

Ethnography of Afar Koeso in Depth Study and Documentation

Amare Tigabu *

Debre Berhan University, Debre Berhan - ETHIOPIA

*Corresponding author: ata8706@gmail.com

Abstract Games are none formalized and formalized expressions of playing which allow people to go beyond immediate imagination and direct physical activity. Generally they will classify in two major groups like, low organized and minor (cultural) games and major games. Games have a power to capture the ideas and behaviors of people `imagination at one period of time and carry that through time to their descendants. Objectives of the study: - To assessing, organizing and documenting of Afar Koeso traditional sport games. Method: - descriptive method has been implemented on this study because of the study nature is inventory, the major sampling techniques was non-probability such assnow ball (networking) (for different groups) and purposive techniques (for different offices). The data collecting materials are in-depth interview, field observation, close and open ended questionnaires, oral information. The main data sources were clan leaders, elders, former and current Afar Koeso players, and different offices. Findings:- the major findings of this research are:- Afar Koeso; (History, types, Nature, Rules and Regulations, Necessary materials, Facilities, Equipment, Socio-cultural values, Team Classifications positions, Risks and benefits, Officials, faults and punishments, etc have been assessed. Conclusion:- According to in depth interview, different sources and practical observation of different Afar Koeso games, there is no clear bench mark about Afar Koeso when, how and who began it but it has long relation with Afar Community. Right now Afar Koeso game is not practicing more compared with previous time. In general Afar Koeso game is famous and has great social impact in the community according to social interaction, recreational activities, leisure time, physical strength etc.

Keywords: Afar Koeso, Lahbahti, Tuhinaitu, Alla, La.

Cite This Article: Amare Tigabu, "Ethnography of Afar Koeso in Depth Study and Documentation." *American Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2018): 44-48. doi: 10.12691/ajssm-6-2-2.



Figure 1. Afar Koeso (Radoita) Cultural Game at the ground

1. Introduction

Afar Koeso is a traditional game that is being practiced in Afar community those are living in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eretria. It is a team and active game according to its nature. It is one of the common traditional games still now in these three triangular neighbor countries. This traditional and physical challenging game does not have any formal written documents and regular tournament program in the community. Afar Koeso Traditional Game is only men's game in the society. Playing Afar Koeso Game is becoming condense with the reason of accessibility of modern sport games in different electronics media, domination of passive recreation

system in youth society, unavailability of well and suitable safety rules, safe player suit and playground and so risky and dangerous to play Afar Koeso game. Because of these and other reasons now a day Afar Koeso game is fetching ignored in the society mostly in youngsters. They divert their attention and interest to modern games instead of Afar Koeso traditional game.

2. Findings

2.1. History of Afar Koeso Cultural Game

There is no clear information how, when and who began Afar Koeso in the Community. But according to

supper grandparents they were playing the game and transfer it as it is for current generation. Afar Koeso game mainly practiced during Holly Days, wedding ceremony, spring season, and any other celebration time. The game may directly interrelated with Afar community life style in different dimensions. Because it is the main recreational and leisure time game for the community starting from previous to existing time. Based on fairy story, origin of Afar Koeso game is begging of Afar community. But now a day it is becoming endanger because of globalization, civilization and other reasons those mentioned at introduction part. These conditions have its own impact for Afar Koeso game activities declination in the society especially, on youngsters' society. As of these and other reasons this interesting and indigenous games and knowledge are becoming flattened. Previous time most young people were free from any addiction and bad habits. Playing Afar Koeso game and other traditional game activities were the only option for their leisure time and recreation. Nowadays most youth are not interested to play Afar Koeso and they are so interested for modern abroad games like Football and other. This trend is so dangerous for Afar Koeso and other traditional games future. Therefore, at least we have to document and organize in well form and try to declare for concerned bodies like federal, zonal traditional and cultural sport offices and others to practice in national level like Genna, Gebeta, Fers Shert etc traditional games.

