food delicious*". Thus scarcity doesn't allow one to exercise the life style he/she chooses rather it enforces him/her to run what is actually in hand.

Regarding the unavoidability and continuity of scarcity throughout human life, Wolaitas also have proverbs. For instance, they say "*Mishiriya gidin gimana giishin wodee wurees,*" "*A woman can lose a chance of being culturally respected by her property expecting total avoidance of scarcity*". Wolaita people use this proverb when they get a person (either male or female) trying to fulfill all his/her wants. That is why, one of the respondents in face-to-face interview responded "We can never fulfill all we want even all in our life span as life is a process coming up with different and better needs day-after-day". The same respondent argued proverbially saying "*Oytaa kessin maattay xayees,*"

"When you get one food item, you couldn't have another food item to be eaten with". This proverb implies that it is challenging for human being to fulfill all he/she wants at the same time.

In line with the above point, Wolaitas believe that scarcity reduces comforts (peace) of human mind when thought critically. Thus they say "Yuushshi qoopin hiitta miyee yashshees," "When one thinks critically the scarcity of resources, it frightens his/her life". This does not mean that Wolaitas frustrate and quit their effort to change their economic life. Reversely, for the relevant effort needed to change one's economic life, they proverbially argue "Shemppissiyaagee duufo," "One gets full rest when he/she dies," which is similar to the core economic principle of the world, "Consistent and relevant effort is needed to survive in a competitive human world having serious scarcity of resources".

Generally speaking, Wolaitas believe that scarcity is common to every nation in all corners of the glob and exert their effort to handle it. They proverbially confirm that the way how they handle scarcity saying "Garttee gattees; tal'ee ayssees" to mean "Borrowing from each other makes one to survive till his/her economic independence". The implication is that due to scarce nature of resources, people of Wolaita help each other through borrowing materials and money. According to one of the elders interviewed, borrowing materials and money from each other and turning them back to the owner trustfully is a long-rooted culture in Wolaita. The elder suggests "When people borrow from each other, it strengthens social cohesion among individuals in the community as well as it reduces illegal acts of taking (stealing, robbing, cheating...) each other's properties". This is because, proverbially the elder adds, "Issi kahuwa xayoy kaysuwawu efees" to mean "A person can commit an act of stealing for one-round dinner".

#### b) Unwise and Wise Use of Resources

##### i. Unwise use of resources

As a general fact it needs wise use of economic resources as resources are scarce by their nature across the nation (which is discussed in the above section). This is generally accepted major economic principle that confirms better life is the result of wise use of economic resources. However, there occurs unwise use of economic resources by some individuals or groups all over the world. This unwise use of economic resources, for the current research, encompasses misconception of time as economic resource, procrastination and its consequences, losing opportunities at hand, desire of life betterment without exerting effort, over utilization of resources, running life being in credit and taking uncalculated risk. For all these kinds of situations, Wolaita people use proverbs during their interactions.

Time is one of primary economic resources that everyone has gifted equally without any difference in share. However, there is misconception and unwise use of time in Wolaita. For such unwise use, Wolaitas say, "Eeyya asi gallassi zin'ees," "The idle sleeps at day time". This proverb has two major implications: first, it implies that an idle person misses his/her bright and golden age of production without appropriate use of it. Secondly, it implies that day is a bright time that people make use of it to run their business and should take rest at night time. Wolaitas proverbially assert the consequence of such unwise use of time (bright and production age) saying, "Gallasii utti pe'iday omarssi wuusawu bees," "The one passed day idle, go for stealing at night," which implies that people joked over their bright and production age do different types of illegal acts at their time of old age like stealing.

