

# Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Oromoo Studies organized by the Institute of Oromoo Studies (IOS) Jimma University



1-2 June 2017 Jimma, Oromia, Ethiopia

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## I. Background to the Conference

The western knowledge system claims to have based its roots on scientific objectivity. The reiteration of this epistemology through successive historical periods marginalized the knowledge sources outside this, especially those of the Africa and the “Orientals”. The later domain is assigned as Other (Said, 2003). That is, it has often been found unprepared to acknowledge intellectual advances in societies out of its circle.

One of the known African people for their indigenous knowledge (IK) system, egalitarian institutions and astronomical observation is the Oromoo. The intellectual endeavor of this nation began to be voiced from the marginal space by scholars such as Asmarom Legesse and multitudes of Oromoo as well as foreign scholars. This scholar not only investigated calendrical investigations but also studied the most complex democratic and administrative system, called Gadaa (2006: xiv).

The Oromoo Gadaa system embodies the totality of the people’s life system and is believed to contribute to world’s democracy and wellbeing of humanity if it is genuinely embraced. It operates based on a complex system of social organization. Based on an ancient calendrical system and with mythological narratives, the Oromoo Gadaa is a "a system of gadaa classes (luba) that succeeded each other every eight year in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative, and ritual responsibilities" (Legesse, 2006: 31). Every eighth year, members of a Gadaa class transition as a group to the next culminating in the fifth Gadaa class a group’s generational life which peaks at 40 years of the group’s social age.

Oromoo is one of the few peoples in the world to possess their own calendric system based on elaborate astronomical knowledge. According to Legesse (1973) and other scholars there are seven types of stars in the Booranaa calendar. The number of stars in each type ranges from one star to seven stars. This shows the fact that the Oromoo people have a sophisticated knowledge of the cosmos and equally fascinating understanding of how it functions.

Gadaa system, governs every aspect of all Oromoo life, wisdom and philosophy. It is in

recognition of its totality that this conference upholds the values enshrined in the system, and envisions endeavors to translate them to prospective practical implementations. Gadaa houses egalitarian perspectives pertinent to human and natural wellbeing, ritual, administrative, political, economic, philosophical, etc matters of humanity. It is attested to embrace egalitarian gender system, eco-friendly perspectives and practices, complete and genuine development, advanced and complex time reckoning and deep understanding of the cosmos, and effective conflict management strategies. It is a living legacy handed down (passing the test of time) from Oromoo assiduous thinkers which generations of today and tomorrow can rely on for a better future.

This complex and all-encompassing system has not received the attention it deserves in practical terms. While this indigenous most democratic system is in existence in the continent for centuries, African nations have ideologically been forced to believe in the origin of democracy in the west. As a result, it is common to see them model their democracies on the west even testifying publically that democracy is at its infant stage, metaphorically an imported child to grow in African nations (indeed all non-western nations in the dichotomy of ‘the west’ vs ‘the rest’).

Furthermore, Gadaa system is being judged on western standards to have lacked certain qualities. For instance, some studies label it as patriarchally oriented system of governance. However, tangible evidences from the operation in Gadaa institutions attest the political as well as ritual leadership role Oromoo women have been playing. The case in point is the Siinqee institution, and one of the known Oromoo female leaders in OdaaHullee, in the western part of Oromia. Hence, bringing such debates to the scholarly platform is inevitable. On top of that, power relations are expressed in the form of Bokkuu and Siinqee, symbolizing male and female power respectively among the people. In the Gadaa system, both genders are deemed equal and each possesses its own instruments and institutions of power. This conception of equality in power relations is rooted in the egalitarian ethos of the Oromoo people that gives a balanced set of power structures for genders.

Generally, the historic Gadaa system is a culture of democracy for the Oromoo, and hence, democracy is a culture of the Oromoo, not a new importation. Gadaa system and its institutions are so intact that they overcome the challenges of time and space. Gadaa has a cherished value of indigenous mechanisms of settling disputes and/or preventing them. It has its own indigenous laws and well-structured institutions devoted to fair representation, accountability, participation, checks and balances and consultation/ consensus, which have been actively operational.

It is the conviction of the Institute of Oromoo Studies that studies pertaining to the Gadaa system in the future should be accomplished in a coordinated and centralized way to further explore its legacies so that the cherished values become the practice in the current daily life of the people. Studying core values and notions of Gadaa have got paramount importance these days. It is cognizant of this that UNESCO has registered Gadaa system as one of the intangible heritage of the world in the year 2016. The Institute of Oromoo Studies, as an institute that is devoted to creating a scene for Oromoo knowledge system to enter the discourse of the day, have become very keen to bring this complex system in which immense core values are embedded into an international forum. It is to address this timely issue that the institute devoted its Second International Conference of Oromoo Studies to themes related to Gadaa.

In sum, important issues need our attention: further exploration of diverse notions of Gadaa system, indicating possible directions towards the revitalization of Gadaa values which would link inter-generationally the Oromoo people in particular and the Ethiopian people at large, evaluate the scholarship undertaken so far, and conceptualize Gadaa's multi-faceted opportunities and challenges ahead holistically. It is to achieve this objective that the Institute has organized its second international conference.

## **II. Objectives of the Conference**

The conference is organized with the purpose of creating a plat form that enables multiple parties/stakeholders meet to work together, and with the Institute/ University, towards the restoration and sustaining of the totality of Gadaa values through various initiatives including research, education, training, conferences, documentation and dissemination of information.

To this end, the conference has the following specific objectives:

- To explore the huge potential of Gadaa System in the area of democratic governance, politics, conflict resolution mechanisms, gender balance and other areas of knowledge;
- To put way forward on how different Gadaa institutions are revitalized and included in both non-formal and formal education;
- To identify core areas for further research on Gadaa system;
- To discuss how to take an initiative in supporting the building of Gadaa center;
- To give direction on studies to be undertaken in the area of Gadaa system;
- To serve as initiative for collaboration among universities in the country and other non-governmental institutions on how to work together in one hub;
- To discuss on how multiple Gadaa values will be inculcated in the coming generation to ensure its intergenerationaleffect.

### **III. Expected Outcomes**

It is believed that the conference could create opportunities and prospects, to exchange research inputs, experiences, and visions in the area of Gadaa system. Therefore, the conference is proposed to be held with the following expected outcomes.

1. It will enable multiple scholars to focus on unraveling the complex governance, leadership, moral and other values that exist in Gadaa.
2. It will serve as an event where initiatives are made to register other core Gadaa institutions such as Irreechaa and others as a world's intangible heritage.
3. It will create a common understanding on how to mobilize resource and manpower in sustaining Gadaa institutions.
4. It will serve as scene where multiple parties: universities, bureaus, government and non-government bodies take an initiative to include core Gadaa values in both formal and non-formal education.
5. It will make other sister universities, create a strong link with the institute towards the collaboration of human power (skills, and joint research works).

6. It inspires non-government organizations in supporting the Institute of Oromo Studies (IOS) in establishing Gadaa center.
7. It creates awareness raising of the huge potential of the existence of knowledge in the area of Gadaa system among the community.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> International Oromoo Studies Conference Organizing Committees

The Institute extends its gratitude to the organizing committees for their devotion in making the event real

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**Welcoming Speech**  
**Dr. Tsige Ketema, V/President for Research and Community Service**

**Dear Excellences, Invited Guests Jimma University Community, Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am honored and privileged to make a welcoming remark on the occasion of The Second International Oromoo Studies Conference. I am also privileged to deliver this speech after Gadaa is recognized as the world's intangible heritage by UNESCO this year.

Gadaa is a system where core values such as democracy and equality which include all age levels and gender are practiced since long time ago. As a system, it encompasses values such as peaceful transfer of power, coherent and strong institutions that involve and educate all age levels, authentic philosophical grounds out of which concepts of time and space are extracted. These are among few values which, I think made UNSCO recognize Gadaa as the world's intangible heritage. It is recognizing this that Jimma University, at large, and Institute of Oromoo Studies, in particular, devoted the Second International Oromoo Studies Conference to the grand theme entitled: “ *The Gadaa: The Indigenous Knowledge System of the Oromo*”.

**Dear Participants and invited Guests,**

A society without its past history is more like a person who lost all his/her memory. Contrast to this, our ancestors did not leave us in the vacuum. They orally transferred immense cultural, social, philosophical, economic and other phenomena of knowledge. If they are so generous in transferring these knowledge systems, our responsibility to play our own share in transferring it to the coming generation is a very strong moral concern which rests on us to answer it. This, indeed make each one of us to play our own share in revitalizing Gadaa and its institutions according to the socio-economic and technological dynamics of the current situations.

It is in view this that we are here to evaluate what Gadaa cherished us in respective of the Oromoo concept of time and development, governance, administration, conflict management, religious and belief systems, gender roles, dynamism of human nature interaction. Consequently, we will exchange scholarly views on how to revitalize Gadaa through coordinated and continuous

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research studies, incorporate its various values to our education system revisiting our curriculum, and work rigorously on other Gadaa institutions for their recognition as intangible heritage by UNESCO.

Hoping that, the conference will create a platform where scholars exchange their views to further enrich Gadaa values and that it will create an opportunity for the participants create a link on how to work together in the future and I finally say you all are welcome to this historic conference.

With this brief remark, I call upon Prof. Fikre Lemessa to deliver an opening speech. Thank you!

## Opening Speech

### **Professor Fikre Lemessa, President of Jimma University**

**Dear Excellences, Invited Guests from abroad and the country and Jimma University Community, Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my privilege to welcome you all to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of Oromoo Studies organized by Jimma University. Above all, what makes me honored is the fact that, this year, Gadaa is recognized as the world's intangible heritage by UNESCO.

By the time there were no sophistication of technology, our ancestors used to organize a meeting of this kind to enact laws, to guide the life course of the people and to regulate economic, cultural, social, political phenomena of the community. It is this invaluable legacy which served as a base for this international conference to focus on "The Gadaa: The Indigenous Knowledge System of the Oromoo".

Oromoo is one of the few peoples in the world to possess their own calenderic system based on elaborate astronomical knowledge. This shows the fact that the Oromoo people have a sophisticated knowledge of the cosmos and equally fascinating understanding of how it functions. As the institute is preparing to conduct scientific explorations of Oromoo indigenous knowledge of the cosmos and other natural systems, it is important to have a denotation which links the current quest with the methods and substance of its predecessors who orally generated and transmitted their deep understanding of the cosmos. Future generations can build on the legacies their ancestors maintained using more advanced and sophisticated technologies.

Why the Gadaa as a grand theme for this conference? It is because the philosophical conception of space and time are there in the womb of Gadaa. It is because notions related to development dynamics are in the very heart of the Gadaa. It is where a fair play of dichotomies: male and female, young and old, self and other, haves the not haves are democratically and fairly treated which of course have made Gadaa an egalitarian system.

If I say selfless leadership is the very core value of Gadaa system, I am not exaggerating it, but attempting to be genuine at my level best. This, of course has made it an indigenous African system where collective consciousness is the pillar for Africans. That is why, scholars from

Caribbean regions were voicing for it on the date of its recognition. What binds the people of the two geographically distant continents are the black core values which centers humanity, equality, justice and other notions of knowledge which can serve the rest world. In my view, it is recognizing this that UNESCO accepted it as the world's intangible heritage. I believe that UNESCO accepted it as world's intangible heritage because there are immense legacies in it-the egalitarianism, peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution mechanism, Oromoo conception of time and space based on Oromoo cosmological order that envisions a primary system of classification of five fundamentals (*yayyaa shanan*) which, in turn, informs the Oromoo worldview.

**Dear participants and invited guests,**

As we are celebrating its recognition let me use this chance to extend my appreciation to those who relentlessly exerted their knowledge which they got from the Gadaa itself to defend it and let it be known and recognized at the globalstage.

Gadaa has become an intangible world heritage. As the Oromoo proverb goes, “Fardi hingeessa malee hinwaranu.” will this be the end is the question worth mentioning. Of course, it will not. Designing a strategy for its inclusion to academics, establishing centers of Gadaa studies in institutions such as Institute of Oromoo Studies are few of the issues which I guess will be raised on this forum.

I won't wrap up this opening speech before conveying my deepest gratitude for excellences from government offices, panelists and researchers for joining us to share their views and professional opinion and their experience. I am also grateful to the organizers for putting their utmost effort to make the forum a success.

Finally I wish you all fruitful, enjoyable, and intellectually stimulating discussions for the days.

Saying that, I officially declare the opening of this conference. Thank you!

**A Message of the Director of the Institute**

**Director of Institute of Oromoo Studies**

For a long period of time, genuine and authentic discourses on Oromoo were rare. If at all there were discourses, they were the ones that distort the image of the people except few attempts made by Garman scholars such as Karl Tutshek and Ludolf Krapf. From the observation of these European scholars, let me quote what two anthropologists said. One of the Garman anthropologist commented about the Oromoo as “Give us Germany Europe is ours; give us Oromoo Africa is ours”. The same observation was made by another French missionary and anthropologist Martial De Salviak (1901), in his French Academic praise winning book “An Ancient People Great African Nation: **The Oromo**”. These foreign scholars, in a very limited encounter they had with the Oromoo people, observed that the Oromoo people were great people. It is not surprising to see this in contemporary African discourses such as that Oromoo is one of the “Top 10 Most Famous African Tribes” (<http://answersafrica.com/african-tribes.html>).

Understanding the moral responsibility rests on him/her, the efforts this generation have made to transfer legacies of its people is something which has to be appreciated. In this regard, the relentless effort institutions and individuals exerted towards the recognition of Gadaa system as the world’s intangible heritage by UNESCO is one of the unique achievements this generation made. This has a huge implication in that the coming generation will have something to tell about its people as a history not made will result in the society endangered of losing its identity and getting excluded from the linguistic space. As contemporary discourse reiterates, if one is out of the linguistic space, it is less likely to claim the future. If we leave something as a “trace”, to borrow Darrida’s term, we claim the future. That is why it is said history is reclaimed when Gadaa system is recognized as intangible heritage of the Oromoo at global level.

In the first International Conference of Oromoo Studies, one third of the papers presented were under the sub-theme of Gadaa. This makes plain that every knowledge related to Oromoo is not only centering Gadaa but also hovering around it. Thinking of Oromoo without Gadaa and Gadaa without Oromoo difficult. What is more, the issue treated as sub-theme last year has evolved to the grand theme in The Second International Oromoo Studies Conference entitle “The Gadaa: The Indigenous Knowledge system of the Oromo”. This progress, I envision, would lead

towards the establishment of Gadaa as one center, would also lead towards the incorporation of some of its values to the curriculum, and would lead towards voicing our cultural, philosophical, and political and socio-economic values to overcome the trump of global imperial culture.

Institute of Oromoo Studies (IOS) is mandated to organize Oromoo studies for better understanding of the Oromoo people and its cultural heritage. As a single ethno-national, the Oromoo have significant share in the social, political and economic dynamics of Ethiopia and Horn of Africa. The morally accepted, deep-rooted, and pragmatic values of the Oromoo people, which are there in the very womb of the Gadaa, can contribute for peaceful co-existence and sustainable development in pluralistic societies and in a rapidly globalizing world facing multifaceted challenges to humanity. IOS inspires to support studies that uncover indigenous knowledge and practices which are ecologically friendly and bring about sustainable human development by integrating governance with deep rooted, collectively shared societal knowledge, values, beliefs and practices that safeguard nature and humanity as mutually exclusive entities.

The Institute of Oromoo Studies will make available, in a way never before attempted, a complete record of the indigenous knowledge, wisdom and practices of the Oromoo society thus giving the general public and scholars at all levels the opportunity to have access to studies so far conducted on Oromoo society from different perspectives, and also conduct further studies pertaining to Oromoo ways of life.

Oromoo is rich in both tangible and intangible heritages. One the one hand, there is heritage in a material, tangible form: archaeology, art, movable objects, architecture and landscape and rituals as one of the papers presented in this conference has shown that the intangible is complemented by the tangible. On the other hand, Oromoo is rich in another form of heritage which arouses the interest of the international community and the African people in particular which is referred to as “Intangible Cultural heritage”. It is apparent that such heritage designates the cultural wealth of the society. This cultural wealth is complex and should be carefully preserved, for it is even more vulnerable than material heritage, as it is in danger of disappearing with its traditional custodians. Rituals, festive exhibitions, traditional dances and music, which testify to the creativity and artistic genius of a population are an often- vulnerable part of heritage. These

heritages should be recorded, stocked, coded based on their methods of transmission and the instruments' manufacturing techniques.

To this end, the Institute of Oromoo Studies collects, archives, documents and digitizes Oromoo and Oromoo related studies conducted anytime anywhere in the world and avails them for students, teachers, visiting scholars and general public in electronic(including audio, visual, audiovisual forms) and print forms. The institute also creates digital databases, texts, and bibliographies and avails them on website for electronic edition which can be searchable, open to corrections and new discoveries, and accessible globally at all hours of the day and night while maintaining its original quality. It will also translate pertinent documents and studies conducted earlier in other languages to English and *Afaan Oromoo* for wider international and local consumption.

What is more, indigenous knowledge systems related to practices such as craftwork, food production and preparation (culinary arts and agricultural systems), preventive health and curative methods (traditional therapies and medicines), cloth making (weaving, dyeing), housing (choice of construction materials and techniques), or defense related (manufacture of weapons and war strategies) will be recorded, analyzed and developed for the benefit of the society. In addition, the knowledge systems related to divination and to the invisible spiritual world, memorization techniques and forms of entertainment (children and adult games) could also be collected, preserved and left open for study. Oral literature (folktales, historical, epic and mythological narratives, legends, proverbs, sung poetry, recited poetry, songs) is also a very important element of heritage which are venerable for change. In this field, very often the preservation strategy consists in the collection of the multiple expressions of an ordinary production, both repetitive and creative.

All these thematic lines of Oromoo studies need a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary researchers who conduct objective researches and studies on Oromoo knowledge systems and practices that contribute to the better understanding of the Oromoo people and their cultures especially about their Egalitarian Democratic systems known as *Gadaa System*.

Gadaan Gadaa Injifannooti!

Horaa Bula!

**A Key Note Speech at the 2nd International Conference of Oromoo Studies on “*Gadaa*: The Indigenous Knowledge System of Oromoo,” Organized by Jimma University, Institute of Oromoo Studies, June 1-2, 2017**

**By Professor Tesema Ta’a, Addis Ababa University.**

**I am greatly honored to be invited by the organizers to deliver a Keynote Speech at this International Conference on such an important and pertinent Topic.**

**What is Indigenous Knowledge?**

Defining Indigenous Knowledge is by no means a straight forward task because one may easily fall into the trap of generalizing and oversimplifying the factors that characterize it. The best way of understanding Indigenous Knowledge is, however, to consider the source, that is, the indigenous peoples and societies. Indigenous peoples have strong, orderly, and cohesive social, economic and political systems rooted in their knowledge of the universe in general and their local areas in particular. Knowledge, defined by the Greek Philosopher, Plato as "justified true beliefs" is accumulated experiences, skills and practices. What makes knowledge indigenous is the fact that it is acquired formally or informally through long years of experience, observation of nature or from teaching and learning. Terms like Traditional Knowledge (TK), Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Local Knowledge (LK) generally refer to Knowledge Systems embodied in the cultural traditions of a given society. Essentially, people who have lived in a particular geographical area interact with their environment acquire knowledge over the generations and handed it down from one generation to another. In other words, it is the result of experiments of local people as part of their daily struggle to survive while working to earn their livelihood. The adaptability and dynamic character of knowledge based on skills, abilities and problem-solving techniques that change over time makes a body of knowledge indigenous to a particular culture.

For instance, for the Oromoo, the knowledge of the entire aspect of life is closely linked to the natural environment. The human-environment and people-to-people interaction among the Oromoo is guided by the general cosmic principle which revolves around the concept of *Nagaa*(peace) and the concept of development known as *finna*. The source of *Nagaa* is the harmonious relations between *Waaqaa* and human beings, *Waaqaa* and the environment, as well

as human beings and the environment. It implies healthy conditions in the natural and social order. Peace (*Nagaa*) becomes ideal for the society through the fertility of land, animals and human beings. The fertility of Mother-earth, human beings and animals was a symbol of peace that would eventually contribute to development and prosperity. Hence, individual actions in everyday life were guided by rules of *Nagaa* (peace), *Safuu* (morality), *seera* (law), *buusaa-gonofaa* (rehabilitation) and *aloof-aloola* (environmental rules) all of which are governed by the OromooGadaaa indigenous knowledge system. In addition, skills of farming arable land, irrigation techniques, cropping, livestock rearing and fighting against human and animal diseases with the use of traditional medicine can be mentioned as the best practices of the Oromoo indigenous knowledge system among others. In the Oromoo belief system to *Waaqa tokkicha*, the father of creation, *Waaqa Uumaafi Uumama*, the relationship between the Oromoo, mother Earth and *Waaqa/Rabbii*, (the Almighty) is also best understood within the basic tenets and principles of the OromooGadaa system.

Several distinguished Oromoo and expatriate scholars have studied and written books, journal articles, MA Theses and PhD Dissertations on the *Gadaa* System of the Oromoo. Particularly, Anthropologists, Sociologists and Historians have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the *Gadaa* practices as an indigenous knowledge system of the Oromoo. Many of these scholars who made tireless efforts to study the basic tenets and principles of the system by closely working among the Oromoo and have rightly underscored that the OromooGadaa system is so complex and highly sophisticated which includes every aspect of Oromoo life. Therefore, it can neither be easily defined nor understood. Nevertheless, those who have made a thorough research on the system have pointed out that *Gadaa* is essentially an invaluable ancient civilization that the Oromoo have offered and contributed to the world as an intangible cultural heritage. More significantly, it is the pillar of the Oromoo indigenous knowledge system closer to the hearts and minds of the people than anything else.

The concept *Gadaa* could refer to the whole system, the eight-year period of *Gadaa* government or the class in power. It also refers to the whole system of governance that entails social, economic, political, legal, philosophical and religious life of the society in time and space. *Gadaa* has been an egalitarian, democratic socio-political, economic and cultural system of

governance. It has proven its significance in the formulation of laws, in the assignment of property rights, allocation of resources as well as in the management, prevention and resolution of conflicts with the maintenance of *Nagaa* ( the Oromoo concept of peace).

The Oromoo indigenous Knowledge systems are manifested in *Gadaa* itself which is a well-structured and organized knowledge reserve and a grandiose institution encompassing, social, political, economic, cultural and military institutions that operate mainly based on self-reliance principles. The Oromoo have indigenous environmental and ecological knowledge embedded in their world view which considers organizations of the physical, the human and spiritual worlds, as a unified system and they have maintained wise management of the natural resources.

The Oromoo have also the knowledge of *Gadaa* customary laws, norms, values and the concepts of *safuu* (morality) and *Ayyaana* (spirit) in their world view, which guide their entire actions and relations in the universe. They have strong social and cultural values, ordered social control and cohesive humanitarian systems rooted in their indigenous knowledge of the universe in general and their local surroundings in particular. According to the Oromoo wisdom the natural environment is part of their existence chained to the entire aspects of life.

Historically, it is significant to note that the intrusion of alien cultures into the cultural traditions of the Oromoo have changed and are changing the entire aspects of Oromoo life. The basic tenets and principles of the *Gadaa* indigenous knowledge system of the Oromoo, however, have survived the suppressions and marginalization of the successive Ethiopian regimes and the negative narratives of some of the national and expatriate Ethiopianist scholars and was able to gain recognition as one of the world's cultural heritages by UNESCO recently. The advent of the emergence of modern world systems and the impact of globalization that has been triggered by the rapid growth and expansion of technological changes is contributing much to reverse the long established cultural traditions. Cognizant of this fact, young Oromoo students and scholars need to develop creative and critical thinking to preserve the best practices and aspects of the *Gadaa* traditions and at the same time sort out how to benefit from modern technology and communication made available by globalization. They have to be extra cautious and be aware of the global situation and undertake basic and applied research on Oromoo studies in general

and on the *Gadaa* indigenous knowledge system in particular in order to cope with the rapidly changing world. Particularly, I would like to underscore that young scholars in the social sciences and humanities have to use the indigenous *Gadaa* calendar and chronology in reconstructing Oromoo history and culture.

Finally, please allow me to congratulate Jimma University management in general and the organizers of the Conference in particular because all the sub-thematic areas selected for paper presentations are relevant and pertinent to the Grand theme and are not mutually exclusive.