2.2. Types of Afar Koeso Cultural Game

Afar Koeso game has little different from zone to zone, but generally there are three types of Afar Koeso game those are Fenayta, Feraita and Radoita. Most of the well-known and being practiced right now at the ground are **Feraita** and **Radoita**.

2.2.1. Fenaita

Fenaita game is not practicing currently in most area and just it is almost has forgotten in the society. Number of players in fenaita is only two and one - one member in each. It is considered as individual games. Playing techniques, rules and regulations, scoring system, etc are similar with Fereita. The difference between Fenaita and Fereita is number of players and Feneita is individual

game unlike Fereita.

2.2.2. Fereita

Fereita is the second famous types of Afar Koeso next to Radoita. Mostly it is practicing in Northern Afar area. It is a team game and includes totally four players with two members in each team. The number of player is limited in this game unlike Radoita.

2.2.3. Radoita

Radoita is the most famous, running with wrestling and physical challenging types of Afar Koeso cultural game. It has different names from area to area i.e. in Red Sea area it is known as **Feeda**, in some area also called **Geeda**. Its' playing system is little bit different from place to place. In some area especially previous time they play Man to Man position with equal number of players in each team. It has an advantage to identify opponent players easily in the game. During Afar Koeso game the players should only charge opponent team with **Redim** (pushing with shoulder only) but not laying down opponent players with catching legs, tackling etc. Playing Radoita at the ground mostly known as **Tuhinaitu** and **Lahbahti** in current society.

Tuhinaitu: - is a friendship game mostly same group (team) will play to evaluate his own current performance to be ready for main Afar Koeso match.

Lahbahti: - is a competitive and aggressive game type of Afar Koeso.

Alla is a traditional appointment system for the match.

2.2.3.1. Basic Techniques of the Afar Koeso game (Radoita)

All Afar Koeso games are played with hands and small ball approximately Ground tennis ball size. The game basic techniques, scoring system, playground size, game duration, officials and number of players, team position, rules and regulations are almost different in each type of game. In **Fereita** and **Feneyta** except number of players almost all activities and techniques are similar, but in **Radoita** playing techniques are completely different from both games. To score points in Fereita and Feneyta catching the ball that threw to air after three times rebounding on the ground, unlike Radoita players should reach the ball that he accepted from Enayta to scoring area without falling down by opponent players.



Figure 2. playing Afar Koeso (Fereita) in sitting and standing position

In Radoita game Enayta will take the ball from referee (Essee) and then he will observe seriously all his team mate players' position and pass the ball by throwing to one he is confident in good position to perform and reach with the ball without any opponent obstacle to the scoring area to get a point. After receiving the ball the player will run as fast as to scoring area. During this time the opponent players will run aggressively to lay (catch) the player running with ball to protect before reaching at scoring area.

In general the ball holder team members will protect their team member from any opponent obstacle until he reach to scoring area including by laying opponent team players and the defender team also struggle to grab ball holding player before he reach at scoring area.

2.2.3.2. Formation of Teams and positions of Afar Koeso (Radoita)

There are three main groups in Afar Koeso game such as offensive, defensive and Enayta in the match. During Afar Koeso match both offensive and defensive team will act as defensive and offensive player simultaneously. While one of the offensive team player runs to scoring area with ball the defensive team runs to block this player before reaching scoring area and at the same time the offensive team players also block defensive team players before they touch and lay down their team member.

a. Offensive Units and Roles

Offensive team is ball holding team in Afar Koeso match. All members act as striker to reach the ball at scoring area. The main goal of offensive unit is reaching the ball with holding at the scoring area. One of the player reach the ball at scoring area that team can get or score one point. If the player fell down to ground or grabbed by defensive player he cannot score point. A player who reached at scoring area with ball without any obstacle he may be appreciating as man of the match. This player is called **Helem** (star player). Then after the ball will be return to Enayta to continue the game. While the striker runs with ball his team mate will prevent him from defensive team by blocking them before touching to make free the running way.