In line with wise use of time as an economic resource, Wolaitas proverbially advise those who commit procrastination. They say, "Wontto maana giishin wori ayssees," "If one procrastinates life for tomorrow, he/she misses it by death". This proverb has the implication of avoiding blindly saving in life; which is just as an advice to manage each day's life with the resource at hand. Similarly, Wolaitas also say, "Beni mishiriya kawo gelana gaydda mule gelennan attawusu," "Expecting a king to marry her, a lady totally misses her marriage opportunity". As similar to the proverb indicated above, this proverb has the implication of the unsuitable use of resources (at hand) in its right time; which is the same in meaning to "Malaamo godaa ixidaaraa manaamo godaappe shahaarawusu," "A woman refused to marry better husband at right time, becomes pregnant by a layman at the end". We can alternatively use another proverb "Eqqada hemmettaydda minjennaara yela zin'ada miittaa mawusu," "A woman who hasn't saved resources before her delivery suffers a lot from starvation when she is in bed by delivery".

For the consequence of procrastination, Wolaitas proverbially say, "Badhdheesan manddariday zerennan attees," "One who go for long journey at the time of sowing, loses his/her chance of sowing". It is a proverb that indicates time determines the end product of any activity. If one misses the use of time in its vivacity, he/she loses his/her chance of success. In other words, this proverb implies time is an economic resource that needs conscious exploitation. This is because the time used at its appropriate span of life is better than the time one strictly uses at the end during its deadline. Arguing for this, Wolaitas say "Maallado maaxaan manddaridaagaa qolchaaaway gakkenna," "An early journey using pack-horse is better than a delayed journey using fast horse" which is similar to another proverb; "Azallay omarssi waaxxees," "The idle swifts at the deadline". Both of these proverbs have the implication of working hard at one's productive age;



which reduces or avoids the worthless wafting at the time of old age.

In the proverbial advice through endemic wisdom, Wolaitas also discourage losing the chance of using resources at hand. They say, "Geleshshoppe aadhdhidi shaafaa qociyay baawa shin bari kushe meecetti erenna," *"Even though monkeys are more exposed to rivers than anybody, they never wash their hands"*. Naturally monkeys live at the shores of rivers, but they do not wash their hands. The same is true for some people who do not exploit the resources that they are exposed to. Wolaitas count this kind of people as lazy proverbially saying, "Eeyyiya agido zaakkoy de'ishin haatta uyawusu," *"A lazy woman drinks water having the drink she prepared at hand"*. The implication is lazy people are not conscious of resources in their hand and lose their chance of using it. Similarly, in Wolaita there has been said, "Bukkayda bullattay, agaydda sammettay," *"Why make your skin tarnish and be thirsty having butter and water at your hand"*. The implication is that some people suffer from starvation not mainly due to shortage of resources rather than unconscious use of what they have at hand.

Wolaitas believe that change in life is the result of exerting one's own significant effort. They have proverbs for advising people living life for its sake without exerting any effort. They label such kind of people as ordinary people and say, "Laafay laataa naagees," *"Ordinary people wait for inheritance to fulfill their economic wellbeing"*. The implication is that ordinary people do not exercise life by exerting effort for its betterment. However, life needs exerting of effort even in its appropriate order. Wolaitas believe that the disorderly way of exerting effort doesn't result in a successful life. That is why they proverbially say, "Azallay gadiya goyyennan kattaa dooriyossa hiixees," *"Before sowing, an idle prepares storage for his/her grain"*. As alternative to this proverb, Wolaitas use another proverb having similar meaning; namely "Goyyennan gootara essees," *"An idle prepares storage for grain before starting cultivation of his/her land"*. Both of the proverbs reveal the disorderly way of doing activities which ends up with unsuccessful life.

On the other hand, Wolaitas do not encourage the over utilization of economic resources; beyond one's economic capacity. From the wider sea of their endemic wisdom, they proverbially advise members of their community to act economically based on one's actual affording capacity rather than imitating others (especially the rich ones). Thus, they say, "Shodhdhe gaammuwadan xaaggana giiddi xuuqqes giida," *"When trying to roar like a lion, a frog becomes burst"*. This proverb mainly indicates the dangerous consequences of imitating riches (by poor) in utilization of resources. Similarly, it has also been said (for the poor), "Bakkani baawa shin asho meennan aqikke gees godare," *"Without having a cent, a hyena plans to eat meat"*. This

proverb, most of the time, is used when one exaggerates his/her poor economic capacity and his/her interlocutor wants to re-bounce back the idea oppositely.