**Thank You!**

## Papers Presented

### 1. Restorative Justice and Re-integrative shaming of offenders in the Oromoo Guma system: reflection on the Arsi Oromoo's reintegrative and restorative practices

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#### *Abstract*

*The reintegrative theory of punishment particularly the idea of reconciling conflictants through reintegrative shaming of offenders have recently entered the international literature on conflict management, peacemaking, justice restoration and conflict resolution. However, the Oromoo have long been implementing similar or related practices to deal with complexity of social violence and to facilitate victim-offender mediation and communication. This paper discusses some aspects of the Arsi Oromoo's reintegrative shaming practices and the role of those practices in restoring peace at interpersonal and intercommunal levels. The paper assesses the meanings of the Oromoo restorative justice processes and reintegrative shaming elements in the light of theoretical foundations and validations that promote meaningful meetings and interactions between victims, offenders and communities in cultivating norms of mutual recognition and dignity, sense of trust, empathy, feelings of solidarity, compassion, respect and spirit of mutuality. The paper's central argument is that the Oromoo's reintegrative shaming processes are interactive, participatory, deliberative and engaging processes that facilitate conditions for offenders to experience more remorse and more forgiveness. The paper outlines the implications for future inquiries into the social, cultural, moral and psychological foundations of the Oromoo reintegrative shaming practices.*

## Introduction

Meaningful conflict management and resolution processes emphasize healing of injuries and restoration of right relationships. They focus on rebuilding societal harmony and putting wrongs right rather than settling problems through punishing the wrongdoer (Woolford & Ratner, 2008). A conflict resolution process that emphasises victim healing, offender accountability, restoration of losses and reintegration of the offender into the society is called restorative justice system (Morris & Maxwell, 2001). For Tony Marshall, ‘restorative justice is a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future’ (1996, p. 37). Restorative justice is process-based, goal-oriented and value-laden. According to Woolford & Ratner (2008), ‘restorative justice *processes* typically emphasise the participative involvement of victim and offender, and sometimes the community, in a facilitated encounter. The *goals* of restorative justice include promoting empathy, repairing harm and reintegrating offenders. The *values* of restorative justice centre on key oppositions between restorative and retributive justice’ (p. 64).

Restorative justice has become an influential movement in Australia, Canada, England and Wales, New Zealand and other countries for the last three to four decades. It was introduced in these countries as an alternative to retributive justice practices that are characteristic of the criminal justice system and that which focus on punishing offenders for the crimes that they have committed. In the retributive justice, crime is understood as ‘a violation of the state, defined by lawbreaking and guilt. Justice determines blame and administers pain in a contest between the offender and the state directed by systematic rules’ (Zehr, 1990). Retributive justice focuses on the violation of law whereas restorative justice focuses on violation of people and the relationships between them. Howard Zehr makes clear that in restorative justice, ‘justice involves the victim, the offender and the community in a search for solutions which promote repair, reconciliation, and reassurance’ (1990: 181). In other words, retributive justice and restorative justice are dissimilar on the issues to be vindicated.

Retributive justice seeks to vindicate law by determining blame and administering punishment, whereas restorative justice seeks to vindicate victims by acknowledging their injury and by creating obligations for those responsible to make things right.

Retributive justice involves the state and the offender in a formal process of adjudication, whereas restorative justice involves victims, offenders and community members in a search for solutions' (Morris & Maxwell, 2001, p. 3).

The main quality of restorative justice is its effectiveness in striking balance between high control and high support and confrontation and disapproval of wrongdoing while acknowledging and supporting the intrinsic worth of the wrongdoer (McCold & Wachtel, 2002). It is a mechanism of providing 'holistic and systematic response to wrongdoing that emphasizes repairing the harms and healing the wounds of stakeholders (victims, offenders, and their communities) that were caused by the criminal behavior, and ultimately reintegrating the stakeholders involve' (Fernandez, 2010, p. 9). In a more a detailed manner, Sharpe (1998) outlines the key attributes of restorative justice. First and foremost, restorative justice *engages all parties with a stake in offence*. It does not only involve the victim and the offender, but also opens the door to others who feel that their interests have been affected by the offence. Unlike retributive justice processes that focus on maintaining statutory rules and regulations, restorative justice processes aim at *healing the broken relationships*. They address the victim's and the offender's desire for healing and encourage the offender *to take full and direct accountability for their offending*. This means that accountability is at the centre of reconstructing meaningful and sustainable relationship between disputants and others who have been directly as well as indirectly been affected. Restorative justice principles require offenders to openly recognize that they have hurt their victims and acknowledge that the hurts they have inflicted have jeopardized normal and dignified relationships. The other useful quality of restorative justice is that it aims at reuniting what has been broken or divided. As implied in its name, it focuses on *reconstructing broken relationships between the victim and the offender on the one hand and between the communities from which the victim and the offender come*. Though reintegration of the victim and the offender back into the communities is central to the restorative efforts, the process becomes complete only when reintegration and reunion of the affected communities are attained. Last, but not least, restorative justice strives to *strengthen the community in order to prevent further harms*. Restorative justice processes identify causes of offensive behaviours, address their roots and work toward creating an environment wherein community members live together.

This is an aspect of promoting restorative deterrence and cultivating rule-abiding social identities (Braithwaite, 2002).

One important aspect of restorative justice is reintegrative shaming. The reintegrative theory of punishment (Sullivan & Tifft, 2006) particularly the idea of reconciling conflictants through reintegrative shaming of offenders have recently entered the international literature on conflict management, peacemaking, justice restoration and conflict resolution. As a concept, reintegrative shaming is associated with an Australian criminologist John Braithwaite (2002). The Oromoo translation for reintegrative shaming is *saalfachiisuu* or *qaanfachiisuu*. The Oromoo version of reintegrative shaming also involves disapproval of the offensive act within a continuum of respect for the offender. The Oromoo use shames and shaming to rebuild broken or fractured social bonds.

The paper discusses the importance of the practice based on examples from the Arsi Oromoo. The Arsi are one of the largest Oromoo sub-groups. The two greater moieties of the Oromoo society are the Boran and the Barentuma. The Arsi belong to the Barentuma. The society's traditional social organization is defined in terms of segmentary patrilineal system wherein moieties (federations), clans, sub-clans, sub-sub-clans, lineages and families constitute the hierarchical and interacting networks of social organization. The paper analyses some elements of the normative, processual and symbolic dimensions of the society's restorative justice and reintegrative shaming. It discusses some major empirical and analytical gaps that need to be filled to increase our understanding on the practices.

#### Methodology of the study

The data required for the study was collected from a group of elders from the Dodola, Adaba and Kokosa districts of the West Arsi Zone. The study engaged the respondents in systematic evaluation of the meanings of *guma*-based conflict resolution and management processes and the social-psychological and socio-emotional values underlying the cultural and social processing of reintegration. I attempted to analyse the meanings of the reintegrative shaming practices within the terrain of interpretivism. Central to interpretivism is the Weberian notion of *Verstehen* (understanding)-the view that understanding involves an interpretive grasping of the meanings of

things and situations and that the meanings of things and situations ‘need to be understood from the perspective of the subject rather than that of the observer and in totality rather than in isolation’ (Given, 2008, p. 660).

### **Description of the Arsi Oromoo’s reintegrative and restorative practices**

#### *The building blocks of the Arsi Oromoo’s restorative justice*

The Oromooguma-based conflict resolution is generally an interactive and engaging process. It is a collaborative and process-based approach that works towards resolving differences and building a climate of healing, reintegration, mutuality and reassurance. Trust and honesty, open and improved communication, cooperation and collaboration, problem-solving and affirmation are its building blocks. Restorative meetings or conferences and deliberations involve elders and relatives of the conflictants. Traditionally, the *guma* practitioners called the *jaarsa guma* (the council of elders) are expected to cultivate the environment for open communication, cooperation, trust, affirmation, reassurance and total reintegration. The actors are collaboratively and cooperatively engaged in acts of doing justice. The moral framework of the *guma* system encourages involvement of ‘the victim, the offender and the community in a search for solutions which promote repair, reconciliation, and reassurance’ (Zehr 1990, p. 181). *Guma*-based conflict resolution and societal reintegration is a site of sharing stories, feelings, emotions and perspectives. Victims and their families express feelings and emotions on how they have been affected by the offense. The offenders or their representatives also express feelings and emotions on how they have been affected by the incidence. The participants share extensive views and expansive concerns over what should be done to repair injuries caused by the offense. The Arsi Oromooguma system accentuates the role of active emotional, affective and cognitive engagement of victims, offenders and other members of the affected community in forging reintegrative understanding. This is in line with the fundamental principles of restorative justice. According to McCold (2004, p. 15), ‘for restorative justice to be ‘restorative’ it must involve those most directly affected. Every effort must be made to maximize the involvement and exchange of information between the affected parties .... The essence of restorative justice is not the end, but the means by which resolution is achieved.’ The set of values and practices that underlie involvement and active participation include victim healing, offender accountability,

inter-communal reconciliation and reintegration, sense of collective and relational wellbeing, individual empowerment, moral evaluation of the magnitudes of harms and their implications on the relationships between individuals and groups (Zernova, 2007).

*Commitment toward creating reintegrative opportunities for the offender*

Mutual responsibility between individual offenders and victims on the one hand between them and their communities is at the centre of restorative justice in the Arsi Oromoo's ecological concept of peace. The society has the responsibility to cultivate, nurture and regulate its members and to integrate them in the event of wrongdoing. The society's values of peace do not encourage suppression of individuals to bring satisfaction to the group. The cultural norms stress the values of addressing individuals' psychological, emotional and affective needs and embedding or nesting those needs into the complex configuration of interrelated needs of the broader society. In other words, they promote mutual and constructive interdependence between individuals and the society to which they belong. Reintegration of offenders is seen as an aspect of re-invigorating the entire community. One can say that *guma*-based conflict management and resolution elements of nested paradigm system which posits that 'we must respond to immediate crises in a manner that is informed by a longer-term vision' (Lederach, 1997, p. 78).

*Ethnomoral values governing acts of violence*

The ethnomoral values have it that when an Arsi man kills another Arsi, he is expected to be by the side of the deceased and cry high to call the surrounding people to let them know of the incidence and take care of the body. He cannot flight away as soon as he has realized that the person is dead. He is also expected to lay the dead body on its side to show civility and respect for human body. If he is an extremely atrocious enemy, however, he may lay the body with its abdomen facing the sky. If he kills remorselessly and mishandles the body, the killer will be required to pay thirteen more heads of cattle for his atrocious killing and for behaving against the established ethno-moral values of killing. A person who has killed, but wants to get reintegrated into his society through ritual cleansing gives maximum care for the body and puts green leaf on the body. After he has done this and ensured that the caregivers have arrived to attend to the body, he can run away to a place where he gets a safer shelter. The act of taking refuge in the

house of a *bokku* or other socially influential figure falls into the Oromoo's caring framework whose justification rests on its capacity to embrace and reintegrate offenders.

*The spiritual and emotional atmosphere within which shaming is conducted*

As in other reintegrative shaming processes (Zernova, 2007), the Arsi Oromoo's shaming processes are conducted within the continuum of love, respect and concern for the offender. The societal disapproval or negative reaction fundamentally aims at the wrongdoing, not at the offender. All acts of reintegration are acts of recollecting or restoring the entire society from the destructive consequences of wrongdoing. In the culture, the killer is expected to take refuge in the house of the *bokku* (the father of the scepter). The wrongdoer explains to the *bokku* whom he killed and what he did to the body. The *bokku* receives the person and keeps him in protection, but requires him to undergo a sort of reintegrative shaming. The *bokkuu* announces to his society that a man has killed another man, but humbly took refuge in his house. He also passes a strong decree that no one from the affected families or communities should retaliate and urge all to settle the matter through normal pathways. That is through the *guma* system. In this regard, the *bokku* plays the dual purpose of protecting the offender and maintaining his society's restorative justice agency. Having made the binding declaration, the *bokku* keeps the person in a secluded place, usually in *ona* (abandoned house) or in a *goda* (cave). Then he assigns someone from the members of the village to provide the person care, food and drinks. But the killer is served food with hooked piece of wood and in a broken utensil from a distance. This is an aspect of requiring the wrongdoer to subject himself or herself to what can be conceptualized as rituals of self-abasement (von Hirsch, Ashworth & Shearing, 2003). In other words, the wrongdoer is made to undergo some *hardship of restorative obligation* (Walgrave, 2002) before he or she is reintegrated. While serving the food or drinks, the community members are required to cover their eyes to avoid seeing a person with great impurity. This is to designate that he is contaminated or has committed heinous sin. In some contexts, the impure person is not given cereal food, rather a cooked leaf of wild plant called *doobbi*. This plant is not eaten under normal circumstance, but only during high shortage of food or during famine period. He is given drinks also in broken utensils made of clay, not in a graceful *qodaa* (a beautiful cultural utensil made of special grass). Some scholars of restorative justice (e.g. Braithwaite, 2002) criticize such facets of restorative sanctions as punitive, de-humanizing or stigmatizing acts. In an e-mail-based

communications with me on 03/08/2012 over the meanings and social functions of these and other Arsi Oromoo's rituals of self-basement, John Braithwaite expressed his mixed feelings regarding the acceptability of the ritual practices. He felt that while most of what the Arsi do to facilitate reintegration are acceptable, some of the society's practices such as temporary exclusion of the offender from the public sights and food offering modes that degrade or humiliate the offender's status are the fundamental weaknesses of public shaming and disgrace in the name of restorative justice. He advised me to 'think about the possibility that while most aspects are reintegrative, some aspects may be humiliating or stigmatizing along the way, even if these are transcended by ultimate reintegration at the end of the ritual.' (Braithwaite, 2012). However, the Arsi Oromoo's ways of humiliating acute offenders such as 'soul takers' is different from potentially devastating stigmatic shaming that make it harder for offenders 'to be accepted back into the community following an offence' (Dignan, 2005, p. 199). Once they have passed through the apologetic and reintegrative rituals, the Oromoo offenders are fully reintegrated, restored and reassured. Elders and other social practitioners assume the responsibility to decrease the counterproductiveness of the apologetic or reintegrative ordeals.

*More organized acts of purifying the offender*

In the Arsi, the offender is expected to be an active participant in identifying and accepting the sanctions set to punish him or her. *Gosti na dhaanadhaa* (let my clan punish me) *gosti na natti muraa* (let my clan pass judgment on me), and *jaarsi biyyaa natti haa muru* (let the clan elders pass judgment on me) are common ways of showing willingness for subjections meant to facilitate re-integration. After seven days, the *bokku* passes the person to *waataa* (ritual cleanser). The *waataa* starts cleansing the man by killing a black sheep and shedding all of its blood on to his body. This is just to signal that killing a person is an act of contaminating self with blood. As part of the cleansing process, the *waataa* wounds some parts of the person's body. After this, the *waataa* shaves all hair on all part of his body. This is followed by maddening the person with the filth of a slaughtered old cow. The cow's internal parts are taken out to the surface and the impure is then thrown into the filth. This is still to indicate the filth and uncleanness of the person signified in his act of destroying sacred soul. After this, he is thrown into deep water and washed thoroughly. The clothes the person wore when he killed a fellow community member will be torn apart and thrown away so that it can go away with its bad spirits. His weapons will

also be confiscated. Having performed all these ritual activities on the person of the wrongdoer, the *waatta* gives him back to the *bokku* who requires him to undergo another cycle of ritual cleansing before he is able to go back to normalcy. The person undergoes all of these humiliations without a single compliant because he wants to reintegrate himself into normal life, but he knows very well that normalcy cannot be regained easily once it was severely damaged. The good thing is that his humiliations, self-dropping, sufferings and total succumbing will be counted and narrated on the day when the two families meet face to face and engage themselves in emotional exchange of what happened in the past and how the bitterness and the fracture it caused between them should be reversed through total reunion.

As soon as he received back the half cleansed wrongdoer, the *bokku* identifies the killer's *sadii dhiigaa* (the killer's kins) and asks them to get their troubles resolved. The *guma*-based conflict resolution has its own complex courses of action, rituals and reunion. On the funeral day of the deceased, the *bokku* establishes the *qora mata* (a team of principal investigators) and *qora miilaa* (a team of secondary investigators constituted of the third party). The establishment of the investigation teams marks the beginning of formal resolution process. It is declared on this day that the investigators' principal and strictly mandated duty is uncovering the truth for the sake of truth as truth is above all and the perpetrators and their social networks are also strongly advised to show full cooperation for the sake of truth as truth is above all. During this occasion, invocation is made by referring to the victimized group that having grudges and retaliatory motives after having submitted one's miserable encounters to the truth finders is a shameful act.

When reconciliation is achieved, various social conditions are arranged to restore or normalize the broken relationship. One of the arrangements is marriage arrangement. A girl who belongs to the community to whom the killer belongs may be married to the brother or other close relative of the victim. This is done to cement the fractured human relationship. Some of the community members argue that these arrangement objectives females while others see the arrangement as a process that promotes the symbolic value of females as connectors, stabilizers and re-invigorators. An emotionally touching reconstructive arrangement which one may not be expected in today's individualistic world is the society's capacity to create a situation that allows the killer to become an honest and loving servant of the mother of the victim. This is done with the spirit of replacing her killed son. This arrangement leads to the extent of making the mother

of the deceased to feel that her son was not killed as *waaq* (god) gave her a son-substitute. This is the outcome of communication, interaction and understanding reached between the healing circle for the victim and the healing circle for the offender. This is suggestive of the Arsi *guma* system's power to transform dysfunctional relationships between the conflicting parties.

### **Theorizing from the Arsi Oromoo's Restorative justice processes**

The paper tried to show that the Arsi Oromoo's reintegrative shaming aims at re-integrating the wrongdoer back into the society. The paper implicated that an offender (anti-social agent) can be fully integrated and even can feel more confident by virtue of his total willingness to be subjected to reintegrative shaming ordeals. The reintegrative and restorative processes focus on attaining post-conflict interpersonal and communal reconstruction. It is a practice in which the community members affected by conflict and its aftermaths work together to attain peace and re-integrate individual perpetrators back into community. At this place, I try to theorize from the practices and indicate some of the elements which constitute the restorative and reintegrative processes. I try to illuminate the interaction and interrelations between the restorative and reintegrative processes in the light of social-psychological theories (Kelman, 2009) and that principles that guide interactive conflict resolution processes (Fisher, 2009).

### *Promoting relational empathy across conflict lines and cultivating mutual understanding*

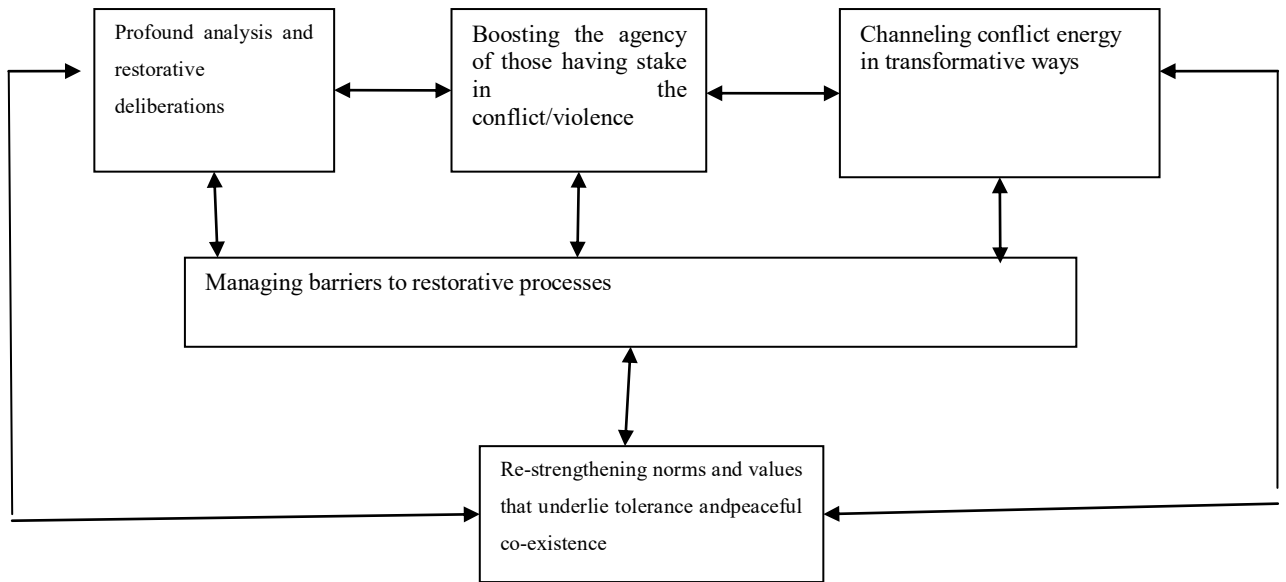
The values that govern the Arsi Oromoo's restorative and reconstructive processes are empathy with the victim, understanding the trouble conditions of offenders, recognizing the victim's search for justice and healing and the offender's desperate search for re-integration. This can be taken as an aspect of promoting relational empathy across conflict lines. As a process, relational empathy fundamentally involves affective, emotional and cognitive processes that lead to mutual integrative understandings (Broome, 2009). The Arsi Oromoo use the concept *dalamuu* to refer to a situation wherein those in the side of the victim have to understand the situation of the victim and his relatives. The *guma* system is characterized by profound analysis of problems and goal-oriented restorative deliberations. The society's restorative justice processes usually begin by meticulous identification of the nature of the problems to be addressed. The general belief is that conscious contemplation over and meticulous diagnosis of the conflict situations may improve the rationality of the strategies developed and the actions and decisions taken.

*Boosting the agency of those having stake in the conflict/violence*

The Arsi Oromoo's restorative justice processes promote active participation of those having stake in the conflict/violence that has affected not only interpersonal, but also inter-communal relationships. Engaging key actors in restorative justice process is grounded on the belief that conflict actors have not only the tendency to express grievances, but also the hopes and visions on how to build constructive paths to social reconstruction and just peace. This is in line with basic principle of restorative justice. That is maximizing 'the input and participation of these sets of persons in our search for healing, restoration, understanding, empathy, accountability, and prevention' (Sullivan & Tifft, 2006, p. 18). The effectiveness of a conflict resolution effort lies in its ability to help actors in conflict reframe the context of the conflict and move them 'away from positions of incompatibility and opposition towards a dialogue focusing on interests, similarities and goals' (Galtung and Jacobsen, 2001: 234-235). The culture pays due attention to creating and sustaining social interactions that shape thoughts and feelings that maintain and perpetuate the state of intolerance.

*Channeling conflict energy in transformative ways*

The Arsi Oromoo's restorative and reintegrative processes focus on channeling conflict energy in transformative ways. This involves encouraging and supporting conflictants to handle their differences in non-violent, constructive and transformative ways (Galtung and Jacobson, 2001). Towards this end, the *guma* practitioners devise ways that relieve conflictants from the zero-sum conceptions of conflict (Kelman, 2009). In connection to this, Lederach (1997) underscores that 'we must think about the healing of people and the rebuilding of their relationships in terms relative to those that it took to create the hatred and violence that has divided them' (p. 78). The *guma* practitioners follow process-oriented approach and create the environment for interactive process of mutual influence and for gradual de-escalation of heated differences. For the *guma* practitioners, conflict resolution is an interactive, creative and future-oriented problemsolving processes (Fisher, 2009). They embrace conflict management and resolution as an adaptive, participatory, interactive, progressive and cyclic process of diagnosing problems and planning strategies as well as values that lead to the desired future.



The peacemaking process involves a regular adaptation and strategic response to the dynamic forces that drive conflict in particular directions. As an adaptive move, the process requires a meticulous examination of the outcome of interventions. It implies that the effort toward resolution should be built on an evaluative and reflective process of learning and relearning from contexts, episodes and practical encounters. The framework embeds in it the thinking required to grapple with multifaceted interests, values, preferences, realities and emotional investments that permeate and shape the positions the conflicting parties hold. The double arrows in the framework show that there are multiple driving forces that require back and forth strategic and analytical movements. They also entail that conflict management and resolution processes require designing and redesigning peace proposals and evaluating their desirability and anticipating how to move forward by establishing the supportive foundations and strategies.