b. Defensive Units and Roles

Main role of defensive unit is attending aggressively the opposite team Enayta when he give the ball by throwing for one of his team member who is so fast, strong, agile and well performer. He will not give for all but for good positioned and well performer players only. The defender players are blocking ball holding player including lay down to the ground before reaching scoring area with the ball. All players may act as defender during match. No goal keeper and specific goal area but end line of opponent field area serves as a goal area.

c. Special Team Units and Roles

The special teams units of Afar Koeso game are called Enayta. Each team will have one Enayta when they playing. Enayta's serve as pace maker for the game and also as referee to manage and control his team mates for the period of game time. These special team unit possess

the ball and observe team mates position to pass the ball for own team members during their turn then after receiving back the ball from anyone who possess the ball.

2.2.3.3. Rules of Afar Koeso game (Radoita)

a. General Rules and Regulations of Afar Koeso game

1. Host team is full sponsor for guest team.
2. Beginner of the match is host team.
3. Referee will give the ball for home team Enayta to start the game.
4. An Enayta who get the ball will start the game by giving to his team mate by throwing only.
5. Ball will exchange to opposite team Enayta after first team finish his turn.
6. Ball can exchange from one team to another in each some rounds (mostly each four rounds).
7. Any jewelry and long finger nail is forbidden during game.
8. Insulting, boxing, kicking, being aggressive, spraying sand, dust etc is forbidden in the game.
9. Laying opponent player who does not hold the ball is not permitted.
10. No formal Players' substitution any number and anyone can be on and off in the match.
11. Some areas catching legs and laying ball holding opponent players does not award you as a clever but hugging around waist area of the body is more norm.
12. Even the players injured in the game the match continue but the victim will off.
13. Afar Koeso (Radoita) is classified based on age level (children, adolescent) but females do not play it.

b. Scoring System

To score the point a ball holding team player have to reach the scoring area with the ball without lay down or grabbed by opponents team member and has to bounce high to air the ball at the middle of his feet then jump and clamp by both hands with his both shank to create sound as it indicate he scored the point. This sound serves as whistle for Referee (Essee). At this time in case of opponent players too close to the ball holding player he can pass the ball for his team mate who is free from opponents and in better position.

1. A team has scored much point is a winner team
2. If the team member(s) have illegal faults their team will lose winning position for the game even they scored more points.
3. After falling down by opponent team member and rerunning again does not award points.
4. For one reaching at scoring area with ball can award one point (**La** means 1 cow).

c. Duration of Afar Koeso (Radoita), Play Ground Size, number of player and Materials

1. In Afar Koeso game the players will finish the game when they tired but unlimited time.
2. Time duration is depends on their agreement but if the first team spends an hour the next team will have equal an hour to continue the game.

3. Afar Koeso game play ground has no limited measurement and they prefer it by estimation.
4. Esses guess half of the playground to allot ground for each team.
5. Playground should be leveled, free from any obstacles like rock, wood hunk, valley etc.
6. The only material to play Afar Koeso game is approximately ground tennis ball size that may be made from stuff, plastic, hair and other convenient local materials.
7. Number of players is unlimited and unequal number in each team.

d. Officials and faults

1. Up to five local respected persons serve as referee (Essee) in Afar Koeso game.
2. Enayta serves as referee in some conditions.
3. Tackling free opponent players is fault.
4. Insulting, boxing, being aggressive, throwing stone, spraying sand, dust etc
5. Bringing sharp materials, bracelets, watch, ring are forbidden in the game

e. Punishments for Different Faults

As a team guilty team penalize the following punishments;

1. The game main referees (Essee) can decide the casualty team as winner of the match.
2. Destructive team members will pay restitution for victim team members by inviting full and adequate meal for all team members. The local tradition system can obligate the team to invite the causality. This is the respected tradition in the community.

As a player guilty player will penalize by his own team members

1. Torching, by tying his limbs and sometimes immersing into water for some minutes.
2. They will also ban him from next game if he does not admit his mistake but he admitted his mistake he will have chance to join next match.
3. And other punishment types based on the groups interest.