In similar way of proverbial speech, Wolaitas also criticize those who do not adequately exploit their economic capacity at the existing time. One of the proverbs they use for such kind of people is "Medhdhido miishshaa bayzzidi kon'an miyobaappe ashsho," *"It is a surprise when a potter sells materials she crafted and cooks with broken jar"*. Instead of this proverb, Wolaitas also use "Bawu bukkada balaaletta shokkada uyawusu," *"A milk woman drinks watery-milk even though adequate amount of milk is in her hand"*. These proverbs demonstrate the need to enjoy life with existing economic capacity at hand. For those who do not exercise life in such a way, Wolaitas provide proverbial advice of, "Dirssa miizaa goday guttumaa maana gees, xon'a mirguwa goday usttendan mike gees," *"A rich man having hundreds of cattle likes to consume resources in a saved manner, but the poor exercises life reversely"*. These proverbs connote negative advice to both category of people.

With different dimension but in a similar scenario, Wolaitas proverbially discourage a family member (any one) who tries to exploit resources beyond the economic capacity of the family. Thus, they say, "Aayeessi shayan yegganawu baawa shin na'iya hiixxada uttawusu," *"However the mother suffers from lack of clothes to cover her bare body, the daughter puts down her extra clothes on the ground"*. Changeably, Wolaitas also use "Aayyiya uniya oottawusu, na'iya caammaa shammawusu," *"Being her mother an ordinary wage worker, the daughter buys shoes of luxury"*. Both the proverbs indicate that, in Wolaita, parents give priority in economic utilization to their children, but it has also a negative connotation of discouraging children trying to live beyond the economic capacity of their families. In line with this theme, it has been also said, "Aawaassi miyoy baawa shin machchiya menttiya yelawusu," *"A wife gives birth to twins regardless of absolute shortage of food for consumption to the family"*. This proverb implies the risk that a family should take for unplanned extension of family size.

It is also the case in Wolaita that some people aspire to enjoy the standard of life beyond their economic competence. In such kind of encounters Wolaitas use proverbs like, "Uttiyoosi baynnaaggee zin'yoosi anee gees," *"The one who doesn't have a seat requests a bed for laying down"*. The implication is to reveal ones exaggerated desire to exercise life beyond his/her capacity of affording or accessing it. When similar situation occurs, Wolaitas also use "Saalenay bayinnaraa, eerippanne qum'ees gaawusu," *"A woman incapable of having less standard mat worries the discomfort of tradition comfortable skin-rug"*, or

alternatively say "Miizzaa haarennaagee asho xallaa maana gees," *"A person doesn't have any cattle aspires to eat meat always"*, or "Bawu kutto marinne baynnaagee baquluwa kooraa shammees," *"A person buys a saddle of the mule without having a chick"*.

There are a number of proverbs having the same implication to "Uttiyoosi baynnaaggee zin'iyooosi anee gees," *"The one who doesn't have a seat requests a bed for laying down"*. Such the proverbs include "Ubba baynnaara cum'u gini maana gawusu," *"An absolutely poor woman says I don't like to eat tasteless food"*, "Cawaa qucciyo zanzzay baynnara alleeqanawu belecaa hamma gawusu," *"The one who doesn't have a traditional soft to dry out his/her sweating, worries for a traditional jewelry"*, "Aykko baynna manqoy bootta eessaa wottayis gees," *"An absolutely poor says let's compete with an item of high quality white honey"*, "Baaranawu baynnaagee gacoy xuuqqin coomana gees," *"The one who has nothing to eat worries for eating much"*, "Bawu baynnaagee lakkuwaagaa gannees," *"The skinny finishes a drink full of a big jar"*. All of these proverbs depict the implication of unreal-over-exaggerated wish and talk of poor people; that are mocked or joked frequently by majority of Wolaitas.