*Managing barriers to restorative processes*

It is common for all conflicts that tensions exist between incompatible perceptions and orientations. As tellingly stressed by Kelman (2009, p. 182), it is natural that ‘a conflict relationship generates images and norms that entrench the conflict and create barriers to change that inhibit conflict resolution.’ Such conditions have the capacity to ‘distort communication and distract subjects from the goal of mutual understanding’ (Woolford & Ratner, 2008, p. 29).

‘Therefore, conflict resolution efforts must be geared to discovering the possibilities for change, identifying the conditions for change, and overcoming the resistances to change’ (Kelman, 2009, *ibid*). One of the challenges is sense of individual and collective victimhood on the side of those who received affliction. Negative perceptions and sense of vengeance intensify hostility and weaken the possibility of reintegration (Cragg, 1992). Among others, *guma* practitioners have to deal with the conflicting parties’ conflict waging strategies and with various emotional and cognitive issues that prevent the move toward peacemaking. They are expected to have strong emotional intelligence-which is the ability perceive, identify, understand, access, and reflectively regulate emotions (Matthews *et al.* 2006) and the capacity and commitment to reinforce societal values that discourage counterviolent tendencies and behaviors (Sullivan & Tifft, 2006).

*Re-strengthening norms and values that underlie tolerance and peaceful co-existence*

Peace and peaceful co-existence are value-laden. Values are the forces that maintain or destroy the integrity of peace and peaceful co-existence. In this regard, grassroots embrace of the values of peace and coexistence is imperative for constructing and reconstructing peace. Cognizant of the links between peace and culturally-based societal values, the Arsi *guma* system focuses on re-strengthening norms and values that underlie tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

**Conclusions and implications**

The paper dealt with values and principles underlying some of the Arsi Oromoo’s reintegrative shaming processes. The Arsi Oromoo’s *guma*-based reintegrative processes potentially minimize the chance of re-offending, increase the chance of reintegration and reunion and foster the public need for reassurance (Cragg, 1992). In the context of Oromoo restorative justice processes, community members indicate the graveness of a wrongdoing such as intentional homicide and force the wrongdoer to undergo various steps of reintegrative shaming. In reintegrative shaming, community members express their disapproval of the offender’s wrongdoing. This is to be followed by gestures of re-acceptance or reintegration into the community (Johnstone, 2002). For those who have committed heinous offenses such as killing their co-members, reintegrative shaming is a pre-condition for them to seek full reintegration and re-acceptance. It is a self-imposed, but communally exercised reintegrative measure and involves subjection of the wrongdoer to

reiterative rituals of cleansing. As is the case with all reintegrative shaming processes (McCold, 2001), the Arsi Oromoo's reintegrative shaming processes require wrongdoers to experience shame for their offending behaviour and take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. As is the case with all restorative and reintegrative practices (Johnstone, 2002 & Braithwaite, 2002), the Arsi Oromoo try to establish key social and cultural conditions such as communalism, mutual responsibility and interdependency which are conducive to reintegrative shaming.

The Arsi Oromo *guma* system offers constructive, reintegrative and educative responses to interpersonal and intergroup conflicts and violence. In this sense, the *guma* system is more than settling blood money. The *guma* system is a complex and process-oriented restorative justice intervention. Its aim is not punish individuals or please individuals or target personal needs and desires. It is a process through which offenders are reintegrated back into their communities and the mechanism through which the communities salvage themselves from offending and destructive behaviours. The *guma* system offers broader assessment of problems and their consequences. The main intention of *guma*-based conflict management and resolution is promotion of societal reintegration, interpersonal understanding, intergroup reconstruction and empathy. Individuals' affective, emotional and may be material needs of individuals themselves are addressed within the broader communal needs and demands. In line with this, the *guma* system gives important values for stories of victims, offenders and other community members. For those affected by conflict and violence, it creates a space to exchange views on and make sense of the destructive role of violence and crime. On the whole, the *guma*-based conflict management and resolution involves holistic peace processes.

The concept of holistic peace processes implies that building peace is more than taking care of a series of interrelated separate "pieces of peace" that fit together in a coherent manner. The properties of a whole peace process cannot be determined by the sum of the pieces. Rather, the whole peace process and the pieces of peace mutually influence each other (Allen Nan, 2009, p. 383).

It is important to note also that the *guma* system emphasizes the importance of what Paul Lederach (2005) calls moral imagination. This is the initiative and the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships, embrace complexity and stepping into the mystery of the unknown. As in other community-oriented restorative justice intervention (Dignan, 2005), the

system considers victimization as a highly complex process that encompasses a number of possible elements and consequences. One can say that *guma*-based conflict management and resolution processes generally work toward attaining ‘a meaningful experience of justice for victims of crime and healing of trauma which they tend to suffer; genuine accountability for offenders and their reintegration into law-abiding society; recovery of the social capital that tends to be lost’ (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007, p. 4). In other words, conflict management and resolution processes work toward cultivating personal and social healing, reconstructing normalcy and collective wellbeing. The *guma* system fosters reintegrative and communicative engagement and promotes principles of reciprocity, tolerance, dignity, and mutual respect. In pursuit of the principles of mutuality, reciprocity, reintegration and reconstruction, *guma* practitioners strive to integrate and harness the multiple social, psychological and emotional needs, feelings and desires of disputants with the aim to forge mutual and integrative understanding. The effort involves complex problemsolving and conflict assessment processes, normative, cognitive and affective processes, and integrative sets of actions.

As an approach to justice, restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm caused by crime while holding the offender responsible for his or her actions (Sullivan & Tifft, 2006). Offenders are made accountable for their wrongdoings and cooperate in the effort to reintegrate them back into their society. However, a broader exploration into the Arsi Oromoo’s practice and comparing the practices with other Oromoo’s sub-cultural practices can offer more comprehensive insights on the meaning of justice among the Oromoo society. It is important also examining the ways in which the Arsi and other Oromoo societies’ restorative processes and reintegrative practices are related to Oromoo’s other ethno-moral and institutional identities. Analyses of the structural and processual dimensions of the practices and processes become more meaningful if discussed and interpreted in the light of other theoretical and empirical literature on restorative justice (Dignan, 2005). Further research is important to indicate the ways in which the Oromo *guma* system’s restorative practices have advantage or disadvantage over the adversarial orientation of formal criminal system or should show what can be done to integrate the two in facilitating meaningful interpersonal and inter-communal re-integration in the aftermath of conflict and violence. It is important inquiring into negative social processes that decrease the acceptability of the Oromoo reintegrative and shame management processes and

their practicability to provide offenders as well as their victims' psychological and emotional rehabilitation. The other important thing is making comparative and cross-cultural analysis that involve a careful and detailed evaluation of the Arsi Oromoo's restorative justice and reintegrative shaming processes with that of the neighboring identity groups such as the Sidama, the Kambata, the Gedo, the Guji, the Boran and the Hadiya. Within case and cross case analyses may provide useful insights into the variations, similarities and associations between and among cultures.

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**2. Does the ‘Delayed Justice’ Implies ‘Denied Justice’ in the Unesco-Oromoo Context: Gadaa as Big as a System and as Small as the Unesco Profile**

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**Abstract**

The paper tries to enhance debates on the Gadaa system with the aim of fostering space ‘to think anew.’ It is, first, an analysis of *what is* ‘in contrast,’ to ‘*what could be*’, and, second, a rethinking of ‘*what is going on*’ in relation to ‘*what should be*,’ in the UNESCO-Oromoo context. In the analysis, it poses questions; should we take the Gadaa system back to the Oromoo origin and thereby assume; “the System is as old as the Oromoo or take the UNESCO registration of the System as a threshold of Oromoo history by limiting Gadaa background to the UNESCO’s decision.” Leaving the judgment to those who know ‘*what*’ and those who feel not, the paper outlines levels of blame; Firstly, since November 1946, the UNESCO has been registering caves, Monuments, Songs, etc. and paradoxically enlisted Gadaa system, late on November 2016. Secondly, the Ethiopian government, whose historic root is embedded in the Oromoo, has neither recognized any cycle of Oromoo ceremonies (Jila-Ayyaana-Dhawaa-Dhibaayyuu) in the national calendar nor included Gadaa democratic values in the constitution. In the rethinking, the paper connects center of blame to dilemma of post registration alternatives by extending root of the blame to the Oromia regional state on two grounds. Firstly, be unknowingly or otherwise, whoever admires whatever appeared to Gadaa to be right, undermine essences of Gadaa system (critique to those who want the UNESCO register what are already in Gadaa, like Ayyaan Irrechaa separately). Secondly, commitment to Gadaa system is lacking in the state of Oromia, for it’s constitutionally failure to take Gadaa democratic values while its Parliament named Caffee, MP elected by the Oromoo, office complex symbolizes the five Gadaa grades and the Odaa marked flag symbolizes Gadaa. Considering post registration period as an entry to think anew, the paper hypothesizes imperative checklist for the futurity of UNESCO-Oromoo relations; 1) the UNESCO registration of the Gadaa system never bring true recognition unless it fully capture totality of the Gadaa as reflected in the Oromoo thought. 2) Provided that the UNESCO fully met priority number #1, it must declare its regret for the delayed registration with full consent that ‘the delayed justice is denied Justice. 3) Provided that the UNESCO fulfilled items #1 and #2, it should transform act of registration into progressive task of restoring the System. 4) To make the registration real and recognition realistic, the UNESCO must address why the Gadaa system, which dwell in the world legal profile, remain absent from the Ethiopian federal code or national calendar, as well as regional constitution. The paper ends up with alternative ways of admitting Gadaa registration by invoking weights of truth in Gadaa; “*Haqnii Afaan Qaban Funaanin Dubbata*,”<sup>1</sup> and “*Dhugaan Warraa Ittum Galan*.”<sup>2</sup>

**Keywords: UNESCO, Gadaa System, Oromoo, Recognition, Registration.**

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<sup>1</sup>Roughly mean; the justice will speak through nose when allowed not to speak out in mouth

<sup>2</sup>The truth is an inescapable destination, where one inevitably rest at the end.

**INTRODUCTION**

There have been several studies of the Gada system's potential contribution to Oromoo self government Asmarom Legesse (1987), Lemmu Baissa (1971), Bonnie Holcomb (1993), Dinsa Lepisa (1975), Sisay Ibsa (1992) and several others have recently examined various aspects of the gada system and have reached useful conclusion. By examining the interrelationships of culture, institutional change, and development, In his article "Aspects Oromoo Cultural Endowments and Their Implications for Economic Development," Professor Fayissa he finds that the democratic institution of Gada recognizes the importance of cooperative work arrangements which facilitate division of labor and specialization, property rights, private ownership, and incentives that are conducive for economic growth and development in Oromia (Damie 1996; II). Therefore, Gadaa is an indigenous socio-political democratic system of the Oromoo people by which they regulate Political stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligations, moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the society. The Gada, in its healthy condition, function according to its own logic and ideals. Substantially the system has its own democratic values, beliefs and ideology that supported popular participation, legitimate and accountable political authority, well established term of office and peaceful transfer of power. Structurally, the system is based on age-groups to run the political, social and cultural affairs of the Oromoo society. Procedurally, democratic nature of Gada is evidenced in its election of political leaders, every eight years, in free and democratic procedure. The Oromoo Make decisions over key, life-giving resources through their indigenous governance, Gadaa, which is contained in the Oromummaa-Shared-Value, Language-Afaan-Oromoo, Economy-Finfinne, System-Gadaa, Religion-Waaqefanna), Ethics-Safuu, Culture-Aadaa), Biyya-Oromiya, Government-Caffee, Tuma Seeraa-Heeraa and Seenaa ummataa-History of the nation). Accordingly, the Gadaa system addresses cores issues and concepts, as well as practices that one can at the universal level such as Human Rights, Civil and Political Rights, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, etc. At level of universal discourses in which the concept of human rights constantly raises theoretical issues about the nature, extent, justification and requirements of legitimate government and the nature of the good life, etc. are pertinent, the Gadaa system can be critically considered and comparatively debated.

However, although Constitution of the UNESCO article one clearly put the purpose of the Organization; “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations,” the UNESCO delayed in recognizing the Gadaa system which is tantamount to denial of justice. The delayed justice justifies that that ignorance of each other’s ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;<sup>3</sup>

Considering that the first letter in the acrimony UNESCO itself is built in a universally valid criterion of truth and rightness to competing claims and organization claims to promote the process whereby human wants and values can be transformed into legalized human rights, the paper discusses UNESCO’S delayed recognition of the Gadaa system. Above all, it aims to enhance post UNESCO registration critical discourse on the Gadaa system and calls for deeper commitment needed to address crucial issues; 1) did the UNESCO register the Gadaa System within its total essences? 2) Did the world regret for the UNESCO’S delayed registration of the Gadaa System (Delayed Justice as denied Justice) long after it registered things ranging from Stone/Cave to Songs? 3) Should the Oromoo forgive or forget all that happened to them long before the system is recognized, 4) Will the UNESCO go beyond registration to progressive task of restoring the System (Commitment beyond the name)?

### **Historic-Conceptual Framework**

Historically, the Oromoo Gadaa system like trends and human evolution of various conceptual frameworks gave birth to the International Bill of Human Rights along with its extensions; Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, etc. In its commitment which stems from the United Nations Charter, which reaffirms the faith of the peoples of the world in

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<sup>3</sup>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Basic Texts 2014 edition including texts and amendments adopted by the General Conference at its 37th session (Paris, 5 – 20 November 2013)

fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, the United Nations is committed to upholding, promoting and protecting the human rights of every individual. Article 21 sub-article 3 of the United Nations clearly encourages such a life defining system in stating that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. International law itself is a product of its environment and has developed in accordance with various particularities that reflect the conditions and cultural traditions of the society which evolves a certain specific set of values – social, economic and political frameworks on the legal framework which orders life in that environment. The declaration of human right which was partially revised in Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 1989, notes that indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law (article 1)...They have the right to self-determination (article 3) and, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions (article 4).<sup>4</sup> The Declaration also lists their rights to practice their cultural traditions, and to education, access to media and health practices, together with a range of rights concerning their distinctive relationship to the land (articles 9–37). Came into being in November 1946, the UNESCO aim, proclaimed in article 1 of its constitution, is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration through education, science and culture ‘in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world’. Like many specialized agencies such as the International Labour Organization, the UNESCO is constantly developing international law in its respective sphere, upon similar universal ground.

The Gadaa system stands for the same universal human issues in the Oromoo context. It also conceptually meet the meaning and essentially reflect concept of ‘indigenous,’ The meaning of

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<sup>4</sup>*A Draft Declaration was adopted in 1994: see resolution 1994/45, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/56, p. 103. See also R. T. Coulter, ‘The Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: What is it? What Does It Mean?’, 13 NQHR, 1995, p. 123*

the term “Indigenous” that the Oromoo use, just like the whole sane world is the original population of a certain place, that sharing a common past, present and future, are aware of being indigenous and speak or have spoken the language of their forebears. They preserve their values, norms and cultural heritage, and are recognized as such by other members of the group and by outsiders (AIRA 1986). Like the UNESCO, the Gadaa system may also examine questions of massive, systematic or flagrant violations of human rights resulting either from a policy contrary to human rights applied by a state or from an accumulation of individual cases forming a consistent pattern<sup>5</sup>. The political function of the Gumii is the authority to review the activities of the Gadaa class in power. In the Borana Oromoo community, for example, the Gumii Gaayyo(the assembly of multitudes) brings together almost important leaders, such as living Abba Gadaa (the president of the assembly), the Qaallus (spiritual leaders), age-set councilors, clan leaders and Gadaa councilors, and other concerned individuals to make or amend or change laws and rules of every eight years(Assefa Jalata 2009:4). The rationality behind such a system can be seen beyond the community of practicing to wider nation and even globally.

### ***Rationale***

Cognizant of the plain truth thatIf nobody can any longer speak, and then nobody can any longer listen! I feel burden of truth dwell in the Oromoo saying that yoo abbaan Iyyate Ollaan birmata! Truth is a matter of taking, negotiating, and contesting perspectives created in and through language within social activities. However, the UNESCO’s recent registration of the Oromoo Gadaa system obviously witness the age-old idea of a know-all top-man is right to do what is right. Firstly, recognizing the value of the adage; “the justice delayed is the justice denied” I want to bring the issue of Gadaa registration to the scholarly debate. “For the wound opened up in everyday practice by a truth claim that has become problematic must be healed in a discourse that cannot be terminated “once and for all,” either by “decisive” evidence or by “compelling” arguments (2003:124). Secondly, I believe that “Every self-conscious nation looks back upon its past to revive former glories, to discover its origin, to relate its history to that of other parts of the world and to arrive at knowledge of the development of its political, social, economic

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<sup>5</sup> UNESCO Doc. 108 EX/CR/HR/PROC/2 Rev. (1979)

and other systems” (Bill, 1998, 4). But still I observe critical misunderstanding of the Gadaa system even among the Oromoo who want the UNESCO make them happy. Many Oromoo want the UNESCO to register what cannot be separated from the Gadaa system separately, i.e. Ayyaan Irreechaa. One of the elements of Gadaa is Ayyaana. Hence, if the UNESCO truly registered Gadaa with full totality of the system, then the Irreechaa is already registered no need of registering it again. Thirdly, I doubt whether the UNESCO understand that various historic-political unrest and constant degenerations among the systems of Oligarchy, Democracy, Aristocracy, Monarchy, Despotism, Dictatorship and Authoritarianism are not observed in the Gadaa system. Fourthly, I believe that true recognition comes from within in order to be respected by the without. In this regards, I doubt whether we really have done our job fist. The Oromiya regional government constitution should have mentioned values of the Gadaa system in its regional constitution since the federal provision has given it this mandate. I feel the sad thing; i.e. to live with the people learning to deny themselves attention to what they are hearing even while listening. The Oromia Regional government officially indicate that the regional universities and colleges have much in common, in that they are bound to proclamation of regional government; Lbsii lakk. 162 sada 2006 baheen keeyaata 18 lakk. 12 Dhaabbattootaa fi kolleejjota leenjii barsiisotaa Naannichatti argaman ni hoggana; ni bulcha; ni deeggara, akkasumas keeyatuma kan lakk 18. Qo’annoowwan tajaajila barnootaa fooyyessuu dandeessisan ni adeemsisa; kanneen sadarkaa biyyaatti adeemsifamniif deeggarsa barbaachisaa ni kenna;lakk 26. Caasaa seektara barnootaa yeroo yeroon qoratee ni fooyyessa; ni gurmeessa; humna namaa barbaachisaa ta’e ni ramada;The Federal government should have included considerable events such as Ayyaan Irreechaa in its national colander (National holy days). The UN Declaration Article 1.1: *States shall protect the essence of the national or ethnic, cultural or religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.* The African Charter of Human Rights article-17 and 22 which jointly recognizes the relevance and development of a cultural life of a given community to be respected and exercised by interested individuals. The Ethiopian constitution article 41(9) which heralds State’s responsibility to protect and preserve historical and cultural legacies.

*Review literature*

This paper has benefited from several studies conducted on the Gadaa System. *Many scholarship and writings of renowned anthropologists and historians have directly or indirectly addressed to shed light on this debate (Aguilar1996, Bassi 1996, Baxter 1994, contributors to Baxter, et.al., 1996, Gemetchu Megerssa 1993, Holcomb 1997, contributors to Asafa Jalata, (ed.) 1998, Asmarom Legesse 1973, Baissa Lemmu 1994, Lewis1998, Mekuria Bulcha 1997a, Sorenson 1996, 1998, Zeitelman 1994 and others, see Baxter 1998). Among these, especially the educated Oromoo scholars have been struggling to preserve and encourage the Oromoo culture through planning, documentation, maintenance, publication, public events, and other educational programs. The struggle has not been done blindly or out of self love. As a result, the interpretation and possible application of specific features of the historic Gada has become part of the debate even among contemporary intellectuals. Accordingly a considerable literature has developed concerning the historic Oromoo Gada system of government, its mechanisms, and its variations from region to region, and survivals of the system into the current day in some parts of Oromoo territory.*

The Gada system was a complex institutional organization that embraced the Oromoo peoples' political, social, economic and religious life in entirety (Legesse2000:195). *The political philosophy of Gadaa is based on three main values: terms of eight years, balanced opposition between parties, and power sharing between higher and lower levels.* The Gada system is an administration system of classes (luba) that succeeded each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. In 1868 W. Plowden, for instance, stated that "...among republican systems, Gada is superior" (Melba, 1985: 25). According to Jalata, Prior to their colonization, the Oromoo people for many centuries were independent and organized both culturally and politically using the social institution of Gadaa to maintain their security and sovereignty(2009;:3).

Asmarom Legesse also described the Gada system as "one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken" (Melba, 1985, 24-25). According to this source, The "Oromoo democracy within the Gadaa system is one of those remarkable creations of the human mind that evolved into a full-fledged system of government, as a result of

five centuries of evolution and deliberate, rational, legislative transformation. It has an extraordinary organization of political system and rule of law with intimate relationship with morality. The rule of law and morality(Safuu) has become the core of Oromoo social, economic, political, philosophical, and spiritual life of a holistic institution of Gada system. Tenna Dewo puts, for instance, the Oromoo of Ethiopia maintain that “Nagaa,” translated as Peace, is the essential key to all cosmic and human order, possessing the highest and most central value for humanity to pursue.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the Egyptian concept “Maat” is translated as harmony, order, peace, justice, or balance. Both, rule of law and morality are important principles in the beliefs and practices of Oromoo’s indigenous politics. It stands against the politics that make man the wolf of man. Politics of governance, the rule of law and moral accountability are inseparable for one cannot stand without the other. Referring to the case of Borana, Costantinos put that ‘In their practice of an elaborated age- and generation system, called Gadaa, they seem to have opted for a culturally-intern, emic solution to some of the fundamental problems in anthropological, geneological and sociological theory raised above: Individuals do (ideally) pass as a group of age-mates through a defined sequence of grades(Costantinos 1995; 2000:15).

The revival of Oromoo democracy can also serve as a challenge to the generalized contention of some scholars who argue that democracy and economic growth cannot be sustained in Africa because of the production crisis which arises due to the lack of adequate entrepreneurs (Chaval, 1994)

*Hence, gadaa consisted of **five-fixed party system**<sup>7</sup>. Five successive gadaa stages make up a generation (gap between father and son) that occupies forty years on the gadaa cycle. The first five eight years were generally periods of training and military service in addition to shouldering some economic activities(ibid.p.3).* Structurally- the Oromoo Gadaa system has its own principles of checks and a balance, balanced opposition, and power sharing between higher and lowers administrative organs. Procedurally-Though not available in the written form, the Gadaa system has also well said principles which define accountability of leaders, methods of

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<sup>6</sup>Tenna Dewo 2013, pp. 159-185.