2.2.3.4. Popularity and Cultural Impacts on the society

Afar Koeso (Radoita) has high socio cultural impact on the society in negative and positive dimensions.

a. Positive impacts of Radoita

1. Developing social interaction among players, teams, zone, clans, different groups, etc like any other modern sport activities.
2. Develop physical and mental fitness for players.
3. Recreational and positive leisure time for spectators and other society.
4. Serves as level of dignity and develop competency in different social groups, etc.

b. Risks of Afar Koeso (Radoita)

1. Reasons of different severe injuries until death.
2. The injured players may suffer long last health problems social problems.
3. Players do not worry about safety but being aggressive to win the game, etc.

3. Conclusion

According to in depth interview, different sources and practical observation of different Afar Koeso games, there is no clear bench mark about Afar Koeso when, how and who began it but it has long relation with Afar Community. Right now Afar Koeso game is not practicing more compared with previous time. This is so dangerous for Afar Koeso game in the future. While playing Afar Koeso game the players only play with using hands and throwing the ball not kicking. During playing the game the players should receive the ball from Enayta then run to scoring area to score points.

Afar Koeso game has different classifications but the most famous are Feneita, Fereita and Radoita. Fereita and Feneita have similar playing techniques, rules, regulations, scoring system, etc but the only difference is the number of players. Feneita is individual game but Fereita and Radoita are team game. Each Afar Koeso game has their own rules and regulations, team positions, scoring system, officials, unlimited playground, unlimited duration of time but they utilize the same ground tennis size ball.

Afar Koeso has officials and referees (Essee) those manage the match like modern games. These referrers have full responsibility and power to decide about any illegal action during the game. Even they can change the result of the game if a team is guilty.

As a guilty team they will punish by inviting the entire victim team members full and adequate meal for excuse purpose. Guilty team will lose winning position with referee decision. Until they admit their mistake they may be ban for next unlimited match. As a guilty player his own team members will punish relevant penalty to him based on their interest. They may punish him by torching, immersing in water.

In general Afar Koeso game is famous and has great social impact in the community according to social interaction, recreational activities, leisure time, physical strength etc.

References

- [1] Afar regional state culture and tourism youth and sport commission office as source for videos and photos.
- [2] Oral information about Afar Koeso traditional sport games.
- [3] 2006 E.C., Ethiopian Cultural Sports Book, (Amaharic version), (books by Ethiopian cultural sports federation and culture and tourism office).
- [4] Tamirat Gebremariam – Masters of Arts Degree in History.
- [5] Traditional Games in Ethiopia.
- [6] J. Last, Ethiopian Festivals: Sports, Games, Celebrations, Occasions, Pilgrimages (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 1982), p.3.
- [7] Ethiopian Traditional Sport Federation, Bahelawi Sport, Hegena Denboch, (1992 E.C), p.9.
- [8] Niederstadt, "Of Kings and Cohorts...", p.60.
- [9] Nabar Sport, p.10; Solomon Addis Getahun, "A History of Sport in Ethiopia", Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Trondheim: 2009), p.410.
- [10] Richard Pankhurst, "The Early History of Ethiopian Horse-Names", Paideuma, Afrika-Studienl (1989), p.198.
- [11] Ethiopian Equestrian Federation, "The Ethiopians and Their Horses", (Addis Ababa. June, 1997), unpublished material found in Ethiopian Olympic Committee, p.33; Richard Pankhurst, "Horsemen of Old-Time Ethiopia", Ethiopian Observer, Volume, XIII, Number, 1 (1970), p.6.

- [12] Nabar Sport (1973 E.C), p.39; Mehari, Krista, "Throne Names, Horse Names and Field Names: Look At <http://worldinfozone.com/country.php?country=Ethiopia&page=2> (October 20, 2017, 4:30).
- [13] Cultural sport of Kefa Community and their contribution for the society (by Amrot Gizaw, 2012).
- [14] History of sport in Ethiopia by Solomon Addis Getahun.
- [15] www.ethpress.gov.et/herald/index.php/society/item/7261-gena-a-cultural-sport-game BY YARED GEBREMEDEN.