Furthermore, proverbially Wolaitas make fun of mere, water un-holding talks and acts of poor people beyond their economic capacity. For instance, they say, "Bariyyo baynnaagee laappun basuwa maana gees," *"A person emaciated of starvation desires to eat seven times his/her current capacity"*, "Issi uuttee goday anggallay anee gees," *"A person having only one inset plant requests for the best product of it"*, "Issi miizzee goday shimppennan usttikke gees," *"A person having only one cow declares that he/she doesn't drink milk without its best quality"*. All of the proverbs listed in this paragraph have the same implication of exercising life beyond one's existing economic capacity which is not recommended in Wolaita and may result in economic crisis.

As mentioned in the above lesson of scarcity, there has been a long lived tradition of borrowing from each other in Wolaita. This, the tradition of borrowing from each other in Wolaita, is rooted in the culture of strong trustworthiness among people. However, Wolaitas discourage running of life having a credit (of money or property) of some body. Proverbially they mock "Anzzay de'ishin ashuwa mees azallay," *"An idle eats meat (delicious food) being on credit of somebody"*. This proverb is similar in meaning to "Laafa naati bantta aawaa biittaa bayzzidi ashuwa moosona," *"Idle sons of a person sell their father's land and eat meat with such the money"*. Both of the proverbs indicate that meat is a delicious food in Wolaita but not recommended to be eaten having a credit of somebody. Besides, these proverbs also imply that credit is something given priority before fulfilling other necessities in life.

Economically uncalculated way of taking risk is proverbially de-motivated in Wolaita. Thus Wolaitas say "Daana dulliya wuraana afalawu qaaridi uttees," *"One seats with a bare buttock for a short-lived clothes"*. This proverb implies the meaning of calculating the benefit of any business before exerting whatever amount of effort to run it. There are also other proverbs that affirm the same meaning. For instance, it has been said in Wolaita "Boora kessena gadee boora worees," *"A small acre of land below the price of an ox kills it"*, which promotes giving priority to something worthier rather than blindly losing it for an item below its price. This the issue of prioritizing is also reflected with proverbs like "Bollara gullottidi garssara kallottis," *"One dresses well above waist being bared below it"*, which is not supported by the endemic culture of Wolaita.

#### ii. Wise use of resources

As has been explained in the above sections, resources are scarce by their very nature and requires wise use. One of such the wise use of resources is the timeliness of accumulating assets. In Wolaita's proverbial wisdom, it has been said that "Aaway de'ishin xee'a, away de'ishin woxxa," *"Produce asset while your father is alive and be proactive while the sun is lit"*. This proverb implies that to have a prosperous life in his/her future, one should start accumulating asset when he/she is dependent of his/her parents. Proverbially, Wolaitas present rationale why it is needed to start accumulating asset early in one's life. i.e., "Hirggay laattees," *"The one who thinks of his/her future life early, ends up with good life at the old age"*, which is similar to "Maldduwa qoraphphay mees," *"One eats sorghum when he/she saves it"* a proverb with a saving concept.

Proverbially, Wolaitas also advise members of the society to run economically appropriate life on the basis of one's affording capacity. They say "Ba soon ba wolqqa keenaa hanettees," *"One runs his/her economic life on the basis of his/her affording capacity"*. This proverb, most of the time, is used to advise people who are extravagant having their limited economic capacity. In other words, economic life of people in a given society is too individual as everybody has different affording capacity. That is why Wolaitas say "Aawu bar penggiya banan likkidi kessees" *"One makes his/her door based on his/her height"*, which is not exactly about the physical door that we use for our houses, rather it implies that how a person expends what he/she has on the basis of his/her affording capacity.

On other hand, Wolaitas promote wise use of resources in terms of neglecting the tradition of boasting beyond one's actual economic capacity and giving credit to any small job. For instance, it has been said "Karido kattay kaho ayssees," *"The food mocked too small becomes sufficient for supper"*. This proverb frequently used when one denies to give credit to someone or something thinking that it is too small or too

weak. Wolaitas perceive such kind of small personalities/things as a key support at the baseline of one's economic success. That is why they proverbially say "Aaddan amppidi dadan giqees," *"Being dependent on magic, one bans his/her property on thunder"*.