<sup>7</sup> Dereje Hinew 2012. History of Oromo Social Organization: Gadaa Grades Based Roles and Responsibilities p.9.Wallagga University, Nekemte, Ethiopia.

handling disputes, political morality reconciliation and respect for basic rights and liberties. Gadaa Laws stand above all men – even the Abbaa Gadaa is subject to same punishments as other citizens if he transgresses. Legally-Many authors equate the Gadaa with Rousseau’s notion of the state which is a moral person whose life is the union of its members, whose laws are acts of the general will, and whose end is the liberty and equality of the citizens. The Oromoo consider the Gadaa law as the law of life which is supposed to be older than changes yielding place to the new. Legality-The political function of the Gumii is the authority to review the activities of the Gadaa class in power. In the Borana Oromoo community, for example, the Gumii Gaayyo(the assembly of multitudes) brings together almost important leaders, such as living Abba Gadaa (the president of the assembly), the Qaallus (spiritual leaders), age-set councilors, clan leaders and Gadaa councilors, and other concerned individuals to make or amend or change laws and rules of every eight years(Assefa Jalata 2009:4). Given their evaluation, a political leader can be removed when the rational legal method of impeachment has failed, or is deemed to be less likely to succeed. The rationality behind such a system can be seen beyond the community of practicing to wider nation and even globally. The Article II, Section 4, of American constitution states that the President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.<sup>8</sup> Contextually-In this dynamic world, new idea emerges and often need to be considered. New problems arise and demand new solutions. Education expands, technologies travel and all have direct or indirect impacts upon local people. For instance, with the expansion of HIV/AIDS, the common Boorana sexual practice of *jaala-jaaltoo* (lover-mistress relations) has required rethinking. The issues of early marriage, female genital mutilation, and polygamy are taken serious by women right activists and offices of youth, children and women affairs. These all have certain implications in reference to the Borana former practices which can only be modified or negotiated by the decision of *Gumii gayoo*. In this regard, amendments and restatement of the *Gadaa* laws of three consecutive *Gumii gaayoo*were recorded by different scholars. **Case of the Borana;** the 1988 *Gumii gaayoo* was reported by Shongolo (1995). He exhaustively presented the restated cardinal laws of the Borana and new ones. The August 1996 *gumii gaayoo* was organized by Boruu Madhaa the 68<sup>th</sup> Borana *abbaa gadaa*. The result was documented by Goollo Huqqaa Liiban (1996). The 2004 *Gumii*

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<sup>8</sup> World Book, Inc., ([www.worldbook.com](http://www.worldbook.com)),2004

*gaayoo* of the *Gadaa* period of Liiban Jaldeessa (2000-2008) was discussed by Ibrahim Ameer Elemo (2005). In these *Gumiigaayoo* one can see certain amendments of the former laws and enactments of new laws in response to the local and global situations. **Female Genital Mutilation:** The assembly enacted a law that prohibits female circumcision. Anyone found committing female circumcision should be punished by a head of cattle. **Restated Prerogative and Grand Rules Prerogatives of horse:** horse should be given priority in watering at any time since it belongs to **Prerogatives of ritual leaders:** *Gadaa* leaders, *Qaalluu*, *Wayyyuu*, *Hayyuu* have ritual seniority. No one is allowed to commit any wrong against ritual leaders. Any offense against *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Qaalluu*, and *Wayyyuu* is punishable by as many heads of cattle as the hair of the offender's head. **Prerogatives of wives of ritual leaders:** they have inviolable rights; any one violates their rights and accused of the commission of the act should be punished by as many heads of cattle as the number of hairs on his/her head. **Prerogatives of Cattle:** any act of stealing or killing cattle is punishable. The punishment varies based upon whether the stolen or killed animal is calf, bull, ox, cow, and heifer. Bull is the most respected of all for it mounts cow and basic for cattle multiplication. **Prerogatives of sheep:** any killing or stealing of uncastrated male sheep is punishable by thirty heads of cattle. Any killing or stealing of bearing sheep is punishable by five heads of cattle. Any killing or stealing of castrated sheep is punishable by five heads of cattle. **Prerogatives of Donkey:** any act of stealing donkey is punishable by thirty heads of cattle. Any act of loading donkey without the knowledge of the owner is punishable by five heads of cattle. **Prerogative of Traditional Healers:** the assembly restated prerogative of traditional healers. Traditional healers are expected to respond to any request for help from the Borana, regardless of distance and time. If a practitioner denies responding to the call of Borana, he should be denied his status as health practitioner. **Rules Water Wells:** the assembly also paid due attention to the use, management, ownership and protection of water wells. **Prerogatives of Neighboring Groups:** on this occasion prerogatives of some of the neighboring groups were restated. For instance, the Ejii Somali are the providers of *baqqala-faajjii*. They are respected and have the right to access any Borana water point. **Rules against unethical behavior and using taboo words:** the assembly underscored that since recently young men use dishonorable, shameful and embarrassing expressions, which are against Borana culture. Using taboo words like '*haadha raawu*', 'fuck your mother' should be banned. Anyone found using these words should be punished by fine of one cattle. **Rules against Alcohol Drinking and Khat Chewing:**

the Borana enacted rules that prohibit alcohol drinking and *Khat* chewing in the Boranaland. The assembly discussed that many people are victims of alcohol and *khat*. It becomes common problem attacking actively against active section of the Borana. It paralyzes the tongues of those who speak the truth, it paralyzes the energy of the youth, and it discourages those who are courageous. The rich lost his cattle, the bravest lost his courage, and the charismatic lost his influence in favor of drinking alcohol and chewing *Khat*. **Rules of Education:** the assembly affirmed that girls' education is so important. So far Borana male have been sent to school in relatively fair number, but females. This has negatively affected the Borana in general and Borana women in particular. In addition, so far Borana *Gadaa* leaders have been without formal education except in few cases. This has negatively affected the Borana political system. As of this time the Borana should send male and female to school. **Rule of Wildlife Protection:** One of the issues paid attention to by the assembly was environmental issues. The assembly declared that wildlife should be protected. Anyone found killing wildlife shall be punished by two heads of cattle. Antelope should be given special consideration for it is about to be wiped out from the land of the Borana. Anyone kills antelope shall be punished by two heads of cattle. **Protecting Ritual Sites:** ritual sites should be protected; shall not be tilled. It is often said that the land is idle and could be farmed for the rituals are not regularly performed. Farming the land is basically against the sacredness of the ritual site and completely forbidden. **Rules for Using Camel Transportation:** the assembly to amend the law on the use of camel for transportation. The Borana customary law did not allow the *gadaa* leaders to use camel for transportation, during any ritual movements from place to place. This last assembly amended the law and allowed the use of it.

### Statement of the Problem

Came into being in November 1946, the UNESCO aim, proclaimed in article 1 of its constitution, is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration through education, science and culture 'in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world'. The Oromoo are naturally entitled with such rights under the system of *Gadaa* which is an indigenous democratic system of governance in which the community as a whole has the opportunities to participate on equal basis. Like the UNESCO, the *Gadaa* system may also examine questions of

massive, systematic or flagrant violations of human rights resulting either from a policy contrary to human rights applied by a state or from an accumulation of individual cases forming a consistent pattern<sup>9</sup>.

However, the UNESCO failed to extend its institutional guarantee to the Gadaa system. The Oromoo are denied of many universal provisions and institutional recognitions. The Federal government should have included considerable events such as Ayyaan Irreechaa in its national colander (National holy days). The Ethiopian constitution article 41(9) which heralds State's responsibility to protect and preserve historical and cultural legacies. Considering that the first letter in the acronymy UNESCO itself is built in a universally valid criterion of truth and rightness to competing claims and organization claims to promote the process whereby human wants and values can be transformed into legalized human rights. I found it important to analyze the reason why UNESCO'S delayed recognition of the Gadaa system. Besides, we must enhance post UNESCO registration critical discourse on the Gadaa system in order to address crucial issues; 1) did the UNESCO register the Gadaa System within its total essences? 2) Did the world regret for the UNESCO'S delayed registration of the Gadaa System (Delayed Justice as denied Justice) long after it registered things ranging from Stone/Cave to Songs? 3) Should the Oromoo forgive or forget all that happened to them long before the system is recognized, 4) Will the UNESCO go beyond registration to progressive task of restoring the System (Commitment beyond the name)?

**Objective of the research;** The overall aim of the study is to critically analyze the UNESCO-Oromoo conception of the Gadaa system from the views of what mean should be meant and has been felt by the pre-registration and post recognition of the Gadaa system. The specific Objectives are;

1. Hermeneutically understand and point out historic-conceptual and contextual message in followed from the UNESCO-Gadaa recognition,
2. Rationally investigate the lived actuality of the Oromoo people vis-à-vis the living experiences of the Gadaa system.

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<sup>9</sup> UNESCO Doc. 108 EX/CR/HR/PROC/2 Rev. (1979)

3. Evaluate status of the Gadaa system in relation to the Oromoo collective feeling and level of self-consciousness in the post Gadaa
4. Draw lessons for diffusion and research conceptual influence vis-à-vis potential opportunities that the Oromoo have to use

**Research Methodology;** This paper uses critical, re-interpretative, comparative, and integrative modes of analyses. It reviewed the available documents and works of various scholars of the Gadaa system, analysts, public opinion in the post Gadaa registration period, discussion with higher officials during the Boorana baallii transition. Secondary data is produced from available historic-metrological records, published and unpublished documents and various activity reports of governmental institutions and Media. Furthermore, relevant federal and regional governments' policies, strategy documents, and proclamations have been carefully reviewed. Results of the situational analysis are considered from hermeneutic point of view.

### **Discussion**

Here come the question; did the UNESCO registered Gadaa system in its totality, as described above? UNESCO was established to bracket the ideology that claims that some population of humans is distinct from and superior to all others on the basis of some arbitrarily selected or artificially created set of biological and cultural criteria. This kind of thinking led to genocide in Europe during World War II, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, and other grave human rights violations. The following letter which contains ill-intention sent to UNESCO;

0116400013

World Heritage Centre

UNESCO 7 Place de Fontenot 75352 Paris France 10th July 2015

His Excellency Mr. Kishore Rau, Director, World Heritage Centre (CLT/HER/WHC)

**Subject:** our opposition to the pending process for the inscription of the so called Gada age-grade system on the Representative lists of Intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Your Excellency

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The Gada system has nothing to do with a democratic system of government. It is in fact a ritual association of Oromoo males, for a fixed number of years (8 years) to create social unity and stability within the ethnic group. Its main objective is to perpetuate violence towards others. We therefore, your Excellency, request you to reject the Gada, the most barbaric system of expansion, subjugation and the continual conflict propagation in East Africa not to be recognized as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Yours sincerely

Prof. Gelebew Sengogo

Prof. Samuael Karanja

Dr. Thomas Machar

Dr. An ne Soi

Mr. Sahilu Milanzi

The humanities established this organization to promulgate the right to an education “directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for fundamental human rights. It aims at is fighting against the “four olds” that the world wanted to do away with, i.e. old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking. This is something different from the concept ‘indigenous’ that it has been recognized in its world heritage’s profile. When we refer back to UNESCO’S profile, we will see that organization relies on reliable and research based input and never run as blind as you do. The UNDP report, 2004, rejected claims that cultural differences necessarily lead to social, economic and political conflict (UNDP 2004, p. v). The international community recognizes the importance of the protection of cultural heritage and reaffirms its commitment to fight against its intentional destruction in any form so that such cultural heritage may be transmitted to the succeeding generations<sup>10</sup>. As it has

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<sup>10</sup>For the purposes of this Declaration “intentional destruction” means an act intended to destroy in whole or in part cultural heritage, thus compromising its integrity, in a manner which constitutes a violation of international law or an unjustifiable offence to the principles of humanity and dictates of public conscience, in the latter case in

Programme of Action o against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, UNESCO should have responded to bad guys. *Mindful* that cultural heritage is an important component of the cultural identity of communities, groups and individuals, and of social cohesion, so that its intentional destruction may have adverse consequences on human dignity and human rights,<sup>11</sup> *Further affirms* that the respect for diversity of cultures, including the protection and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, values of tolerance and mutual understanding are fostered through multi-civilizational discourse and are the best guarantors of peace in the world;<sup>12</sup>.The first fundamental case is the application of the principles of justice to the basic structure of society by the exercise of citizens’ sense of justice.

Did the UNESCO respond to that letter distortion? The UNESCO failed to extend its premise to the Oromoo moral attack. *New perspectives in UNESCO’s activities pertaining to the dialogue among civilizations, including in particular follow-up to the New Delhi Ministerial Conference; “Resolution adopted at the 20th plenary meeting, on 16 October 2003”* Retributive or denunciatory-It is true that in a reasonably well-ordered society those who are punished for violating just laws have normally done something wrong. This is because the purpose of the criminal law is to uphold basic natural duties, those which forbid us to injure other persons in their life and limb, or to deprive them of their liberty and property, and punishments are to serve this end. It would be far better if the acts proscribed by penal statutes were never done. Thus a propensity to commit such acts is a mark of bad character, and in a just society legal punishments will only fall upon those who display these faults. When we refer back to UNESCO’S profile, we will see that organization relies on reliable and research based input and never run as blind as you do. The UNDP report, 2004, rejected claims that cultural differences necessarily lead to social, economic and political conflict (UNDP 2004, p. v). UNESCO was established to bracket the ideology that claims that some population of humans is distinct from and superior to all others on the basis of some arbitrarily selected or artificially created set of biological and cultural criteria. This kind of thinking led to genocide in Europe during World War II, ethnic cleansing in

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so far as such acts are not already governed by fundamental principles of international law

<sup>11</sup>Resolution adopted on the report of Commission IV at the 21st plenary meeting, on 17 October 2003

<sup>12</sup>*The General Conference, Recalling* 31 C/Resolution 39 on the “Call for international cooperation to prevent and eradicate acts of terrorism”, the United Nations Global Agenda for the Dialogue among Civilizations adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 56/6 of 21 November 2001, and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in 31 C/Resolution 25,

Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, and other grave human rights violations. The first letter in the acrimony UNESCO is built in a universally valid criterion of truth and rightness to competing claims. The UNESCO promotes the process whereby human wants and values can be transformed into legalized human rights.

0116400008

Emblem: Oromia Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau

Ref. No. Dh.A.G 13-1/2599

Date: 13/03/2015

To Authority for Research and Conservation of cultural heritages Under Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ref. No. Dh.A.G 13-1/2599, Date: 13/03/2015 Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Addis Ababa

**Subject:** Regarding Sending to you a petition by the Oromoo people for the inscription of the Gada System on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

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The culture of the Oromoo people with regard to equality and democracy remains an exemplary one to the remaining world. Thus, we hereby express that the signatures for the petition are attached here in and that Oromoo people ardently upholds the inscription of the Gada system on the Representative List as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity which would demonstrate to the rest of the world that our country Ethiopia is not only the cradle of mankind but also the mother of an age-old democratic system.

With regards,

Signed and sealed

Geetuu Wayyeessaa Tolaa

Head of Oromiya Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau

The first letter in the acrimony UNESCO is built in a universally valid criterion of truth and rightness to competing claims. The UNESCO promotes the process whereby human wants and values can be transformed into legalized human rights. Some problems are solved completely, some are solved partially, and other is waiting for our mental advancement. The organization stand on the deep foundation of humanity; i.e. fundamental moral and spiritual ground which stand on the plea that all peoples were created by the same god and thereby guaranteed the golden rule: “Thou shall love thy neighbor as thy self” or “Do unto other as you would like others to do unto you.” We can’t solve new problem with an old mind. The Old Testament; Genesis, 11-19, 1-26,-3), promotes this. The Qur’an views humankind as vicegerents on ‘the noblest of humankind is the best in conduct,’ “no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another,” “stand out firmly for justice, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor,” “male or female: you are members, one of another,” (Qur’an 2:256, 49:13, 17:15, 4:135, 3:195, 8:61,29:46, respectively. International laws and convention of humanity support this. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious, and Linguistic Minorities states; Article 1.1: States shall protect the essence of the national or ethnic, cultural or religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

However, the UNESCO failed to extend its vision to the Oromoo request in general. The second fundamental case is the application of citizens’ powers of practical reason and thought in forming, revising, and rationally pursuing their conception of the good. It is clear that the distribution of economic and social advantages is entirely different. These arrangements are not the converse, so to speak, of the criminal law, so that just as the one punishes certain offenses, the other rewards moral worth. The function of unequal distributive shares is to cover the costs of training and education, to attract individuals to places and associations where they are most needed from a social point of view, and so on. A just scheme, then, answers to what men are entitled to; it satisfies their legitimate expectations as founded upon social institutions. Gadaa is

registered after cambalala. Delayed justice failed to be denied justice at the Oromoo issues. Yet it is true that his conception of justice is still to be identified. The leeway behind the scenes for the determination of the proper minimum leaves the matter unsettled. The fact is that we do not in general agree to very much when we acknowledge ends of this kind. It must be recognized that a fairly detailed weighting of aims is implicit in a reasonably complete conception of justice. In everyday life we often content ourselves with enumerating common sense precepts and objectives of policy, adding that on particular questions we have to balance them in the light of the general facts of the situation. While this is sound practical advice, it does not express an articulated conception of justice. One is being told in effect to exercise one's judgment as best one can within the framework of these ends as guidelines. Only policies preferable on each score are clearly more desirable. Our customary way of relying on intuition guided by lower-order standards may obscure the existence of more basic principles that account for the force of these criteria. For justice is infringed whenever equal liberty is denied without sufficient reason. The question, then, is whether being intolerant of another is grounds enough for limiting someone's liberty. In this and other ways procedural constraints are said to mitigate the defects of the majority principle. The justification appeals to a greater equal liberty. At no point is there a reference to compensating economic and social benefits. Existing institutions are to be judged in the light of this conception and held to be unjust to the extent that they depart from it without sufficient reason. The lexical ranking of the principles specifies which elements of the ideal are relatively more urgent, and the priority rules this ordering suggests are to be applied to non ideal cases as well. Thus as far as circumstances permit, we have a natural duty to remove any injustices, beginning with the most grievous as identified by the extent of the deviation from perfect justice.

Above all, the following categories of denial are clearly observed;;

*Provisional denial; The UNESCO failed to discharge its provisions on the case of Oromoo. Article 31 – Relationship to the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity; “The incorporation of these items in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity shall in no way prejudice the criteria for future inscriptions decided upon in accordance with Article 16, paragraph 2.”*

The UNESCO's principle allows a thinking that could allow one to listen and to be listened. People who work in this institution must be there for their qualification to rely on the universality, objectivity, and neutrality of reason. It promotes human task of dragging the old world into the light of day and give Positive shape.).Leaving what is lost to the world wars, what is left is cultural integrity and multiculturalism, human well-being in the UNESCO'S programs' main goal. Being respectful to the UNESCO principle, we are now celebrating rich diversities of all, as important parts of humanity's heritage, values in their own rights. We place great importance on understanding the social world around us from a variety of perspectives, and a variety of different identities facilitate such an endeavor

**Delay of Justice;** *Regrets* the delays as regards the implementation of some parts of some resolutions and decisions of UNESCO, and *requests* the Director-General to ensure that they are fully implemented<sup>13</sup>.The losers truly deserved to win but lost out as a result of bad luck, or from other contingencies that caused the contest to miscarry.

**Institutional failure;** *Referring* to Article I(2)(c) of the Constitution of UNESCO that entrusts UNESCO with the task of maintaining, increasing and diffusing knowledge by “assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science, and recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions” In this regards;

1. The UNESCO should have paid critical attention to challenges within the Ethiopian political land escape. The proclamation No.1/1995 declared the coming into effect of the Constitution of the FDRE as of the 21<sup>st</sup> day of August 1995 and portrays it as a power map that legitimized state sovereignty and structured government offices upon supremacy of the law. It underlined government's commitment to fix a lasting solution for various problems. Referring to article 9, it defined territorial jurisdiction through the articles 1, 50 and 2. Fundamental guarantees of the articles 27 and 29 appeared salient features of the constitution. The article 8 reinforces this in conferring sovereign power to nations, nationalities and peoples of the country. The constitutional immunity goes to the federal government whose responsibility and accountability are predicated in the articles 50 and 12 respectively. Pronouncing its global legitimacy, article

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<sup>13</sup>Implementation of 31 C/Resolution 43 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories(Resolution adopted on the reports of Commissions II and IV at the 18th and 21st plenary meetings, on 15 and 17 October 2003)

13, upon article *10* of the UDHR, it assigns interpretative power to the House of Federation by article 62. The post 1991 Ethiopian political landscape indicates the promotion of indigenous cultural practices in favor of promoting and recognizing the cumulative efforts of the countless generations in the development and democratization endeavors. The article 41(9) of our constitution states that the State has the responsibility to protect and preserve historical and cultural legacies, and to contribute to the promotion of the arts and sports. The Gada system appeared one of the many indigenous systems that achieved constitutional recognition on the base of basic assumptions; 1) the age old Gadaa system has valuable democratic elements which can be integrated and consumed for the current political situation of Ethiopia. Its indigenous democratic values and principles are appreciated. 2) its roles to maintaining social order and safeguarding the rights of citizens, protecting natural resources and environment, maintaining internal peace and harmony is appreciated. However, beyond these assumptions, many aspects remained questionable; 1) does the state law fully recognized and established a separate domain where the *Gadaa* system is allowed to work fully. 2) Did the government practically provided protection to the system both as intangible cultural heritage and as a political system that surviving pressures from within and outside. 3) Although it accepted that the prevalence of the system supports the present democratization and human right protection, did the government provide legal and technical support to enhance the *Gadaa* way of deciding on one's own affairs? 1. **Global gap**; The constitution unlikely escaped waves of triangular criticisms. *Firstly*, global lack of clarity and coherence with international law enables the opponents suspect borderline between human and democratic rights which specifically calls articles *27* and *29* into question. Secondly, similar critics revolve around article *39* for which the government is suspected of preferring a 'putting together' form of federation. 2. **Domestic gaps** At the state level, domestic confrontation between indigenous institutions (the Gadaa system) and the statutory supremacy resulted customary goal-derailment. The repressive characteristic of the article 78/5, legal infallibility and the constitutional irreversibility of the article 9 keep Gadaa system at bay by lowering it to nostalgic consecration. Unlike the Gadaa system, secular tendency of the article 11 tacitly advocate politics of "Humans for Human without God" In the Gadaa system, the justice rule can best be subsumed under *uumaa*(cosmology), *Waaqa*(undifferentiated-Being and *Safuu*(ethics). The Gadaa system constitutes elements of human agency with moral senses of responsibility whereby laws rule

supreme and define the Oromoo judicial territory. Leaders never shy away from the word of God to judge. Firstly, the overlap of penal codes (Gadaa customary decision versus states' legal authority) lead to double jeopardy when considered from the personal liberty view point, the state punish the person accused of being murderer while the Gadaa customary authority impose its legal means of punishing such a person, fixed in the Gadaa law that a murderer is penalized with 30 head of cattle and released free). That is; the same person may face double punishment from two overlapping authorities which goes against the *article 23* of the constitution. Secondly, the Gadaa decision may be invalid and of no effect when considered from the provision of article 9 which disqualify all laws contravening its provision. Indigenous institutions, particularly the Oromoo *Gadaa* system, confront article 9, 34, 35 and 78 over the pertinent issues involving gender cases.

2. The UNESCO should have endorsed the Oromia regional government to constitutionally Gadaa “States should adopt the appropriate legislative, administrative, educational and technical measures, within the framework of their economic resources, to protect cultural heritage and should revise them periodically with a view to adapting them to the evolution of national and international cultural heritage protection standards”

### **Are we critical of post registration satisfaction? Do we know what it means?**

The system is however registered by the 11<sup>th</sup> world conference held at Addis Ababa with full vote on November 30/20016. But meaning implies that something is happening; you can say meaning is determined by the use of the thing, the way an audience uses a painting once it is put in public (Jasper Johns), (1930 - ), U.S. painter.<sup>14</sup> Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.<sup>15</sup> Since every people should be the originators of their own designs, the projector of their own schemes, and creators of the events that lead to their destiny—the consummation of their desires (Martin Robison Delany) (1812 - 1885).<sup>16</sup> **Let us consider the following and rethink of them, whether the registered system considered them or not;**

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<sup>14</sup>Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2009. © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

<sup>15</sup>Lewis Carroll (1832 - 1898), British writer and mathematician (ibid.)

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

<sup>16</sup>U.S. physician, abolitionist, and newspaper editor.

**Space time philosophy of life;** There temporal unites that one must understand. If you miss one you miss all. The one day in the Gada is ayyaan, the seven day week in the Gada is torban, the 27 day is in the Gada is lunar month called jia, the 360 day in the Gada is year known as Ganna, the eight year period of the Gada is term of political office called Gadaa, the 40 year generation cycle in the Gada is classes called luba, the nine times recurrence of this 40 year cycle is saglii and the 360 year historical epoch called jaatama terminates the entire cycle of Gada.

**Organizationally-***The political philosophy of Gadaa is based on three main values: terms of eight years, balanced opposition between parties, and power sharing between higher and lower levels. Hence, gadaa consisted of five-fixed party system<sup>17</sup>. Five successive gadaa stages make up a generation (gap between father and son) that occupies forty years on the gadaa cycle. The first five eight years were generally periods of training and military service in addition to shouldering some economic activities (ibid.p.3).*

**Generationally-** *stages are;* Boy (daballe): 8 years duration – Herder (gammeedidiqqoo): 8 years – Herder (gammeeguguddoo): 8 years – (Junior) Warrior (kuusa): 8 years – Married man/Senior Warrior (raabadidiqqaa): 8 years – Father (raabadorii): 5 years – Leader (gadaa): 8 years subdivided into 3+5 years – Elder/ Senior advisor (yuuba I-III/IV): altogether 27 years – Ritual elder (gadamojjii): 8 years – Old man (jaarsa): retired, until death (Haberland 1963, Legesse 1973). Members of an age- set are initiated into the next higher set with elaborated ceremony. *An individual entered the system at a specific age and passed through transition rites at intervals appropriate to the passage from childhood through full adulthood to senility. Recruitment in to the Gadaa system is based on the maintenance of one socially defined generation between father and son (Asmarom, 2000; Asafa, 2010).* In other words, enrollment into the system is not by biological age, but upon the recruitment that an individual remain exactly five stages below his father's level. Gadaa grades succeeded each other every. Every Oromoo of specific age-grade is expected to perform a certain function according to specified rules and regulations. Hence, by leaning the customary law and law of Waaqaa, every person was expected to contribute to the social development. Social development (finna) stands

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*The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*

<sup>17</sup> Dereje Hinew 2012. History of Oromo Social Organization: Gadaa Grades Based Roles and Responsibilities p.9. Wallagga University, Nekemte, Ethiopia.

for “ the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers and which it transforms; it is the fertile patrimony held in trust by the present generation which it will enrich and bequeath to future generations...”(Asafa,2010).When summarized into generations, this successive stage has the following five generational chains; **Generational Chain/cycle**

Generation	Grades		
	Son	Father	Grandfather
1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Dabballe	Raaba-doorii	Gadaammojjii (ritual elder)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation	Gammee-didiqqoo (junior herder)	Gadaa (leader)	Jaarsa I (‘old man’)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Generation	Gammee-gugurddoo (senior herder)	Yuuba I (elder/advisor)	Jaarsa II (‘old man’)
4 <sup>th</sup> Generation	kuusa (junior warrior)	Yuuba II (elder/advisor)	JaarsaIII (‘old man’)
5 <sup>th</sup> Generation	Raaba-didiqqaa(married man/senior warrior)	Yuuba III (elder/advisor)	Jaarsa IV (‘old man’)

**Conclusion; the UNESCO should recognize Gadaa with its totality and as a system.** The Gadaa system, as an age-based social organization must have also been developed as a mechanism of motivating and fitting members of the society into social structure. Accordingly, various socio-political functions and responsibilities are associated with initiation into and promotion from one Gadaa to the next. Gadaa as a system reflects **the Oromoo world view through concepts such as Jiru, Jiru – Jirrenya, Gada, Jaatama, Ayaana Sagli, Uumaa, Finna, Horo and Oromumma.**

**Thus the Gadaa should be understood; a)Politically,** the Oromoo is known by a generation set organization, which is believed to guide every aspect of their life, called of the *Gadaa* system. The Gada system is a democratic system of governance in which the community as a whole has the opportunities to participate on equal basis. What makes both the ruling and the ruled obey and enforce the laws is the free will and commitment of everyone, “how deep the

sense of order is among the Oromoo can be gleaned from the fact that homicide—within their society—is virtually unknown. b) **Socially**, the Oromoo Gada system, via Buusaa-gonofaa, has the commendable tradition or practice of helping the needy among them. The Oromoo Buusa-gonofaa, Dabare, Hirbaa, etc are basic cooperative structures that they use; if a person loses his asset due to any reason, each member of the clan would contribute whatever he can to help the person rehabilitate himself. c) **Theologically**, the Oromoo believe in one creator, called *Waaqa*. They consider as mediator between *Waaqa* from above and human from earth. They don't complicate identity with politics and religion. Doctor Goolloo Huqqaa (1996) and Doctor Ibrahim Ame (2005) indicated how the 37<sup>th</sup> Gumii Gaayoo warned individual Borana against changing their names due to religious conversion. d) **Chronologically**, the Oromoo follow 'argaa-dhageettii' in which they Gadaa leadership is historically dedicated daily routine to teaching the young generation, advising community members and customary leaders on cultural matters. e) **Diplomatically**, Political alliances and social integrations between the Borana and other groups are marked through certain ritual gift exchanges. The Borana maintain peaceful relation with other ethnic groups through their mechanism of cultural integration and ritual gifts and exchanges with their neighbors. Professor Guther Schlee, in his publication, 1989, confirms how this serves them as a means through which they form political integration at a wider regional level and define and redefine relations with some of their neighboring groups. According to Asmarom (1973: 93-96) in Borana society among whom Gada is still fully operational, gumi gayo that is the assembly of the representatives of the entire society is a law making body. This body has the highest degree of political authority. The gumi is held under a green tree known as dhaddacha gumi. Green for the Oromoo is the symbol of Justice. Bassi (1994:16) shows that the Borana Gada officials do not employ force to enforce their decisions; rather they exclude the offender from nagaan Borana (peace of the Borana) Other scholars such as Shongolo, 1995; Gemechu, 2012,) witness how the banner, called *baqala-faajjii brings the Borana and Somali group of Eji together* (Profesor Kassam, 2006) Similarly explains how the Borana and the Gabra have ritual gift exchanges on regular time interval and ritual pilgrimages. f) **As to calendar**; the one day in the Gada is ayyaana, the seven day week in the Gada is torban, the 27 day is in the Gada is lunar month called jila, the 360 day in the Gada is year known as Ganna, the eight year period of the Gada is term of political office called Gadaa, the 40 year generation cycle in the Gada is classes called luba, the nine times recurrence of this

40 year cycle is sallii and the 360 year historical epoch called jaatama terminates the entire cycle of Gada. The Gada System is keyed to a remarkably sophisticated system of time reckoning. The system is based on accurate astronomic observations associated with a complete day-month nomenclature. The total system is a permutation calendar the like of which has been recorded only three times in the history of mankind. It occurs among the Chinese, the Hindu, and the Mayans -three civilizations far removed from Borana [Oromoo]. **g) The Astronomical** views of the Oromoo is deep rooted in the seven stars or constellations; Lami (triangulum) - Busan (pleiades)-Bakkalcha (Aldebaran)- Algajima (Belatrix)- Arb Gaddu (central Orion)- Urji Walla (Saiph) and Basa (Sirius) In 1978,Lynch and Robbins [5] published their discovery of 19 basalt pillars in Namoratunga,a megalithic site in the Borana region of Kenya. The configuration of the basalts represented the alignment of the stars and constellations known as Urjii Dhaha to Oromoos, used to compute accurate calendar The Namoratunga findings were carbon dated to about 300B.C,suggestingthe invention and beginning of the use of the calendar to roughly the same time (AsfawBeyene, 1995, JOS, p.58).The Oromoo have a unique time reckoning system designating seven or eight of the myriad bodies of the sky, using static nature of the celestial spheres and the movement of the earth with the moon to define the length of the year and the months (Melaku, 2001).

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### 3. *Gadaa* Values of Environment

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#### *Abstract*

The paper wants to discuss on some major distinct to *gadaa* views and knowledge of environment. *Gadaa* is a social human system but it was formulated and evolved out of nature and, hence worked towards its harmony. *Gadaa*-nature affiliation is established on reciprocal relationships and several indigenous institutions have formed its integral units to maintain this relationship even though this area is not given attentions in *gadaa* focused studies. The study has principally employed qualitative research method and its different kinds of data collection techniques, such as interview, discussion, observation, personal profile and document analysis. Hence, the following points are strong evidences leading to the above proposition of *Gadaa* values of environment. One, the etymological root and linguistic meaning of the term *Gadaa* derived from the word *gaaddisa* (shading) and what it environmentally implies. This derivation implies the need for beneath *Waaqaa* (God and the law of nature) and *Seera Ikkee* (cardinal *gadaa* law) on next against natural and social calamity. The next point is the formulation of every eight years period rotation of *gadaa* power and the five parties of *gadaa* simulation from nature. Third, the ecological knowledge with the sycamore *Odaa* tree and its use values aligned prerogatives in their customary law, *Seera Odaa*. Fourth, the way *Gadaa* conceptualized various components of environment and made interactions in a widest sense of environment. *Gadaa* views that environmental component interactions are spearheaded by three essential elements: rain→ grass →milk which are sources of life and food for the remaining components and, then the whole elements in cosmos combining form a cyclic type of chain one relied on another. In the system, human causative agent to determining environmental wellbeing and/ reverse to environmental flattening is acted through several watchful institutions with clear cut roles of harmonizing, stabilizing and intervening. However, this environment focused value is limited to very few parts of Oromiya after the decline of *gadaa* system of governance and due to contemporary challenging factors. This study recommends that the emerging scenarios on *gadaa* and others on indigenous study need to emphasize such values towards environment conservation and furtherance validation of human wisdom.

Key words: *gadaa*, *odaa*, environment, knowledge,

**I. Introduction**  
**1. Background**

People in different social context and varying life setting might be driven under indigenous and/ non-indigenous philosophy and took collective and/ individual based actions and decisions which will determine the local environment. Indigenous knowledge is embedded in community practices, culturally based value systems, systems of production and consumption, institutions, relationships and rituals (Sabine Hausler, 1995:184; Marana, 2010); Edward, 2010). Indigenous knowledge is the body of knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences, informal experiments, and intimate understanding of their environment in a given culture (B Rajasekaran, 1993). It is a way of thinking and doing things differently of the old as well new owning indigenous peoples have extended histories of interaction with the natural environment (Marana, 2012). Through indigenous governance system, culture is doing distinct from the modern one that it promotes place-based consciousness of human interactions for livelihood and non-livelihood activities. Indigenous knowledge is a comprehensive type of human wisdom evolved and developed in different cultural and ecological contexts that among other things its roles in environment management are emerging at a present-day. According to Workineh (2011) indigenous knowledge is based on local resources and time-tested environmental management practices. The environmental concern has brought studies on indigenous society and their knowledge system to contemporary global discussion (Edward, 2010).

According to Melaku (2016) indigenous peoples have strong social and cultural values, ordered social control and cohesive social systems rooted in their indigenous knowledge of the universe in general, and their locals in particular. They have normative and well thought-out behavior in their relations with and adaptation to the wider ecological niche hitherto established in their worldview. Marana (2010) expressed that nature conservation is a firm practical standing of indigenous society.

The need to understand indigenous society from its own cultural point of view has convinced the contemporary modern study to open its eyes to see the interrelationships among various elements of the environment. However, indigenous people long time interactions with nature and their

knowledge system in environmental conservation have only recently grown to attract the interests of professionals, policy makers, planners, and politicians. In a country like Ethiopia, which is a home of numerous indigenous people where that each group owns long time historical interactions with physical natural environment (Edward, 2010). Particularly, the change on domestic political landscape of the country since the 1991 saw promising light.

Human-environment interactions are unavoidable elsewhere due to human dependency interrelationships so that its impacts are direct even though the degrees of its activities positive and negative consequences are not same. For a particular group of people indigenously dealt within its local environmental and cultural context, its ecological consciousness and activities could be varying in history. Thus, the shape and form of the environment is dependent on its history, a history that includes humans (Marana, 2010). In the eyes of indigenous study the link between culture and nature in Oromo is vitally studied from the perspectives of *Gadaa*, which is a generational value around which almost the entire aspects of Oromo nation has been fundamentally established and defined (Asmarom, 2006; Alemayehu, 2009; Dereje, 2005). Studies have been conducted on various aspects and several issues of *gadaa* in different disciplines and by professional at various levels. The previous works are, however, largely dealt with non-environmental purposes of *gadaa* like the socio-cultural, political, religious-ritual and military roles. Owing that *gadaa* is highly complex system and several issues of its broad fields have been treated in various disciplines and by various scholars, this paper has tried to disclose some of its major values with specific to environment which are so far little/not covered.

Scholars studied Oromo environment agreed that environmental conservation is parts of the populaces long established (Melaku, 2016; Lemessa, 2014; Temesgen, 2012; Workineh, 2005 & 2011). Given by the paucity of literatures on the area, studies on Oromo environment have dominantly focused on general features of Oromo indigenous knowledge with major environmental components and natural resources conservation instead of the *gadaa* values and its various institutions established at its hearts. Particularly speaking, from the need to disclosing this comprehensive system environmental value experiences, this work is an attempt made to discuss some important points about nature centeredness of *gadaa* and its interactions based on

the available written and oral sources particularly from the traditions, views, knowledge and practices associated to *gadaa*.

In contrary to limited study coverage seen in the area, available sources indicate that several basic values presented at varying points and conditions in Gadaa witnessed nature centered affiliations and cognizant of its affability. The evolvement of *Gadaa* in nature is realized from the way it integrated itself with several components of environment and it assumed responsibilities to protect the environment purport a discussion with regard to its knowledge and practices relevancies and conformity to environmental conservation. There are gadaa born basic views and knowledge of environment which shows its nature accommodativeness and that could spit environmental optimism. In this regard, the first prime thing is how *Gadaa* realizes itself among the diverse cosmic and viewed other environmental components in relations to itself in universe. This is supported by some survived views and interactions of the Oromo towards their local environment through their ritual, blessings, prayers, etc at life proliferation. In mainstream culture of Oromo, there is said to be that nature enhancement and life initiations are centric to their established worldview which is demonstrated in the steps, procedures and processes with *gadaa* ritual, religious, political, cultural, etc practices. Their prayers, songs, blessings, practices of ritual and spiritual activities associated to gadaa are said to be intact to maintaining daybreak law of nature (Alemayehu, 2009; Dereje, 2005 & 2010). This is further reinforced by some other indigenous institutions and strategies designed to moderate between human and nature. Supporting this, the research finding indicated that temporal, moral and religious institutions, framework and strategies moderating the social human system to the conformity of nature conservation are normative values of *gadaa*.

Few studies undergone on Oromo environment management knowledge have given attentions to the views and practices with major components of environment like land, tree, water, etc (Melaku, 2016; Lemessa, 2014; Temesgen, 2012). But, the Oromo institutions role in environment management particularly *gadaa* is little considered irrespective of its mega level wisdom of the populace. Assuming that, the role of Gadaa in the future life of the Oromo would be unbeatable as in the past and present time its values of environment shall be revealed. The greater definite role that Gadaa has assumed in the entire areas of the Oromo life shall be

claiming paramount places in indigenous knowledge environment conservation and management practices. Studying the cultural and historical interactions of the Oromo with environmental components would not be outside the influences of *gadaa* philosophies while minimally its governance system was operational.

The discussion came set forth relied on some recounts in mainstream tradition of the Oromo in their background knowledge from the three study areas: Gujii, Kokosa and Tulama of East Shewa where to some extents some *gadaa* elements have been ensured survival and continuity to the present. This was confirmed with the data collected from *Gadaa* leaders, elders and *hayyus* of these areas which revealed the issue almost overlapping. Elders were referred to cross check how far the tradition is supported in their local *Gadaa* knowledge and practices. This study on environmental value of *gadaa* is, thus, motivated to reveal out some major philosophies embedded at the heart of its system and how the various views, knowledge, activities and practices associated to its political, ritual, spiritual, social, etc aspects are working towards realization of this goal. This *Gadaa* value of environment can provide an insight and a look into how the Oromo and its environment shaped each other at least before the present. So that, this area shall not be only given a slighter attentions than its roles shaped the Oromo social, economic, culture, religion, history, etc life.

Still, the amount of *Gadaa* knowledge and its practices retained at a grass root level embedding the various traditions related to *gadaa* environmental values are varying in their degrees of manifestations. Including, the various institutions and strategies established around nature conservation are seen at varying levels of existence and survival that while some have declined and some others are remained spinal but submerged and swallowed by other major views. This is partly attributed to the past political and historical scenarios of the country since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In general, Oromo indigenous values are running out little protected and secured due to the absence of no rules and regulations empowered cultural resources, Oromo sacred sites, places, views and bearers of the knowledge from being attacked by anybody layman and intruders. Given that the area is still only narrowly studied and a practical balanced attention is not seen given in academic studies and government development policies. This is coincided by

contemporary emerging factors which are challenging the continuation of indigenous wisdom like change in religion, globalization, modernism, etc threatening their positions.

## **2. Methods and Materials**

Like most social science, this research has dealt with culture that involved claims of values and rights. This study employed qualitative research methods. Both primary and secondary sources were used to compile the data for the study. Mainly interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis (both published and unpublished) were the instruments used to obtain reliable data for the study.

Interviews were held with elder members based on their mastery knowledge of the history, culture and *gadaa* values of the society. The interview was mainly held with custodian commoners (Gadaaleaders and hayyuus (advisors), the *Qaalluu/tti* and head of the *Saddeetaa* assembly (particularly in Kokosa). Interviews were held in any places and time available without reservation.

In the entire field stay twelve in-depth interviews, which took an average of one and half hour with each interviewee, were conducted. The responses of the interviewee were documented by note taking and tape-recording. This tool was used to get detailed data for the entire frame of this study. The study also employed relevant official documents, unpublished and published documents as source of data. Some important official documents were obtained from the library, government office and internet. Data from these sources, thus, were used for the entire frame of the study.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

### **3.1. An Overview to Culture and Nature in Oromo**

A given people's view with nature and their interactions with environmental components are primarily determined by the types of worldview a group culturally adopted. Study indicates that African worldview is the concept of the unity of cosmos (Dereje, 2005; Samu'el, 2011). The African concept of cosmology is described as a universe is made up of the spiritual and

supernatural realities: the human society, animals, plants, and others. Ritual and other forms of socio-cultural traditions of African society affirm the essential unity derived from the primordial unit. The primordial unit is the assumption that the universe and its elements have the same source father, God (Samu'el: 48).

According to Workineh (2005) many African countries have developed an organic conception of nature that promotes an ecological balance or interdependency between human, plant, and animal life. Nature is an integral part of their day-to-day existence. In many African countries environmental knowledge relies on both the relationship between humans and nature, and the visible world and the invisible world. Thus, spiritual being and material being have a complementary relationship.

According to Workineh (2005) the Oromo share the major African beliefs which consider nature as their integral units. Categorically, the Oromo views of nature can be assigned to more of an organic worldview which recognizes natural elements are alike of beings having their own values to the universe and thus, they form strong coexistence (Eshetu, 2010). This organic type of worldview which declared the inclusion of nature and natural substances into the mainstream culture has aligned to biocentrism view. Biocentrism admits independent existence of natural resources and their intrinsic values as oppose to anthropocentric which diminishes and ends resources to human palatable utility (Taye, *et al.*, 2010:189). Direct opposite to this is a mechanistic worldview which has contrarily opted natural sources for material and economic needs satisfaction (Samue'l, 2011). Workineh (2011) argued that unlike anthropocentrism the Oromo have deep concerns for the future and health of both human and nonhuman creatures. The Oromo world view has included an environmental ethic that can serve as the basis for a contemporary environmental ethic. *Gadaa* incorporated almost every major life aspects of the Oromo in which human-environment interaction and natural resources utilization formed its integral units and established on reciprocal relationships.

Gadaa-nature affiliations and friendly relationships are evidenced in several aspects as they will be presented in the forthcoming discussion. As it is presented, starting from its etymological

roots of derivations to philosophies how elements in universe cohabited are centric points of the discussion in this paper.

### **3.2. The Derivative Term of the Word *Gadaa* and Its Cycles Relationship with Nature**

To begin with, sources explain that agreed that the etymological linguistic origin and derivative word of the term *Gadaa* is *gaaddisa* (shading). This is meant that the word *gadaa* is found to be adopted from this word, shading. The term shading implies to take asylum under something roofing from the above and provided shelter against calamity. According to sources, this is unequivocally beneath the belly of divine Waaqaa (God), the Supreme Being and below that is summoned under the shade of social human system which will secure both an individual and a group under established order of society. The issues regarding the origin of *gadaa* as also explained in Alemayehu (2009:37) that the term *Gadaa* was the combinations of two separate words: ‘ga’ which represents *seeraa* (law), and ‘da’ that implies Waaqa (God). Hence, *gadaa* was derived from the law of Waaqa of the ancient Cushitic. Accordingly, like its linguistic origin implies *gaaddisa* which is means taking sanctuary under the belly of Waaqaa and below under social system, the law of *Gadaa* was also adopted from the law of Waaqaa (daybreak/ nature). With this context, nature and *gadaa* are replicated so as to support and reinforce each other. This is further supported by the works of Alemayehu (2009) and Samu’el (2011) that the cardinal law of *Gadaa*, known as *Seera Ikkee* was copied from the law of nature in the daybreak time. In the expressions of my informants the Oromo belief system is grounded on *argaa-dhageetti*(witness-hear)in reality than revelation so that Oromo ancient laws principally referred nature.

According to informants this is one way social and natural environments intactness and cohabitations overlapped. While Waaqaa governs the whole thing from the above, *gadaa* is responsibly delegated on the earth through its received laws and mandate. *Gadaa* is an umbrella under which provisions of peace, security and coexistence are ensured to the people being shaded its power and authority. This is about abiding the law of nature and human under common conceptual roof and ideal shade towards harmonious and reciprocal relationships. In the context of *gadaa*, shading is being roofed under the social human system for harmony through

temporal, religious and ritual remedies. This is a conceptual way towards maintaining the equilibrium between the social and natural world. The term shading is therefore implying to receive protection from harsh and bad conditions and happenings of both natural and social causalities. This includes the need to be abiding under the belly of the divine God (Waaqaa) in respecting its orders and receiving protection at the hearts of the society in maintaining their laws and values. The need to obey and respect Waaqaa and its laws and orders are to get ultimate protections of security. An environmental role of shade is conceptually implied at an idea level. In both its symbolic and practical meaning shading has a direct environmental implication that is common point derivate and harmony between natural and social world.

### 3.3 The Cycles of *Gadaa* Affiliation to Nature

According to available sources the origin of *gadaa* and its full evolvement is nature. One of the major presumptions is the Gadaa cycle that is said to be the imitations of natural phenomenon. Particularly speaking, every eight years cycle of *gadaa* was imitated from blossoming period of *podocarpus* (birbirsa) tree in the first light time days. Birbirsa blossoms and gives seeds every eight years from which the cut off point for every series of gadaa cyclic period was adopted. Works based on scientific prove (Abdela, 2008) indicated that Podocarpus gives blossom every 7 to 8 years which is shared in Oromo knowledge of the tree species.

When informants asserted this view' birbirsa is a giant tree species which shades over wide area and used for various purposes determined by place-based and value-centered consciousness. Irrespective of its wide shading services of environmental purposes Birbirsa tree is believed to be the most feared during high rainy season due to its lightning strike susceptibility. In *Argaa-dhageetti* of Oromo the power of Waaqaa is partly manifested by its dropping of lightening and this happening is said to have connected the tree species to an area Its power to punish the sinners is demonstrated. Birbirsa tree is one of the floras known to the Oromo since ancient and that received rules of utility in a customary law of the Oromo. Among the Arsii during the reformation of *Seera Ambaa/Arsii* (c.a. 15<sup>th</sup> century) one of the species of plants which enumerated to the top classes of *Mukkeen Seeraa* (Trees of Law) was Birbirsa. In Tulama of East Shewa it marked the purity and genuineness of *Qaalluu* (*Qaalluu jechuun kan birbirsa dhaabeejaaloo marqedha.*).

Besides to the formulation of eight years period based rotation of power, the five parties of *gadaa* are said to be organically the replication of *waan shananumamaa (yaayyaa shanan)*, five organic creatures. Major creatures in Oromo worldview are arranged in five. According to Tulama traditions the parties of *gadaa*, parts of a tree, the first essential creatures of Waaqaa, human body constituents etc are arranged in five (Key informants; Gaaddisa Aadaa, 2008:4). This is what Gemtechu (2005) has mentioned as Yaayyaa Shanan(the five fundamentals) in Oromo worldview.

### **3.4 The Ecological Knowledge withthe Holy Sycamore Odaa Tree of *Gadaa* Center**

*Gadaa* is intact to the sycamore Odaa Tree for its whole thing activities. In the history of the Oromo people since the beginning of *gadaa* institutions its general assembly was held at the café under the shade of the *oda* tree. Shade of *oda* was both the central office of government where the *gadaa* assembly met and was a sacred place for ritual practices. In long established culture of the Oromo people hence *oda* is regarded as the sources of peace, symbol and unity among the people (Alemayehu, 2009:79-80, Dereje, 2005 & 10). It is a tree under which all categories of laws and rules were received and enacted while the *Gadaa* system of governance was autonomously exercised.

Discussion about *Gadaa* at any level underscores its center, the holy sycamore *Odaa* tree, which is said to be the most gifted by its multifarious rounded values in their worldview from among various and diverse natural flora species. It is said that the relationships between *Gadaa* and *Odaa* are founded on secret and deep philosophical thought of culture-nature centeredness that was explored through the Oromo ecological wisdom. Why *gadaa* social human system has abode under *Odaa* tree different from all species of the natural world address the type of worldview behind the selection scene that had relied on the nature of the tree and its natural features supported in their long time practices.