Taking the expected citizenship responsibilities of the a government is again another dimension of wise use of resources in Wolaita. One of such the responsibilities is paying government tax on time. As support to this, Wolaitas say "Giiriiddi gilqqay keha," *"One who became poor paying government tax is better than those who didn't do that and rich"*. In line with this, Wolaitas believe that it is a compulsory condition for a citizen to pay a government tax. For un-fulfillment of such a condition, it has been proverbially advised in Wolaita "Kawossi giidobaa Karen ayssa," *"Make whatever belongs to a government out of a door"*. This proverb implies that one should not make the combination of his/her legal property and what expected to be paid or provided to a government; as a wise use of resources.

Giving a relevant credit to little resources as a foundation stone of one's economic life is considered as wise use of resources. It is because everything starts from a scratch or something too little. In such cases, Wolaitas proverbially say "Gusiya dorsees goday guppiya paraa shammees," *"Having ownership of a skinny sheep, one can buy a powerful horse through time"*. Similarly it has been said in Wolaita "Saawenni santidii geelayoo ekkettees," *"Being dependant on widow, one marries a girl after a time"*. Both of these proverbs imply that one should give credit to something little or not that much significant at the foundation status of his/her economic life; which leads him/her to the targeted prosperous life at the end. That is why Wolaitas say "Maallado maaxaanaa toggidi omarssi odolchchaa doorees," *"One rides pack-horse at his early life but chooses among powerful horses during his prosperity"*.

Wise utilization of resources also incorporates timely action for the production and making use of resources. For instance, in Wolaita proverbially people say "Badalaa miya kanaa zeriidi woreettees," *"A dog considered enemy of unripe maize should be killed during the period of sowing"*. This proverb indicates that there needs taking of timely action for maximum production of resources. In line with this, Wolaitas proverbially advise that "Kaho katta maanaappe laaxa uutta maana," *"It is better to eat tasteless food timely than eating very delicious food after adequate time passed;"* to show the importance of timeliness in resources' production and consumption.

### c) Sources of Wealth

In their long-lived culture, Wolaitas believe that wealth is a result of one's personal effort. They say "Aawu qaxxin baallee qaaxxees," *"When one empowers him/herself to be strong, others become mobilized to*

*support him/her"*. This proverb depicts the value of self-empowerment for having one's intended prosperity in his/her economic life. Similarly there has been said in Wolaita "Duunnee ottin mokkees, ogee hemettin aadhdees," *"A hard work makes a hill to produce, a quick walk makes a journey too short"*. This proverb has a similar meaning to "Daarinchchaa oottay dawullan makes," *"One who exerts maximum effort by hard working, gets much production from a small plot of land;"* hence can be used alternatively in a demanding situation of interaction. With the same theme, to emphasize the importance of hard working for prosperity, Wolaitas say "Goyyiday tiyaa mees; shukkiday tiriya mees," *"A hard working farmer eats unripe cereals, a butcher with similar quality eats liver"*.

On the other hand, people in Wolaita give significant credit to effective exploitation of one's effort at the age of production thinking that it has a prior value for unproductive life at the old age. The say "Gallassi maxido sumbburaa omarssi kuucci baareettees," *"The chick-pea collected at day time can be eaten at night!"*. Alternatively, Wolaitas say "Awan oottennay aginan wuuqees," *"The one who doesn't work at day time goes for stealing at night"*. Both of the proverbs indicate the importance of effective exploitation of one's effort at the age of production to have excellent life at the old age. Proverbially Wolaitas rationalize that even a little effort exerted at the age of production has its own impact on one's economic success. i.e., "Iso woraynne kushe singgees," *"Let aside others, the one who killed a bug smells his/her hand"*.