Oral sources from the entire study areas corroborated that the selection of *Odaa* has fundamentally grounded on its full ecological justification as to how the beauty of culture and

nature have overlapped there. According to the sayings of my informants when Odaa is mentioned as a highly respected tree it is due to its cohabited natural and cultural qualities. The expression in the selection of Odaa is attributed to the following presumptions. Odaa is ever green tree, the branch of which grows up and covers wide areas. Naturally, it grows at wet and fertile environment. Roots of Odaa tree go deeper into the earth up to 50 meters by breaking stones and rocks. Because of its capacity of sacking water in this way it remains green the whole years including during winter seasons. Besides, Odaa possesses different milk which replicates the symbolic roles milk is accounted as sources of food for survival of life and ritual element used for mediation of nature and catastrophic in Oromo tradition. In addition, the shadow of Odaa accommodates large number of people varying on its age. Almost the aforementioned ideas are supported in the works of Alemayehu (2009: 115) which focuses on Tulama gadaa politics and Dereje (2005 & 10) on the gadaa system.

There are even other stories narrated on the magnificence of the holy sycamore Odaa tree. My informants and scholarly works on gadaa agreed that the earliest man named by *garamticha walabu* (the innocent man of Walabu) is said to have rested under the shade of Oda tree and where Waaqa revealed His laws, moral values and ordered him to teach the people of Waalabuu. The person became a messenger (Nabi) of Waaqa and Odaa Tree was a sacred tree where Waaqa were revealed and taught (Dereje, 2005 & 10); Alemayehu, 2009:38).

Odaa is also further expressed with other forms like humbleness, receipting personality, etiquette, etc and sorts of articulation. The tradition also reveal that Odaa and its immediate surrounding are always clean, as it has a natural power to repulse trees climbing hordes of insects and other biting organisms which spoil the area. Besides, Odaa is also said to have extraordinary values like its fruits edible functions and lightening resistant (*bakakkaan itti hin bu'u*) unlike Birbirsa which is said to be susceptible to its strike.

According to sources Odaa tree own unique ecological characteristics that is grows around wet area and endowed the capacity to retain understory water absorbing to the upper surface. It is said to be naturally growing in mild plain and rainy ecological zone.

The holiness and sacredness of Odaa was grounded on its overall distinct natural attributes and ecological roles and supports in nature. Following the traditional recount, in almost all terms of the sycamore Odaa tree selection for *Gadaa* system its prime environmental and ecological roles are given preference. These are said to include its distinct shading purposes, environ cleanness, qualities of emitting wetness and greenery and its resources endowment like special milk. *Odaa* provided a pivotal role of shading and sheltering environmental functions reinforced by its extensive growing steams covering over a wide area, sending their green and wet broader branches and leaves throughout the year to harbor and moderate the immediate ecosystem, edibility, hospitality, etc. In this regard, shading environment services and socio-cultural reservoir values are overlapped around the philosophy with specific to Odaa tree. Shading is the environmental attainment services trees and forests provide to inanimate and animate organisms. Environmentally, trees and forests provided a retreatment services to living organisms from heat and dry temperature, retirement for rest and dwelling from enemy.

These ecological qualities are through which the social human and non-human life success could be intact and this ultimate goal is realized in their life. Odaa tree meeting ground is a center where fundamental principles of life like unity and unanimity, richness, prosperity, hope, aspiration, etc are rectified. *Gadaa* entirely ascribed Odaa and the vice versa is also true. The organic knowledge of the one is in another. Under Odaa tree almost all social and natural problems mediations are addressed with the knowledge emanated from its holy sycamore. It is an adaptive strategy to manage both natural and social calamity under its shade to the level that one can never discriminate the other. To this centrality every major merits and demerits, success and failure are discussed with a common point of ground. This is articulated that Odaa tree cohabited social and natural worlds as to the degrees that its sacredness reinforce mediation of nature through prayers, ritual, religious, political services.

The Oromo concept of Odaa exalted the sacredness account of the tree and its immediate environs for environmental purity against spitting anything impure. Such organic knowledge has also strong symbolic roles in greenness, wetness, against anything polluting (sound, loud voices disturbing human mind, taught, quiet, embittering words, sounds expressions, spoiling items, etc.

The liking for greenness and wetness embedded in Oromo organic worldview is also disclosed with the knowledge of Odaa tree. Eshetu(2005) mentioned that Oromo is a greenery society that organic green tree symbolizes their national identity.

Above all, Odaa is a symbolic tree that represents a nation and national emblem. Why a tree represented a nation is the values inherited by the current generation from history. This would never easy leaving on the generation greening view even though some other reasons at a present-day determinant to the Oromo established values of environment. For someone observing the epitome of Odaa tree, its giant appearance, wider canopy branches, interminable wetness and greenness will be retaining certain environment optimistic message in his/her mind and such reflection will be created in thoughts. However, giving the paucity of forests and trees coverage, the sycamore Odaa tree is only actually exist in limited ecology, abundance and rare areas of the Oromo natural environment. Beyond, the trees rare availability in natural ecology by today, those existing sites of *caffé* and *jilaa* in Oromiya, the associated ecological knowledge and its cultural heritage values are its major integral components.

According to my sources another point around Oromo knowledge of *Odaa* is regarding the selection privilege. To rectify their selection ground and purposes of Odaa the knowledge has extended to the need to setting rules of privilege and its values protections from otherwise activities, violating and contravening its sanctity. The prerogatives of *Odaa* are protected through the law of *odaa*. These included the prerogatives against any other uses: different from assembling and meeting purposes which are cheapening and degrading its sanctity. The privilege against different (economic and material palatable) uses, speaking noisily voices, using anger words, speaking disappointing words and expressions, insulting and talking bad words about it, spoiling its environs, grazing and farming, treachery, cutting any of its parts, burning, etc.

Given by unique environmental significance, the prerogatives are protected particularly through *seera Odaa* (the law of the sycamore Odaa) and by *Seeraikkee* (the Ikkee law, the cardinal law of *gadaa*. *Seeraa Ikkee* is a fundamental law of Oromo which included laws of the Waaqaa, laws of the *dachee*(earth), laws of the father and laws of the mother (Alemayehu, 2009; Dereje, 2005; Samu'el, 2010). In the strategies Odaa socio-cultural values beat against any economic and

material utility claim that it is provided absolute protection from palatable utility and any activities cheapening its lofty status. The tree got singular attentions from direct physical exploitation and expropriation of its resources provided that the need to conserve underlies nature protections. As the result, rules regarding its administration, its right, respect, sacredness and a *gumaa* (reparation payment) were made in customary law. Odaa is never cut down for any direct use purposes and any of its part is never taken to home including its leaves, any bad and insulting words is never said about it. Any of such actions against Odaa personality will end to all forms of punishment: cursing, social, cultural and political impeachment, material form of penalty amounted to 100 heads of cattle and ritual for purifying from sin is conducted.

The various accounts related to Odaa tree showed the interminable relationships between social and natural environment. It is believed that, showing the ecological merit of gadaa, Odaa has extraordinary qualities abide fair political, ritual and social decisions. As Gadaa was derived from *Seera Waaqaa*, Odaa was its centers to watch, exercise, enact and act its laws. These services have elevated Odaa tree from mere species of natural floras to center of egalitarian governance and coexistent for social-natural elements under the banner of *gadaa*. Activities taken under *odaa* tree are genuine and organic so as elements constituted live harmonious. Shaded under its belly most genuine decisions are made to protect laws of nature at a place. The thing given to *gadaa* together with others from *Waaqaa* is the knowledge of Odaa where the power and authority of *Waaqaa* is exalted and this accountability is transferred to leaders who hold the accountability to maintain nature and conserve its resources.

### **3.5. Gadaa Views about Environmental Components**

Probably the most centric point to the discussion is Gadaa views about the diverse universe and the place of environmental components and the way it sees itself in relations to others. *Gadaa* ascribes that living and non-living organisms are the outcome of social-human and natural world interrelated interactions and their process which determine environmental wealth and health. As the *Gadaa* belief every component of the environment is interrelated through natural and social laws binding and guiding their interactions towards both negative and positive consequences. This interrelatedness view among elements of the diverse cosmos and the unity of environmental

components is presumably the centric point in the discussion. Accordingly elements of universe which are probably fundamental and recognized to its level knowledge are absolutely interrelated as to how they are a unified one in their functions and roles of supporting one another. This conceptualization of Gadaa developed into what sorts of relationships should be held and how should they interact in universe as if that one is essential and reliant on the other and in totally in support of one another with accountability of function for harmony and/ the otherwise. In this regard both visible and invisible elements are interconnected together and formed a cyclic life chain.

As to this view, the interrelated relationship is spearheaded by three essential things: rain, grass and milk. These are openers and initiators for relationships came to be ensued among them first and with integration of the remaining diverse elements in the next place from which a cyclic chain of unity of dependence-interdependence relationships is established. The universe and the whole life determined on the type of relationships among these three leading sequentially linked and connected to support, enhance and supply the other to ensure health and wealth of the universe.

*Gadaa* believes in cosmos diversity (Bartes, 1997; Gemtechu, 2005; Alemayehu, 2009). *Gadaa* also believes and makes intact relationships with among the diverse living and non-living and tangible and intangible components of the universe (Workineh, 2005 & 2011). In the diverse universe *Gadaa* the three essential leading things availability and one the other type of answerability of functions and roles among them ensures environmental health and harmonious unity of the whole elements in cosmic order. Their arrangement is in one the other supporting and enhancing relationships of functions that the other comes to exist for its next element and the whole in general. Accordingly, rain (water) is the prime source to all of them whose availability ensures a grass to grow that its eaters are provided with food and provide milk, a basic food for breast suckers in the third level. Rain is caused from God and only its regular and sufficient provision enables the earth rinse and grows grass and greens ecology, which marked affluence and wellbeing that grass eaters get sufficient food in order to produce milk to their offspring and others for their existence on secondary feeder level. The whole universe is interconnected in accordance that the knowledge about environmental wealth and shortages are defined and lined

up. The knowledge of this order is organic that it has emanated out of nature. This is the point where environmental wealth and health is defined as Waaqaa made everything exact but this orderly nature and natural arrangement based communication is believed to be vulnerable to human interactions.

Rain is poured from sky by Waaqaa (God) in nature. As the function of rain is to ensure green ecology and filled with wet, the function of grass is securing its dependents (herbivorous) with food as to the demanded level and in order that the earth should be cooperative fertile enough and assumed that carrying capacity. In the third level, the functions of milk is serving breast suckers (mammalians), their dependents offspring and others with their basic food and this is dependent on the conditions that the natural ecology is kept affluent green, filled with wet and fresh organism. Literatures agree that water is a primordial source of life in Oromo worldview (Alemayheu, 2009; Gemechu, 2005; Dereje, 2005).

To the extents that rain feeds the earth and grown and provided cattle with grass/ food to give milk that human is provided nourishment. Milk is a food for breast suckers living organisms and a ritual element that human used to express its satisfactions to God and prayers mediate when problems occur in the totality relationships. Milk is a substance human is gifted to praise God, express thanks-giving and beg for future health and wealth. At all levels of these natural orderly functions rain (water) is the prime essential elements the remaining to exist and this is absolutely dependent on the conditions that human kept ritualistic, thanks-giver and neat from sin regulated to the desired thing alone. Here, human activities, contacts and movements shall be intact loyal, observe and respect *Seera* Waaqaa and kept away from intervening into the activities and functions of others. This is bearing that nature is correct and perfect as long as human is not unnecessary intervened in natural order and its based functions.

Thus, the balance in orderly nature of Gadaa view is relied on the type of interactions and activities human has performed. If the interactions and activities are bounded to the established rules nature continues enhanced, otherwise reversed and regress to the opposite. Human is a causal agent ought to maintain and moderate imbalance even when the occurrences of nature happened from harming every single element functions and the whole totality through ritual

activities. Human has assumed an intermediary agent at a mid place between the natural and social order and it has both positive and negative roles of agent. Change against the established order whether natural and social human agent are mediated through temporal and spiritual based institutional frameworks.

The following picture portrays *gadaa* born cyclic relationships among various elements of environment

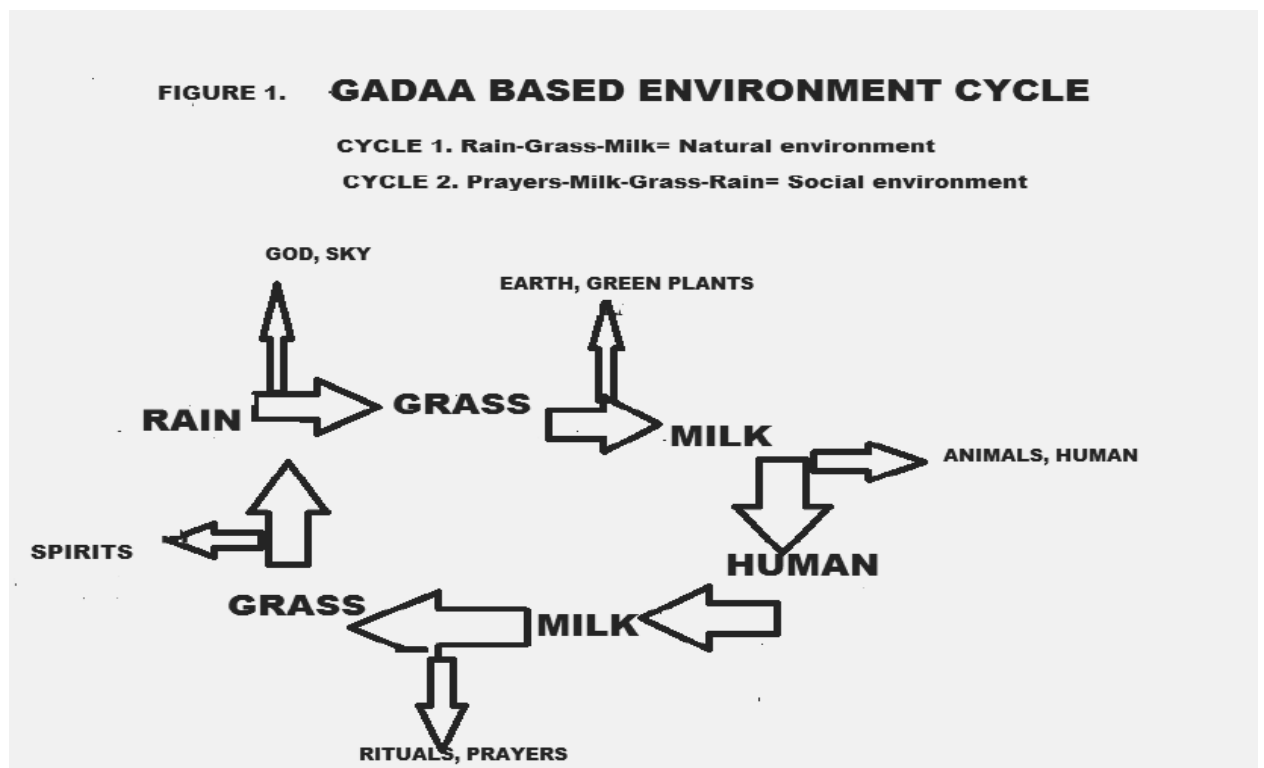


Figure. 3.1. Gadaa Based Environment Cycle. Source: own interpretation

As it is seen from the picture, the cycle natural order world principally constitutes three essential elements in its first half part along with the existence of human being. Between and among the three spearheading elements are other numerous constituents varying from inanimate to animate organisms formed supporters and dependents. Even though the three leading are seemed to be crucial in providing what are desirable particularly food and water for the whole life the remaining should be cooperative in order the whole follow them and becomes reliant. As the

result, the outcomes of interconnected diverse elements and a spiral network in the form of primary and secondary feeders and suppliers are formed through *gadaa* views of environment.

The totality has two divisions: natural world order and social human world order. While the natural world order contained the three essentials elements and the social human world order is the realm of *Gadaa*. The realm of *Gadaa* is reinforced through human ritualistic power. Ritually, human pours milk on the grass which is spiritually empowered and together pledged God for rain, peace, prosperity, health and tranquility for all things in the whole universe and to maintain the natural order recurring. The procession is the outcome of each individual element as well as the whole.

The entire unified cyclic two solid halves: the nature world order-God and social human world order-*Gadaa* ritual.

1<sup>st</sup> halve phase: Rain (primary feeder of the earth causes green wealth)→grass (primary living organisms feeder/ herbivorous)→milk (secondary living organisms feeder/breast sucking/mammalian)→human (the maintainer ritualistic) (one the other reinforcing order)

Natural world order

2<sup>nd</sup> halve phase: human →milk →grass →rain (one the other reinforcing order)

Social world order of interpretation

A grass can never be directly available without rain so does the milk without the former. As grass caused cattle to produce milk, conversely the milk is sprinkled ritually on grass and empowered spiritually to cause rain through human social agent. Thus, those means relationship pursued between two consecutive elements of natural order world is changed in social world case. While grass naturally pursues milk, in the social world case it is reversibly the milk empowered on the grass to cause rain.

Accordingly, every element in the universe is the outcome of a unified wave formed from unity of diverse elements of environment constructed in *gadaa* conceptions. *Gadaa* constructs this

whole relationship is developed into a sort of food web type of a unified elements chain formed from diverse components of environment. In this view of *gadaa*, the whole components of environment and every single element in universe are interlocked in functions to one the other mutual relationship unless a reversible reciprocity will set on to which watching institutions are accountable. This is determined on the extents the three essential availability is ensured and they desirably carry out their proper functions to their immediate next element. As the whole relationships are initiated through the full presence and proper functions of the three essential elements, their insufficiencies and shortages affected the whole relationships impious.

With a normal recurrent, the chain marked affluent and abundant circulation of environmental wellbeing. In the relationship human is supposed to be a key casual agent whose movements and activities turned on the establishment unhealthy and this is why the institutions are established. As the abundance of rain, grass and milk symbolize sufficient availability of food and prosperity, their absence/insufficiency are environmental shortening which is presented in the absence of rain, drought, hunger, disease, war, lack of peace and stability, poverty, etc (Eshetu, 2010; Alemayehu, 2009). Contrary to shortage of rain that causes absence of food and disruption of the procession, its availability ensure affluent grass, green floras and wet ecology which has testified richness, wealth, tranquility, abundance of peace, harmony among human and with non-human organisms. Gadaa conception strongly underlies that both social and environmental merits and crisis are reinforcing on another and inseparable unless human causal agent roles and its anthropogenic activities are submitted to the established institutions and ethos. Upon the conditions that each element carries out its functions and human interventions are moderated to desired line, the whole will be pursuant of health relationships and enjoy a positive result.

### **3.6 Institutional Setup Working around *Gadaa* Environmental Values**

#### ***Gadaa* Cardinal Laws (*Seera Iikkee*) versus Nature**

It is believed that Waaqaa (God) is the source of everything and *gadaa* is a responsible instrument watching the order and arrangement made and put at a place by Waaqaa (God) intact against any non-established actions, behavior, manner, attitudes and practices as violations. The ultimate goal of *gadaa*, like any social system, is ensuring peace and order in the society and

among the various elements of the natural environment as one has the role to initiate and abbreviate the other. For this purposes various reinforcing institutions are said to have been established and working towards this purpose under the banner of *gadaa* system. According to Samu'el (2011; Alemayehu (2009; Dereje (2005) *Gadaa* is known to have making laws for the protections of major elements of environment known by the name *Seera ikkee* (cardinal law). This cardinal law of *gadaa* is uttered to be the fundamental of all laws under the mother law of the nation named *seera walaabuu* during the *gadaa* system of governance that the tradition is still existed in three of the study areas. Some of these include the law of God (*seera Waaqaa*) and the law of earth (*seera Lafaa*). The law of *Waaqaa* and *lafaa* underline the compulsoriness and commendableness to respect both and protect their constituent elements from unnecessary intervention against their established functions. The other category is those supplementary laws which are particularly referred to specific element such as the law of grass (*margaa*), the law of water (*bishaan*), the law of mineral water (*hora*), the law of mountain (*tulluu*), and etc (Alemayehu, 2009).

*Gadaa* value of environment was also supported by other customary temporal and religious centered institutions. This is operational through various interactions regulating and watching institutions established at various points and during varying seasons of a year. The institutions are like *safuu*, *wayyuu* (Guji and Arsii), *Ulfo* (Tulama), *irreessaa*, *adbaarii*, etc (Samu'el, 2010; Alemayehu, 2009). They are reinforced through the preventive strategies as blessing and cursing, material punishment, moral impeachment, physical corporal sentences, etc. Some of these are seasons of a year, sites and species targeted ones that value-centered and place-centered consciousnesses of natural resources management have developed in *gadaa*.

The strategies and institutional frameworks are established to moderate open access utilization of nature and natural resources. Every relations and contacts of human are submitted to the established institutions which worked towards harmonizing and stabilizing the whole relationships from imbalances. These include refraining to take unwanted interventions to practicing necessary ritual, spiritual, religious, temporal, etc requirement as remedies mediate against all things unallowable. The manners of wrongs could be in action, behavior, attitudes, views, gestures, body movements, etc are given nature conformity and/ unconformity implication

and there needs to be supervised submitting to the established institutions from causing environment problem. Institutional setup established around environment remedial can also have pre-hazardous and post-hazardous forms. While the former include various forms of God thanks-giving expression for its abundant provisions and second is confronting remedies.

Even if the background knowledge of historical and cultural roots has witnessed strong nature affiliations Gadaa system has declined since the 20<sup>th</sup> century including the areas referred for the study. More or less, a discussion held at any level on Oromo worldview would have never barred the Gadaa system and its values since it is an entire system of the populace. However, it is unfortunate that contrary to its bearing human generational values and wisdom, Gadaa values of environment is not so far explicitly brought to the center of attentions. Nonetheless, *gadaa* is emerging to be the centric unifying force, symbol of the nation, warehouse of their indigenous knowledge and part of their reviving identity. There seemed to be one of the beneficiaries of the shift to re-indigenization policy in Ethiopia politics. This is to the extents that human wisdom is studied and integrated to the center of attentions and contemporary developmental circles. But, indigenous knowledge limitations of particularistic culture characterized Gadaa.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Like any indigenous wisdom, *Gadaa* has its own experiences of interactions with nature through cultural established institutions and strategies of adaptation. Some important indicators witnessed as to how *gadaa* and nature are interrelated can be the various views, knowledge and practices in *gadaa*, the type of relationships and interactions with key natural physical resources. From the overall discussion *gadaa* conceptualized nature and various forms of its practices at varying point and level have shown considerate of nature conservation. *Gadaa* is nature friendly and this reality is confirmed from how major components of environment are consulted, referred and involved in *gadaa* and the interactions between both are held with a form of certain curiosity and under the established institutional setup. In general, starting from the origin of the word *gadaa*, its cycles, the knowledge with Odaa center of assembly, the unity among various components of environment and the presence of enforcing mechanisms are some of the evidences. These are witnessing the evolvement of *gadaa* out of nature and some major points of commonness shared

between both that there is said to be certain level of understanding in *gadaa* through its wider interactions which enables to develop mutual relationships.

In all of the discussions, *gadaa* understood itself integral unit of the universe and it is believed to have its own roles and functions in the totality. Environmental health and wellbeing are the outcome of positive cooperation among the diverse cosmos. *Gadaa* also beware the negative causal agent of human anthropogenic activities to which a number of indigenous institutors have been accountable. So, the outcome should not be always expected positive and mutual as human demand is limitless unless certain mechanisms to moderate established and this is what *gadaa* incorporated those institutions and legal frameworks at its hearts.

In *Gadaa* rain/ water grass and milk are the three essential elements determining the health conditions of the cosmos. These elements are interrelated in a way each is desirably provided and support the other in the universe. In *gadaa* components of environment are always in a constant form of supporting and enhancing one another and the whole relationships of things in the universe winds around such dependence-interdependence scenarios. Everything has its own roles and functions in the universe that has associated and linked it with another element and enhancing its functions to the next and the whole in general.

In *gadaa* driven philosophy the existence of green, wet and affluent ecology determine peace and security of the universe. The knowledge also identified what to process to maintain nature unaffected and how to solve environmental problems to avert its subsequent result, social crisis. In this view, social and natural environment wellbeing and shortening are direct to one another. Green and wet ecology are beyond the need to fill basic palatable needs. In *gadaa* knowledge of environment they are beyond what they appear to the modern society and someone outside the culture. They are fundamental symbols for abundant and rich environment in their actual being and non-being forms. Through the laws of *Gadaa* these and other natural resources has been provided with protections. There is said to be that value-centered and place-based consciousness have been parts of the strategy lifted some resources and sites beyond human palatable services only to non-economic and non-material values orientation.

*Gadaa* knowledge of environment is not alien to and different from the *gadaa* system thought. In leading and guiding the populace life under its banner, how *Gadaa* views, knowledge and practices with environmental components was so crucial in shaping both human and natural environment. Even if the actual status of *gadaa* is not exactly that of its past before the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the researcher believes that the area will spit some lights on the area of environment management if the knowledge is properly integrated to environment conservation policy. Besides, the study can also substantiate the claim for revitalizing *gadaa*.

For holistic sustainability there should be devises which will ensure survival of some useful indigenous values. But, measures taken in favor of revitalization of indigenous values in the country so far do not proceed to empowering local institutions, bearers of the knowhow through legal frameworks and directly integrated them to developmental policies. The local people do not get space where they exercise their indigenous knowledge which is sometimes embedded to sacred sites and places or either their knowledge integrated to ‘state knowhow’ and its environmental conservation policies which only incorporated the physical people through participation approach instead of people’s knowhow. The way to save should include the adoption of landscape management, delineate and define their physical territory, conducting extensive study and making to be known to the public, introducing new programs like local environment knowledge, etc. A clear standing from the concerning body including government in setting culture regulatory frame works will empower and make the local populace assume full control and ownerships rights over their cultural ecology, their resources (both nature and culture), associated values, etc.

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#### 4. Include the Exclude: The Status and the Role of Women in the Oromoo

##### Gadaa Institution

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##### Abstract

Women play seminal roles in the day-to-day activities of the Oromoo. They have high status and significant role in the Gadaa government organs. This paper focused on the description of the status and role of women in the three Gadaa government organs and its implication for exercising their rights. The pre-existing literatures showed that women are totally excluded from the three Gadaa government organs (legislative, executive and judiciary). However, historical and ethnographic evidences and varieties of valuable material culture uncovered the high status and significant role of women in the Gadaa government, more importantly in the legislative and judiciary organs. In brief, the research data revealed that even though the participation of women in the Gadaa institution in previous time is affected by internal and external factors, currently they have significant status and role in the Gadaa government system. Their status and roles were critically presented and discussed.

**Key Terms:** Executive, Gadaa, Gender, Judiciary and Legislative

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The Oromoo is the single largest ethnic group in the horn of Africa; occupy a land that extends from northeastern Ethiopia to east central Kenya and from the Sudan in the west and Somalia in the east (Haberland, 1970). The Oromoo, an African indigenous people started to live in Ethiopia with their indigenous Gadaa government organs since the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Feyisa, 1998). Regarding the population, the Oromoo refers to an ethnic group counting about 40 million people live in Ethiopia, while about four million live in Kenya (Fille, 2015). In sum, currently the number of Oromoo is estimated at about 45 million live in Africa, that is to say the Oromoo constitutes more than half of the population of Ethiopia.

The Oromoo, being naturalist believe in Waakaa, the only and the creator of all things. The Oromoo speak Afaan Oromoo, categorized as a member of the eastern high land languages of the Cushitic family. It is the third widely spoken language in Africa next to Hausa and Swahili respectively (Lewis, 1994).

Dirribi (2011, p.134) explains that after the proliferation of the Oromoo people, different Oromoo moieties were established their own socio-cultural centres for convocation and congregation under different regional Odaas. Accordingly, Sabboo-Goonaa established a socio-cultural centre at Odaa Gaarree (today's Booranaa zone), the Raayyaa-Asaboo at Odaa Makoodii (today's south Tigray zone), the Siikoo-Mandoo at Odaa Roobaa (today's Baalee zone), the Ituu-Humbanaa at Odaa Bultum (today's west Harargee zone), and the Tuulamaa-Maccaa at Odaa Nabee (today's south west Shawaa zone), Odaa Nabee established in 1230 A.D for the politico-religious centre of the Tuulamaa-Maccaa and after 250 years Odaa Bisil was established in 1480 A.D for the Maccaa proper (Negaso, 2001).

Gadaa is an indigenous, endogenous and ingenious institution that incorporates political, social and economic issues of the Oromoo. Women have their own role and status in the political, social and economic affairs of the Oromoo Gadaa institution.

An ethnographic account of the role and the status of Oromoo women in the political, economic and social affairs and its implications for development of gender equality among the people constitute the central part of this paper. The paper demonstrated the importance of women as an important part of the development of human concern.

## **1.2 Rationale**

There are misconceptions and misunderstandings among different writers and scholars about the status and the role of women in the socio-political life of the Oromoo that says the Oromoo Gadaa system excludes females from socio-political life. They also emphasised that women have no role and are not taking part in the three Gadaa government organs.

Similarly, with regard to the role and the status of women in the Oromoo Gadaa government, one of the writers, Dirribi (2011, p.344) describes that one of the shortcomings of the Oromoo Gadaa system is the exclusion of women from political participation. This means that they do not have the right to elect their representatives and to be elected as the member of the Gadaa higher government organs. Getu (2005, p.51) in his way also describes, it is commonly said that women are restricted to domestic work and are excluded from public activities, including conflict resolution.

However, Dirribi's and Getu's view from the above might have been emanated for one thing, from the replication of hasty generalization of foreign and local writers and researchers; second without conducting a thorough ethnographic research and without the triangulation of different foreign and local researches as well as publications. Thus, the view is different from yes. Because, even though women are excluded from executive organ, because of the domination of Oromoo culture by the previous regimes, still in different parts of the Oromoo major clans, they are playing a great role in solving political, economic and social conflicts that are created among the people (acting as judiciary organs).

In this paper therefore, a better understanding was created as if women have a great role and they have high status in the Oromoo Gadaa institution. It has also been identified and presented that Oromoo women have their own independent institutions (Siiqqee and Ateetee) parallel to Gadaa that that help to protect their social, political and economic rights over the men.

### 1.3 Objective

The following specific objectives are the focus of the research paper.

- To explore and describe the current status and the role of Oromoo women in the three Gadaa government organs,
- To identify material cultures that help to symbolize the equality of women,
- To examine the factors that may affect the equality of women vs. men.

## 2 Literature Review

Indigenous knowledge is the unique traditional local knowledge exists within the minds of the indigenous people and develops around specific conditions of a particular geographic area (Grenier, 1998, p.12). Emeagwali (2003) also describes that indigenous knowledge is related to the indigenous people who have their own ontology that passes over generations through verbal and material elements. This is described that indigenous knowledge is the product of the local people that is neither imported nor transplanted from other societies.

In a similar fashion, Bascom (2007, p.376) also describes folk knowledge: comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth, all crafts and other techniques that are learned by imitation or example, as well as the products of these craft.

The statement shows that folk knowledge genres emerges out of indigenous people's' customs, traditions and norms that is embodied in all forms of folk wisdom, including traditional belief systems, folk arts, folk narratives and etc.

The ideology of gender in a society is part of the indigenous knowledge of that society and the society's complex socio-economic structure (Jeylan, 2004, p.107) According to Jackson (1993, p. 660) as cited in Jeylan (2004, p.103) one feature of a gender ideology is that men and women are relational, socially constructed, culturally specific and negotiated categories.

However, the discrimination aspect of the vulnerable groups such as the system against youths, women, the poor and ethnic minorities and groups who were traditionally discriminated against in the traditional setting for various reasons is one of the limitations of the folk knowledge that poses big challenges in Africa (Kane, et. la, 2005). This could happen because of most African

folk knowledge in general and Ethiopian in particular are patriarchal and in most parts generational in character; thus most African folk lore favours males who have high social status in the people over the females.

Similarly, IDLo (2010, p.7) emphasizes that on the inequality of male and female in Namibian people traditional legal practices that due to the existing social and economic disparities between men and women a mere reliance on equal treatment will not overcome the imbalance. Such women disparity in fact is not only limited in Namibian; but common even in Ethiopian traditional practices (Aberra, 1998) and other African countries too (Kuruk, 2002).

However, Robert (2004, p.7) differently describes that within the Southern Sudanese society the role and status of women is seen as a reflection of a culture that places a premium on the cohesion and strength of the family as a basis of society. According to the writer, the role of women in this social pattern is that of cementing family ties through 'bride-wealth' and of producing children.

The view of Robert is different from the aforementioned statements the fact that women are very important in creating social bondage among the southern Sudan. That means the status and the role of women in African societies including Ethiopia in general and the Oromoo in particular are different from society to society. This marks every society has its own ideology, perception and recognition about the status and the role of women in different social group.

However, the marginalization of women from political sphere is a universal issue. As a result, this day's several scholars have challenged and argued for a rethinking of the role of women in every human concern.

### **3 Research Methods and Materials**

Methods of researches are procedural rules that the researchers should follow and apply. In this paper, ethnographic type of research designs and procedures are chosen based on the title and objective of the research. Accordingly, descriptive type of research and purposive sampling technique were employed to collect relevant and appropriate data from primary and secondary sources.

Among different data collection instruments: partial observation, unstructured interview and text analysis of ethnographic evidences were also given due attention. Finally, after the relevant data have been collected and organized, data were qualitatively described and presented.

## **4 Results and Discussion**

Without participation of women, the Oromoo socio-political practices could be meaningless. That is to say, any social, political and economic practice irrespective of women may not be fruitful. Thus, exploring the status and the role of women in the socio-political life of the Oromoo were given due attention. The research data made clear that the Oromoo women have great role in exercising their political right in different ways in the three Gadaa government organs.

### **4.1 Political Rights**

Women have a significant role in exercising their political right in different Gadaa rites and rituals. Political right is the right that every citizen of a nation can exercise his or her democratic rights that are the right to elect and to be elected as well as the right to express his or her idea.

Gadaa is a complex system of age class and democratic institution established to govern political, economic, social affairs of the Oromoo. Comparable to the modern democratic systems, it has executive, legislative and judiciary organs that play their seminal role in day-to-day activities of the Oromoo (Asmerom, 2006). Political rights can be described in three different Gadaa government organs.

#### **4.1.1 Executive**

The Oromoo women had been part of Gadaa executive organs in previous times. For instance, Eshetu (2009) emphasizes that in previous times a woman called Waaqeehad been the leader of GadaaHulle of Jimmaa in the second half of 19 century. The writer further explains that after the Warra Bakere of Leeqaa Naqamtee came to power the participation of women as the member of executive organ became collapsed in the Gadaa government system.

Even though Eshetu did not mention the exact data of Waaqee's Gadaa power and in which Gadaa cycle and which Gadaa party she had been leading, a woman had been executive head (Abbaa Gadaa) of the Maccaa Oromoo.

Ayalew (2005, Pp.215-216) strengthens the issue in describing, if a chairperson *Abbaa Bokkuu* of an assembly dies in exercising his function, the *Bokkuu* passes onto his son and if he does not have one, the wife of the deceased keeps the *Bokkuu* and proclaims the law. Ayalew's view marks that the wife of an *Abbaa Bokkuu* becomes the successor of the husband. The view manifests the fact that in the Oromoo political philosophy women had the right to act as and participate in the higher *Gadaa* government organs in previous times.

An ethnographic data disclosed there is a legend that in previous times, there were six *Gadaa* parties. Among these, five were the men's *Gadaa*; while one was the *Gadaa* of women called *Gadaa Saaphaloo* (it needs exploratory research). Eventually, women ignored and rejected their own. This is the reason for excluding women from the male *Gadaa* higher officials (Fille, 2015). That means women's membership as executive of the higher *Gadaa* government organ came to end with the coming to an end of the function of women's *Gadaa* party.

Ethnographic evidences attested the fact that in previous time (before the domination of the Oromoo *Gadaa* democratic government system) Oromoo women have had high status and great role in executive *Gadaa* government organs. However, currently because of external and internal factors the involvement and participation of women in the Oromoo *Gadaa* government organ as membership of executive is becoming endangered. In sum, the total exclusion of women in the Oromoo *Gadaa* government organ as executive is basically, far from yes.

#### 4.1.2 Legislative

A common question reads why Oromoo women are not included in the making of *Gadaa* law? The marginalization of women in the legislative organs of the Oromoo is a new trend. This can be treated in different ways:

An interview source made clear that in previous time, 22 females and 23 males were participating in the law making of the *Maccaa Gadaa*. Among the 22 women, nine virgin girls (*Shanee salgee duraa*) between 9-24 years old, nine were married (*taadhii*) women (*Shanee salgee sadaffaa*) between 33-48 years old and four women (*marabbeessitoota*, members of the 5<sup>th</sup> *gumii*) between 49-80 years old from the legislative organ.

The inclusion of different age groups in the legislative organ in the above manifests that the nine girls represents the Gammee Xixiqqaa or Itti Makoo ( 9-16) and Gammee Gurguddoo or Dabballee (16-24) group in that young girls have the right to exercise their political rights as membership of the society. Briefly, they strive to enact laws that protect early marriage among the society.

One the other hand, the concept of number nine manifests Salgan Yaa'ii Booranaa, the entire Oromoo. Similarly, nine fertile women (taadhii) represent the entire married Oromoo women to advocate political, physical, social and economic rights of the married women.

The remaining four women called marabbeessitootaa (facilitators) have the role of facilitation as long as their age is above the age of active Abbaa Gadaa or Abbaa Bokkuu. They also play great role in advising, counselling and blessing the active legislative organs, and are acting advocates of the old women so that they have high status among the people. In their advocacy, they strive to enact laws that may not affect the rights of the entire society in general and the right of aged women in particular.

Among 23 males, nine *qeerroo* (unmarried boys) (*Shanee salgee lammaffaa*) between 9-24 years old, nine married males (*buulaa dhiiraa*) (*Shanee salgee arfaaffaa*) between 33-48 years old and five men (*jaarsa biyyaa*, members of the fif<sup>th</sup> *gumii*) between 49-80 years old are members of legislative organ. That is to say, in the previous time the Maccaa Gadaa law was enacted with the difference of only one legislative male that is insignificant to say total marginalization of woman from the member of legislative organ

According to the above statements, among the *Gadaa* age grades, 0-8 year old called *daa'imman* and between 25-32 years old called *foollee* (both male and female) are not expected to be incorporated in the law making. This is because, children between 0-8 years old are not matured, similarly, the *Foollee* group between 25-32 years old is excluded because of the time of the pre and post marriage activities.

The above ethnographic data disproves Asmerom's (1973, p.19) view that says the Oromoo women are entirely excluded from *Gadaa* age grade. Asmerom conducted his research only focusing on Borana Oromoo that did not include the entire Oromoo ideology about women.

In addition, *Jaartii Cifree* in the *Buttaa* rituals of the Maccaa is an institution that is acting as part of the legislative organ established from the respected and popular married women who have experience in managing, advising and counselling the society and their family.

During the actual Maccaa *Buttaa* ritual, three women known by the name of *Jaartii Cifrees* were staying alone. In addition to the role they have in the *Buttaa* preliminary activities, they were participating in making the tukuls of the whole *Agaajimaas* called *Fooqa Ajjeeruu* (Fille, 2015).

The basic criteria for selecting those women are their good conduct and trustworthiness for their families and the society. The selected ones are hard workers in managing their family and participate in different social services. This may help to encourage other women in the society let them be courage and active.

To sum, women had a great role in making laws in their *Gadaa* party. Nevertheless, these days their *Gadaa* and their participation as legislative organ ceased to function because of external and internal factors. Even though Oromoo women are neglected as legislative organ as discussed above, they still have a great share in the participating in the power hand over of *Gadaa* power and legal enforcements of the Oromoo people.

#### 4.1.3 Judiciary

Women have a significant role and have high status in the enforcement of the folk laws such as in *Gumaa* conflict resolution and other alternative dispute resolution institutions and mechanisms.

In the first phase of *Gumaa* conflict resolution for instance, as soon as the victim's side shows its consent to receive the blood compensation through the elders of their clan, the elders from both sides gather at a convenience place to solve the conflict. In the meantime, the local elders collect five spears, shield, *Kallachaa* and *Caaccuu* and call the active members of the *Gadaa* party, *Jaartii Cifree* and the *lubaa* and ask the families of the victim to receive the blood compensation. Still, if the victim part refuses the question *Jaartii Cifrees* sent to the family.

In Oromoo sacrament, women in general and *Jaarii Cifree* in particular are the sacred bodies so that the victim's family or group are expected to show their consent to solve the conflict soon.

Refusing Jaartii Cifiree's view forced to curse. In addition, other institutions are acting as judiciary organs in protecting physical and moral rights of Oromoo women.

#### **4.1.3.1 Ateetee Institution**

There are different forms of Ateetee of the Oromoo women practicing for different purposes in different settings. Getu (2005) describes that Ateetee ceremony represents a ritualized form of protest expressed by women against violence and abuse of their right. It is an occasion when women air their voices against male domination and gender based violence through verbal communications, songs chatting and many forms of paralinguistic expressions.

In strengthening the above statement, there are four major types of Ateetee ritualized by Oromoo women: The Ateetee of protecting male domination and violence over women, Ateetee of fertility of women (bearing) (most of the time in January), Ateetee of religious (pray during drought and heavy rain) and Ateetee of animals (cattle fertility) and crops production (jaarii Kormaa and Gindii Hiikaa (Fille, 2016).

The research data revealed that the above Ateetee are celebrated and ritualized in different forms at different times. However, the entire Ateetee rituals are totally dominated by women. That is to say, Ateetee excludes or marginalizes male as of Siiqqee institution.

#### **4.1.3.2 Siiqqee Institution**

Siiqqee is an independent women institution that is used to protect and secure the political, physical, economic and human right of women in the Oromoo socio-political life. It totally women dominated institution celebrated at different times for different purposes.

Kuwee (1997) further explains that women use Siiqqee for various ceremonial purposes. They use it to symbolize their status and honour, to protect their rights and to resolve conflicts that range from martial dispute to inter clan fighting. Even though it is important in protecting and securing the rights of women currently it is gradually declining due to different factors.

This is further explained that the Gadaa system, which seemingly excludes women, has designed an institution known as Siiqqee and Ateetee that actively excluded men (Kuwee, 1997).

## **4.2 Economic Rights**

In the Oromoo socio-political life women have the right to produce and possess, the right to proper utilization of resources, the right to own, the right conserve and control their property and their husband too. They have the right to control visible and invisible as well as movable and immovable properties of their couple (Jabessa, 1995).

For instance, during marriage, the family of the bride or groom give a number of cows and household materials so that she has found their post share from the succession of the property of their family.

## **4.3. Social Right**

The status and the role of women in the Oromoo socio-political life can be described in different ways. Ethnographic data and textual analysis revealed that women have the right to adopt or being adoptee, as well as they have the right to practice religious practices

### **4.3.1 The Right to Adopt**

Equal to men, Oromoo women have the right to adopt children to solve their socio-economic problems at both sides.

The observation data manifested the fact that during the ritual of adoption, first an adopter woman enters the promise of adoption as of the husband. Then, the adopter mother anointed the bases of the five spears laid at the adoption centre and the tip of war leader's whip. She also smeared the heads of the law pronouncers with butter. Finally, she carried the adoptee on her shoulder and moved to her home direction. This is to put good impression and sense of belongingness in the mind of the adoptee that the adopter mother is seen as the true and biological mother.

In the Maccaa social life; the adoptee may or may not be only from the celebrants or clan and may not only be confined to the male group. That is to say, women can have the right to adopt child (female) without restriction. In other words, a woman can have the right to adopt a daughter (female) in the absence of husband. However, she cannot adopt a son (male) in the absence of husband (Fille, 2015).

#### 4.3.2 The Right to Manifest Religious Practices (Ateetee Furmaa/Gorobbee)

In addition, the religious manifestation of Oromoo women is not restricted only to the wellbeing and welfare of women, but also they pray to Waaqa when unexpected natural disastrous occur in their area.

In this regard, it is explained that the Arsi women refer to the mysteriously configured nature in their surroundings to show that the surrounding world is an immutable proof of the ceaseless operation of the power of God (Jeyllan, 2005:, p.29). Jeyllan describes that during harsh ecological disruptions and difficult social crises, the Arsii women gathered and prayed to their Waaqaa. Concisely, Oromoo women play a great role in mediating the rule of nature with human being.

### 5. Material Culture Signifying the Equality of Female and Male

The research data have shown that there are different types of material culture that help to signify the involvement of male and female in different rites and rituals of the Oromoo.

#### 5.1 Siiqqee vs Ulaagaa

Ulaagaais one of the powerful legal materials employed during the enactment of the Gadaa law always hold only by men. It is parallel to the Siiqqee of women both in its legal power and in its straightness. The observation data revealed that is a powerful and straight stick, which has spiritual and legal power that hold by all celebrants used to make of Gadaa law.

*Ulaagaa* literally means, criterion that is used to select someone or something from others.

The implication that *Gadaa* norm likes straight/fair trial, dislikes outlawed and wrongs and it is used to govern the society according to the norms of Waaqaa. *Ulaagaa* is also seen as a powerful spiritual object during *dagaagaa qaluu*. This has shown in the annotated video that when all celebrants pointed their *Ulaagaa* to the bull, the bull showed ominous sign, came docile and fell down without any connection. This makes it as one of the powerful legal materials used to enact folk laws. In addition, *Ulaagaa* also adhered as a powerful material under which libation takes place, thus erected with *Birbirsaa*.

## 5.2 Elellaan/Caaccuufi Kallacha, buna

Elellaan, and Caaccuu are sacred material elements help to signify the participation of Oromoo women in different socio-political life of the people. Similarly, Caaccuu, Elellaan and Bunnaa signify the genital organ of female that is to mark the participation of women in the social life of the people.

The above statement further explained that both Kallachaa and its ornament Caaccuu are the respected or sacred materials among the society. Caaccuu symbolizes female's sex organ as well as represents the earth at the opposite tip of the sky (Getu, 2005, p. 46).

Kallachaa is another powerful legal material that is tied on the head of executive organs. In legendary, Kallachaa is fallen from Waaqaa with thunder. Thus, it is given from Waaqaa. As Caaccuu and Elellaan are the sacred ornamental materials for women men only tie Kallachaa. This means the equality of male and female in Gadaa government organs is reflect and manifested by different material elements of the people.

## 5.3 Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu

*Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu* is one of the manmade legal materials predominantly hold by *Abbaa Gadaa* and *Abbaa Bokkuu*. Other high standing *Gadaa* officials also hold it as a symbol of authority and signifying the importance of *Gadaa* institution and its government. However, in addition to members of the *Gadaa* council, now days, it is common to see other Oromoo males holding *Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu* during important public celebrations, religious ceremonies and even at wedding.

Holding *Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu* is seen as identity marker and adherence of *Gadaa* law. It is also seen as gender marker. Existing literature about most African folk laws indicate that the males section of the society are favoured as compared to females; signifying that law making is males domain. However, in the Maccaa society, *Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu* represents the participation of female and male in the enactment of the *Gadaa* law. Look at its figure below.

A closer look at the features (shapes) depicted at the two ends of *Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu* clearly shows the participation of male and female in the *Buttaa* rituals. By definition, as could be seen from the picture, *Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu* has a swollen round shape at its one end (left) symbolizing male scrotum. At its opposite end, it has a bifurcated shape-symbolizing female's genital organ (Fille, 2015).

## 6. Factors Affecting the Inequality of Women

In the Oromoo socio-political life currently, it is impossible to conclude that women have equal right acting as legislative, executive and judiciary organs to men. This cloud happened because of different factors.

### 6.1 Religious factors

The textual data marks that the shift in the belief system in the Maccaa land constitutes another factor endangering the development of the folk law. The introduction and the spread of alien religion among the societies adversely affected traditional laws of the society. For instance, the replacement of the traditional belief by Christianity and Islam has brought not only a change in values, but also outlawed most of the accompanying *Buttaa* rituals among the society (Lamu, 1994).

An interview data has shown that as a means of doing away with elements of traditional Oromoo belief system, today, protestant converts in our locality buy material culture such as Kallachaa, Caaccuu, Elellaan, *Ulee Abbaa Bokkuu*, Siiqqee, Ulaagaa whipsand other artefacts used for cursing and blessing in the process of conflict resolution to destroy. They collect and burn the objects considering them as symbols of bad spirit.