Wolaitas do not allow their community members to run life without working. As to them, those who do not work hard can encounter a problems of hunger and are counted as thieves. Thus, Wolaitas say, "Oottay dewuzzees uttay laawwees," *"The one who works hard becomes satisfied in life and his/her opposite suffers a lot from hunger;"* which may lead the idle to start committing an act of stealing. That is why Wolaitas generalize the non-working idles as thieves saying "Oottenna uri kayso," *"The one who doesn't work is labeled as a thief"*. This proverb reflects the existence of strong and long-lived working culture in Wolaita which may be a guarantee to the economic success of one's life at the old age as has been commented in proverbial wisdom of Wolaita as "Oottobay omarssi otorsees," *"Well exerted effort in hard working makes one proud at his/her old age"*.

For successful production and accumulation of wealth, Wolaitas also believe that it needs cooperative or united hands. That is why they proverbially elucidate "Coray cuchchidi wonggiriya kuntees," *"However small they contribute, a mass makes much output"*. This proverb implies that a united hand is a key to produce much. It is a long-lived culture that Wolaitas use different types of grouping for their effective production. The grouping may include grouping for sowing, for



harvesting, for collecting, for constructing house... To show ineffectiveness of uncooperative works, Wolaitas say "Issoy ootti pe'o shooqaappe coray kanttosay keha," *"A garden crossed by mass is better than the one cultivated by an individual"*.

On the other hand, Wolaitas also give a significant value to cleansing credit as a pre-condition to be wealthy. Here the point is one cannot be wealthy in reality having somebody's or any institutions' credit on him/her. Thus Wolaitas proverbially advise "Acoy baynna manqqoy durre," *"A poor person who is free from any credit is a wealthy person"*. Alternatively Wolaitas use "Acoy baynna manqqoyenne hargge baynna gilqqay issuwa," *"A poor person who is free from any credit and a slim person who is free from any disease are the same"*. Both of these proverbs reflect the meaning of purity of credit is a key condition of richness.

Exerting of a relevant effort in its appropriate condition is also considered as the source of wealth in Wolaita; as it has been said "Zokkoy ixxin ootay uloy ixxin kalles," *"The one who works hard satisfies his/her needs"*. This proverb reflects the meaning that hard working is a key way to satisfy one's needs. Similarly, Wolaitas say "Paaliiddaa kafiyaa donna fittiinni uttidda kafiyaa uluwaa fittawussu," *"The bird that exerted some effort searching of its food itches its beak, but the idle one itches its stomach;"* to mean exerting certain effort is a must to get something for one's consumption. Besides, Wolaitas give credit to the relevance of the effort exerted for a given activity saying that "Garaa wodhdhay danggarssa worees," *"The one who went to forest area for hunting kills an elephant;"* as elephants always live in forest areas.

#### d) Economic Inequality among People

It is obviously known that there exists economic inequality among people in the whole globe. The ground reality in Wolaita is not different. Even there is a wide economic gap among people in Wolaita. Confirming this, Wolaitas proverbially say "Asi ubbi lagge shin dummaayiyay miishsha," *"All human beings are equal, but what makes them different is their economic status"*. This difference makes people either suffer from shortage of their needs or overact due to excess of what they need. In this regard, Wolaitas say "Issuwa son shenderay porees; issuwa son shemppoy porees," *"One suffers a lot from shortage of his/her basic necessities, another suffers a lot from the reverse"*. This proverb indicates that, in Wolaita, there exists the two extremely positioned people in their economic status.

As to the Wolaitas proverbial wisdom, people run their lives based on their economic status. To this end, Wolaitas say "Siine kafiyaa ba qefiyan ankkooyka ba qefiyan pallees," *"Either big or small, a bird flies with its own wings"*. The interpretation of this proverb has directly similar meaning to another Wolaita proverb "De'iyoogee siidhdhidi paahiyo wode, manqqoy mela

xantaa baressesesi," *"A wealthy person feeds his/her child excess of its need, but a poor one makes his/her child rely on the breast feeding"*. In Wolaita, both of the proverbs are used when advising individuals to run his/her life according to his/her current economic capacity that can promote prosperity in his/her future life.

Wolaitas proverbially mock over those running their lives beyond their current economic (affording) capacity. For instance, they say "Doona duree miishshaa duriya karees," *"One who is rich in oratory belittles the person who is rich in property"*. In reality the reverse may be true and Wolaitas elucidate such kind of situation saying "Achchi baynnaara achchay de'iyooro saxxa bessawusu," *"The one without teeth looks down and shows how to bite its counterpart having teeth"*. This proverb depicts the meaning of the irrelevant and not accepted overconfidence of poor over the riches in their economic status and can be replaced by another proverb having similar meaning. i.e., "Curqqaayiya worqqayiyoo karawusu," *"The one who dressed well on clothes belittles another who is well dressed on jewelry"*. Three of the proverbs in this paragraph provides life-style-shaping advice to those who act reversely to their capacity.

In Wolaita there has been a custom of coupling partners for marriage solely based on the similar social strata; giving less attention to the existing economic inequality. In other words, Wolaitas do not allow their daughters to marry a man from the lower social background regardless of his economic prosperity. Thus, when marriage relation request comes from the lower social background to the higher one, they say "Eceree goobidi gawaraa nayiyo oychchees," *"When a mouse becomes economically powerful, it requests the daughter of a cat to marry"*. This proverb reflects the power of economic success on promoting people from socially lower strata in wishing to make marriage relations with their supreme counterparts. Alternative to this proverb, Wolaitas also say "Eceree kallidi asaara bollotanawu qaaqqatees," *"When a mouse becomes overconfident by its prosperity, it wishes to make marriage relations with a human being"*. Both of these proverbs reflect the existing economic inequality among people in Wolaita regardless of their social capital in the community.

In Wolaita, there also has been a persistent mocking of overconfident poor in certain interactional situations when the poor act beyond their existing economic capacity. Wolaitas say "Kanay asaa qulliyawu giyaa gelees," *"A dog comes to market thinking that it is equal to human being"*. Most of the time, this proverb has been addressed by riches to poor which connotes the internal negative meaning of representing poor with dogs when they try to do certain activities beyond their existing economic capacity in front of riches. Similarly, it has been also said "Kanay asaa qulliyawu dulliyan



uttees," *"Imitating human beings, a dog sits down using its buttock"*. As to Wolaitas, this kind of offense from rich people to poor ones is due to the egoistic and unethical thinking of rich people as if they are doers of everything using their money. That is why Wolaitas proverbially say "Kallida uri namisettidabaa erenna," *"The rich people do not understand the problems of poor ones"*.

In line with what has been discussed in the above paragraph, people of Wolaita also deny to offer proper care and attention for their poor counterparts. Thus, Wolaitas proverbially say "Hiyyeesay cooyiiddi barkka bari tiara oyqees," *"A poor suffers a lot treating him/herself when vomiting"*. This proverb shows that people of Wolaita maltreat poor people when they are in need of support from others. Similarly, it has been said "Manqqoy manddi shin dure mi kallees," *"When a poor wishes of change in his/her economic life, the rich satisfies his/her overall needs"*. This proverb shows that the riches do not care about their poor counterparts when the poor are striving for their economic success. However, naturally it needs the adequate support of riches to make the poor to be successful in their economic lives.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### a) Conclusions

Based on the analysis and discussions of Wolaita proverbs for their economic implications, the following conclusions have been reached:

- Wolaita proverbs embody different domains of economic realm of life as a form of indigenous wisdom of Wolaita people.
- The economic realm of life embodied in Wolaita proverbs include scarcity of resources and how Wolaitas manage it, unwise and wise use of resources, sources of wealth and economic inequality among people.

##### b) Recommendations

Based on the analysis and interpretation of Wolaita proverbs and conclusions made above, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- There should be deep studies that promote the frequent use of Wolaita proverbs reflecting the economic facet of life in all adequate contexts of interaction.
- Awareness enhancement training should be given for the younger generations of Wolaita for effective use of proverbs in the proper interactional situations.
- Proverbs should be made as part of language curriculum in all levels of education.
- Wolaita proverbs should be maintained to serve the society as vehicles of transferring indigenous wisdom to the next generations.

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