In addition, Islamic values are also at odds with elements of traditional beliefs and symbols. Like their Christian counter-parts, Muslims despise ritual performances accompanying traditional law making. As indicated in literature review, the introduction of alien religion into the Oromoo land and the spread of their values have left their marks on Oromoo culture (Asefa, 2010 & Geda, 1988).

## 6.2 The Introduction of Modern Political System

The subsequent Ethiopian governments did not give due attention and recognition to the indigenous government system and institutions. Instead, they imported and grafted foreign constitutions (Fille, 2015).

Geda (1998) explains that one of the basic factors that directly or indirectly affects the Oromoo socio-political philosophy is the domination of the previous regimes, the destruction of the Oromoo Caffee council, and the centre of Gadaa rituals and religious rites.

By the name of systematization and modernization of its political system, Ethiopia has carried out either wholesale adoption or partial borrowing of provisions from foregoing laws, which have been incorporated into its constitutions without consideration of their contextual effects. Such modernist zeal, though important in many respects, yet brought about abolition of many equally, if not better, provisions of folk laws that have been used for centuries to solve pertinent social problems. Because of such impositions, the status and the role of women are endangered.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper is therefore has a contribution in a line of scholarship that argues for the need to incorporate a variety of important cultural values and institutions in the development of the rights of women. The interdependence of the domains of women and men is a precondition for maintaining moral and social values in the society.

### 7.1 Conclusion

Some of the pre-existing literature describe that the Oromoo Gadaa government organs totally exclude women from the executive, legislative and judiciary organs. However, it has been described in the discussion that ethnographic data and historical evidences uncovered that women have great role and have high status in the socio-political life of the Oromoo.

Asmerom (1973, Pp. 19-20 also confirmed the issue that the position of the Oromoo women in the egalitarian Gadaa System both oral traditions and historical records show a glimpse of women's better socio-political position.

In conclusion, even though the participation of women as executive, legislative and judiciary organs in previous times are directly or indirectly affected by external and internal factors still the status and the role of women in the Oromoo Gadaa government organ are very high. Their participation is manifested by different material culture used in exercising their political, physical, social and economic rights.

More importantly, they are playing great role and have high status in as legislative and judiciary organs. However, with regard to the marginalization of women as the member of executive organ in the socio-political affairs of the Oromoo still a gap seeks necessary answers.

## **7.2 Recommendation**

A society without woman is a flesh without blood. That is to say, women are very important in the social life of any society. As a result, not only women themselves every person has to hold his share to enrich and maximize the empowerment of women in the three socio-political ladders. More importantly, political officials have to play a great role to scale up and enrich the involvement of women in general and the Oromoo women in particular. In sum, women themselves primarily are responsible to strive to exercise their political, physical, social and economic rights in participating in the three Gadaa government organs.

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**5. Women and Indigenous Conflict Resolution Institutions in Oromia: Experience  
from *Siinqee* of the *WayyuShanan* Arsi Oromoo**

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*Abstract*

The central aim of this thesis is to study the practical and potential roles of the Arsi Oromoo women in indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms with specific reference to *siinqee* institution. As an institution *siinqee* represents the over all aspects of Arsi women. It protects their rights. It is the ritual stick of Oromoo woman that can play cultural, economic, political and religious roles in the Oromoo society. It has various symbolic representations such as a symbol of marriage of Oromoo women, a symbol of power of Oromoo women, a conflict resolution mechanism, a ritual stick used for praying and cattle ride purpose. The women in the Oromoo society are considered as a symbol of mediation and peace building. As an institution of conflict resolution, *siinqee* resolve, conflict between different social groups, like between spouse, between mother and son, between the Oromoo and different ethnic groups and so on. Women are considered as peace makers and respected by all members of the community. They can resolve from small dispute to violent conflicts that occur in the community. Relevant information for this research has been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. With regard to collecting the primary data, key informant interview: structured and semi-structured interviews, observation and focus group discussion was conducted and the information was gathered depending on the objective of this study. The general emphasis of this study specifically focused among the *Wayyu Shanan* Oromoo of Arsi Oromoo in Adami Tulu Jiddo Kombolcha District of Eastern Shawa Zone.

Key words; *siinqee institution, women, conflict*

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

In Oromoo community there are several customary conflict resolution mechanisms. They are such *Gadaa* system or *Gadaa* council, *jarsummaa*, *Qaalluu* system or decision of spiritual leaders, *gumaa* system, *siinqee* institution etc. *Gadaa* system is one of the interesting ways of conflict resolution institution and well respected among the Oromoo community in Ethiopia (Deselegn et al, 2007: 148). "During their long history of egalitarian culture, the Oromoo developed a uniquely democratic socio-political structure known as *Gadaa*" (Cerulli, 1922; Huntingford, 1955; Asmerom, 1973; Melbaa, 1991 cited in Kuwe, 1997: 116) which can be taken as a symbol of practicing collective approach. However during the period of *Gadaa* rule, women were actively excluded from the politico-military structures by the *Gadaa* rule, they were not born into a *Gadaa* grade; they were only married into one (Asmerom, 1973:19).

*Siinqee* is a stick symbolizing a socially authorized set of rights exercised by Oromoo women. Gemetchu, (1993), Esrael, (2009), Desalegn *et al*, (2007:152) assert that there was a check and balance mechanism built into the *Gadaa* system by which *siinqee* was institutionalized, and women formed parallel organizations of their own which actively excluded men. *siinqee* plays, social, economic, religious and political roles among Oromoo women. Women of Oromoo fights with their *siinqee* when their rights are violated, when conflicts happen between the same or different groups, neighbors, clans, nation etc. a woman fights a battle with *siinqee* to control conflict (Kuwe, 1997).

In this study, efforts are going to be made to identify the types of and cause for the major prevailing conflicts, their impacts on the society in general and women in particular, the role of women in conflicts and indigenous conflict management practice with specific reference to *siinqee* among the Arsi Oromoo community residing in the Adami Tullu Jiddo Kombolcha district. Accordingly, this study discovers the system of conflict management in the targeted community, and examines the socio-cultural settings of women's representation in the system. Some of the important elements of the socio-cultural settings of the community in the study area in one way or another related to conflict and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms will be among the key focus area of the study.

## Statement of the Problem

Conflict is one of the social events of human being that are inevitable at all but could be managed through various mechanisms. Conflict is not necessarily limited to just overtly violent situations as there are also non-violent ways of manifesting the prevalence of contradicting needs, ideas, interests and ideologies between and/or among individuals, groups, clans, societies, regions and states. Esrael (2009) has stated that the women have small contribution in conflict resolution process and it is limited to small area specifically in Arsi and works minor cases. Dejene (2002) argues nowadays *siinqee* exists as a ritual stick having the religious and moral authority of women and it could be employed on ritual events by having of demanding for mercy after homicide. Asmerom (1973) shows that the Oromoo women are entirely excluded from *Gadaa* age grade. Kuwee (1997) also discusses that the *Gadaa* system, which seemingly excludes women, has designed an institution known as *siinqeetha* that actively excluded men. Abera (1998) stated that there is evidence that in the old days, women played a very important role in opening negotiations to settle disputes that resulted from homicide among the Oromoo. Similarly Jeylan (2004) asserted that women have involved in rituals of conflict resolution. But he did not clearly explain their roles in conflict resolutions.

Moreover, different authors have studied but they did not discuss the *siinqee*, which is one of the traditional conflict management mechanisms practiced by Oromoo women. Besides, even in most of the existing few ethnographic writings targeting various groups in the country, in general and the Oromia region in particular, the authors tend to neglect the role of women in the various social, cultural, and economic interventions of their respective communities. Here, most researchers tend to gather the vital information relating to the roles and contributions of women from women themselves. Hence, most of the study reports on such issues are found to be very patchy and lack sincerity that in turn hinders them from giving their reader full reliable picture of women and their role in their respective community. Those who studied conflict resolution have not given due attention to women's role in conflict resolution of their respective society in general and of Arsi women in particular.

Hence, in the this study, exhaustive efforts are used in order to investigate the potential and real roles of women in the study area in managing the different sorts of conflicts rising between and among individuals, groups, societies, and administrative entities at the local level. In light of the existing

contradictory views, this research looks at the role and place of women in conflict resolution with specific reference to *siinqee* of the Arsi Oromoo the current practice as both activators and beneficiaries to fill these missing gaps.

### **Research Question**

This study addresses the following research questions:

- What are the major types of conflicts and factors that have been cause for conflict among the Arsi Oromoo?
- What are the indigenous conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Arsi Oromoo?
- What are the status and role of women in indigenous conflict resolution schemes practiced in the study area?
- Are there any cultural and societal settings that help women to play their role in indigenous conflict management interventions practice?
- Are there any sort of social, cultural, and gender-based settings and practices that hindered (bounded) women from playing their role in indigenous conflict management and related practices?

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to explore the role of women in indigenous conflict resolution institutions in Oromia with focus on *Siinqee* of the *WayyuShanan* Arsi Oromoo.

#### **Specific Objectives**

The current study has the following specific objectives;

1. To identify the types of conflicts prevailing in the study area along their causal factors;
2. To investigate indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms exercised by the Arsi Oromoo community of the study area ;
3. To identify the role of women in the targeted community on those indigenous conflict resolution schemes practiced in the study area;

4. To find out if there are any cultural and societal settings in the targeted community that help women to play their role in indigenous conflict management interventions practiced there; and
5. To find out if there are any sort of social, cultural, and gender-based settings and practices that hindered (bounded) women from playing their role in indigenous conflict management and related practices.

### **1.7 Research Design and Methodology**

Relevant and necessary data is needed for any research to reach to the final conclusion and to answer the research questions. The research is designed and employed a qualitative approach. To collect the necessary and relevant data I was used various methods like key informant interview, focus group discussion and observation.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

There are theoretical approaches such as symbolic interpretation, feminism and structural functionalism that can help me in explaining the functions of *siinqee* and its institution. The theory of interpretive anthropology, of Clifford Geertz is one of the best theories that can help me in interpretation the symbolic representations of *siinqee*. The importance of symbolic or interpretive anthropology is that it is a instrument for examining specific aspects of a society that involve symbolic representation to interpret the social structure and what is respected to a particular society. It is important to know "meaning, beliefs, values, worldviews, forms of feeling, styles of thought in terms of which particular peoples construct their existence and live out their particular lives" (Geertz, 2002, :10)

Geertz has stated that law is a type of social abstraction that is driven by culture and imagination intended to regulate social activities or life. He argued that there is a direct relationship and attachment between law on the one hand and myth, ritual, ideology, art or classification systems. In addition, he was famous in focusing on structures of meaning, primarily on the symbols and systems of symbols through whose agency or structures are formed, communicated, and imposed. Lastly he argued that cultures may be 'read' as if they were texts, and has gone far, especially early in his career, towards trying to show that cultures are integrated in a 'logic meaningful' way ( ibid, 1983:182).

According to Ellen Lewin, in her introductory part of her book "*Feminist Anthropology: A Reader Blackwell Anthologies in Social & Cultural Anthropology*"(2006), early in the mid-1970s feminist anthropologists from Great Britain and Europe, and from elsewhere in the world have major contributions in studying women by shifting their concern to the issues relating inferiority of female and the superiority of male cross-culturally. Everywhere they had studied they found the societies in which is male dominated and female subordinated. They were thinking about the ways that can help them to accomplish on constant '*socialinjustices*'. Similarly, Moore, (1999:152) has states that "in societies where women were apparently clearly subordinate in domestic, economic and political life could also be those where symbolic principles and cosmological beliefs valued powerful aspects of femininity."

The structural functionalist theory is one of the most important theoretical approaches to the study of conflict. The structural functionalist says conflict is bad that disintegrate the unity of society. Nader (1968) recognized that this theory emphasized both the structural sources and the structural functions of conflict. In view of that, Lewellen (2003:6) asserts that the structural functionalist considers society as an equilibrium system whose component parts play a role in the maintenance of the whole. Therefore, as part of social life, conflicts too work towards the maintenance of the social structure.

Similarly, (Bemlaku etal, 2010: 98) says that "according to the theory of structural functionalists, social institutions are functionally integrated to form a stable system, and a change in one institution will precipitate a change in other institutions. Societies are seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with their various parts (social institutions) working together to maintain and reproduce them". *Siinqee* institution is one of the social institution in which married women collectively plays socio-economic, religious and political roles in the society. This institution is known by its incorporated especially in resolving the conflict among the Arsii Oromoo community.

## 4 Result and Discussion

### Conflict and the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution among *Wayyu Shanan Arsi Oromoo*

#### 4.1 *Siinqee*: A symbol and An Institution of Oromoo Women

Oromoo people have their own culture like other nations of the world. Cultures are categorized as material and non material or spiritual cultures. Material culture possess materials that human being created, and incorporated in to humans mind by their knowledge and skills. *Siinqee* is one of the material cultures of Oromoo. It is the ritual stick of Oromoo woman that can play cultural, economic, political and religious roles in Oromoo society. It has various symbolic representations. *Siinqee* serves:

- As a symbol of marriage of Oromoo women
- As a ritual stick used for praying
- As a ritual stick used during cattle raid
- As a symbol of power of Oromoo women
- As an institution of conflict resolution

As an institutions *siinqee* institution is represents the over all aspects of Oromoo women. It protects the rights of Oromoo women. Based on the information I gathered from my informants women have full right to fight for their rights. No one stop women from practicing socio-cultural and religious practices in the community. The gathering of women under an institution of *siinqee* can fight against a person or groups that would injure and do wrong things on any woman in the community. That is why Kuwe (1997) has said "*siinqee* is used as a weapon to fight against the violation of *seerawaqa* and loss of *safuu*". It is true that according to the Oromoo worldview *waaq* ordered that they were considered as a symbol of peace and they were respected. *Waaq* did not likes if women are violated by anyone, because, it considered or taken as *safuu* or taboo among the Oromoo. Assafa (2010: 9) has further agreed on this idea. He has said that "women in general are symbolically and politically liminal and correspondingly enjoy special sacred power as a class.' . . . People respect and revere a woman because *Waaq* made her to be respected and revered." That is why Oromoo women have great attention in peace building and controlling over the resource and other socio-cultural, religious and political issues in their respective community.

#### 4.1.1 Siinqee: An Institution of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution mechanisms are classified as formal and informal. Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are part of informal conflict resolution mechanisms. There are many indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms among Oromoo in general and of Arsi in particular. Oromoo people have various conflict resolution mechanisms such as *jaarsumma*, *gumaa*, *siinqee*, *shanacha*, *michuu*, *harma hodhaa*, *guddifachaa*, *manbadha*, *qixxee* etc. However, the most common indigenous dispute settlement mechanisms in my study area are *siinqee*, *jarsummaa*, *gumaa*, *manbadha* and *qixxee*.

Among *WayyuShanan* Oromoo, *siinqee* serves as a symbol of intermediations or conflict resolution. Arsi women do not remain silent if there is a dispute or conflict in the society; instead they look for a solution. The women in the society are believed as a symbol of mediation and peace building. *Siinqee* institution is a well known and respected women's institution of Arsi Oromoo. Arsi women being in groups can resolve small dispute, to violent conflict. They are known by resolving small disputes such as spousal dispute, mother- son disputes, conflict related to prayer (*dambi*), and other violent conflicts such as war, conflict between clans, ethnic groups, and other social and economy related conflicts.

##### A. Husband- Wife Conflict (Dispute)

*Siinqee* institution has a great role in resolving conflict between husband and wife/wives. A wife who quarrels with her husband can resolve her dispute through different way such as *siinqee* and mediation. My informants told me that if a woman's right is violated, women can find a solution for it depending on the nature of the dispute, through their *siinqee* institution. If a husband beats his wife, the women around there who respond to the call for help must identify the reason for the beating. If the conflicting wife is not wearing *qanafaa*<sup>18</sup> or has not recently given birth, the gathering of women call for help of the wife, women have to ask the husband and wife to solve their problem. If the husband and wife agree, the women may mediate them by themselves or by adding other local elders through *jarsummaa*. If the conflicting woman/wife is with *qanafaa* or has recently given birth, the women should call for help by ululating as per *siinqee* principles.

##### *Iyyasiinqee* (Call for *Siinqee*) and Its Procedures

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<sup>18</sup>*Qanafaa* is an ornament of Oromo women most of the times puts on her forehead when given birth and it symbolically signs she is bearing a child and her honor in Oromo culture.

My informants told me that women call for help or participate when a husband beats his wife who has given birth within the past month, or if his wife is with *qanafaa*. This *iyyasiinqee* can happen in two ways. First, the beaten woman or lactating mother tells it to her neighbours and these women go to more neighbors and tell what they heard. Secondly, other women in the surrounding who heard a rumor about the beating of a lactating mother come to her home and see the woman who then go to call others to help by ululating. The husband of the beaten woman kneels in front of her and asks for apology and asks her not to tell others. As my informants told me even though the beaten wife forgives her husband, the other women who heard the information never stop to call others for *iyyasiinqee*, because, it is believed that no one can violate the rights of women with *qanafaa*. The neighbouring women who go to call others take their *siinqee* along with them and ululate by throughout the neighbourhood. As the women in the area hear the sound of ululating woman/women, they leave whatever work they have on their hands and follow the calling women by taking their own *siinqee* with them. Kuwe has said that "[E]ven those who are breast-feeding at the time of the scream should let the babies cry and leave the house to join in the scream". In *siinqee* institution, women give their backing to one of their own who is in a vulnerable position. Their resolve to do so starts from the initial screaming for help to final reconciliation until they go back to their home. At the time of screaming, the gathering women call each other by singing:

*Intala aayyaa dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?*  
*Ana dhaananii dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?*  
*Ana waamanii dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?*  
*Harmi aannanii dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?*  
*Mataan naanno'oo dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?*  
*Duugdi baatto'oo dhageetee? Oduun sigeetee?*  
*Elel elel elel elel elel*

To say:

My 'sisters', have you heard? Has information reached you?  
I have been beaten, have you heard? Has information reached you?  
I have been called, have you heard? Has information reached you?  
I have given birth to a child/ I am breast feeding, have you heard? Has information reached you?  
The hair is dressed 'naannoo'<sup>19</sup> have you heard? Has information reached you?  
The back carries a child, have you heard? Has information reached you?  
*Elel elel elel elel elel*

This way they raise their *siinqee* and sing this '*elelfata*' song and call each other. This song expresses that the beaten mother is wearing '*qanafaa*' and that she is a new mother, nurses and

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<sup>19</sup>A particular hairstyle worn by the mother of a newborn.

carries around her infant. My informants told me that they raise their *siinqee* upward since they are gathering for a fight as the *siinqee* is not lowered during a fight. After all the women gather, they make a line according to their age and social hierarchy and proceed to the house of the beaten woman by ululating another song. They form two groups and each group sings a stanza from the song as follows:

AB

<i>Aayyiyoo sireen leemmanii jiddee</i>	<i>Maa hinjaarannee?</i>
<i>Ija jaallee gadbaateen maa hinlaallanee?</i>	<i>Aayyiyoo sireen makkalla duubaa</i>
<i>Noor aayyyoo</i>	<i>Mucaa makkalla buubaa sileenjisa suutaa</i>
<i>Aayyiyoo sireen leemmanii jiddee</i>	<i>Maa hinjaarannee?</i>
<i>Ijaallee gadbaateen maa hinlaallanee?</i>	<i>Noor aayyyoo?</i>

This song translates as follows:

AB

Oh Mother, the bed of delivery is destroyed	Why do not you reconstruct it?
Why do not we see to the matter together as friends?	Oh Mother, the bed is behind the wall
Welcome, Mother!	You coward boy, we will train you slowly!
Oh Mother, the deliverybedis destroyed	Why do you not reconstruct it?
Why do not we see to the matter together as friends?	Agreed, Mother!

Through this song, the women signify that the mother of a newborn or an infant's dignity has been dishonored and call for a fight to preserve her rights. Women equate an individual woman's problem to that of the whole community of women.

Based on the information from my informants, as the gathering of women reach the concerned woman's home, they include the beaten woman as she holds or carries her baby and continue their song. The senior women come to the front and make a semi-circle in front of the house and continue their ululating song. The man, who has beaten his wife, if he accepts his wrong deeds, kneels and then lies prostrate in front of the gathering women. No one can pick him up from this position until community elders arrive. The gatherings of women point their *siinqee* at him and continue their ululating. If someone tries to pick him up or touch him in sympathy, the women make her/him to lie along with the man and continue their song. The senior women push back using their *siinqee* those who try to reach the man; when people try to bypass them, they hit such persons by the base of their *siinqee*. They continue to sing till the community elders reach them and hear their case.

Then after the community elders reach and ask the women to handle the case, the women refuse to answer them for a short while. The elders repetitively ask them by saying '*ganyaadhiltee dhinnaa*'<sup>20</sup>. They even take off their shoes and bow in front of the women as they try to get the women to submit the case to them. Though the women do not actually refuse the elders, knowingly they forward reasons so as not to submit quickly. For instance, if one of the elders is wearing shoes, the women forward this issue as a pretext to delay submitting the matter to the elders. The women say '*tunfaantuudha*', which means 'this is disrespect'. The man in question kneels to take off his shoes and asks to be allowed to handle the case again saying '*ganyaadhiltee dhinnaa*'. After elders repetitively ask them for a long time, they allow them to take their case saying '*hobba'aaijarraahafaa*', meaning 'we agree, may no harm come to you'. They thus submit their case to the community elders.

At this time, my informants said that, elders ask the women, "What is the problem, ladies?" The women answer, "You know the problem, you have heard why we came here; why do you ask us?" Then, they start to talk to each other to mediate between the quarreled spouses. To start the mediation, first elders ask the gathering of women to sit down under a shade of tree. The elders also take their seats and start mediation. When the man who has beaten his wife with '*qanafaa*'refuses to admit his fault and submit to the mediation process, they begin their ululating song. In such cases, they sing the following song:

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<sup>20</sup> '*Dhilteedhinnaa*' is greeting to the gathering of women. It is to say make it easy and give us your case to mediate. While *ganyaa* is the phrase to call women among the society.

*Ateetee sinbirree barii*

'Atete', birds of dawn

*Deettuu dhaananii hinjirree maalii?*

It is surprising to beat a woman who has just given birth to a child

*Harmi annanii hinjirree maalii?*

It is surprising to beat a breast feeding mother

*Duuddi baatto'oo hinjirree maalii?*

It is surprising to beat a woman who carries a child on her back

*Ateetee hirqammuu baalaa*

'Atete', like a tree with fertile leaves

*Deettuu dhaananii dirmammuu laalaa*

A recently delivered woman has been beaten, look at the scars.

*Elel elel elel elel elel elel*

*Elel elel elel elel elel elel*

As the information from my informants shows, the mediation may not end easily. If the case is handled in a single day, the wrong doer compensates the gathered people according to his ability. For instance, if he is rich, he slaughters ox or cow; but if he is poor, he slaughters sheep or goat. If he does not have the means to do either, he has to offer a drink called *dadhi* (local drink made of honey) to the women, for in this culture, the women should not go on an empty mouth to their homes.

If the case could not be resolved in a day, the participating women do not go back to their homes. They stay the night there singing their ululating or *elelfata* song under the shade of a tree. During this time if the man accepts his fault, elders penalize the man to slaughter his cattle or herd according to his ability. My informants told me that after the cattle or herd readied for slaughter is brought to the place, women still do not accept it quickly. The women hesitate; if the cattle offered is either sheep or goat, they refuse saying 'Am I a fox that you slaughter this for me?'. If a small calf is ready for slaughter, they say 'I myself am a calf (*raada*), I will never accept this'. But if they are offered a cow, they eagerly accept it saying, 'He had beaten my cow; she (the beaten) is a cow; readily slaughter this cow'. All the above depends on the richness of the man. After the cow is brought, they again sing the following for a while:

*Ani buutii qaraa an buutii taraa*

*Elel elel elel elel elel elel*

*Dhiiseengaluu dhiitee qaluu?*

I train the poisonous snake; I am smarter than the snake

*Sangaa hoorraa malee, damma boollaa malee*

I shall not leave it, shall I tread on and slaughter it?

*Dhiiseengaluu dhiitee qaluu?*

I deserve only fattened ox; only dated honey

I shall not leave it, shall I tread on and slaughter it?

*Ellel ellel ellel ellel ellel*

This song expresses how women have strong potential to do whatever they want. The above song is sung on the punishment occasion to tell the truth that they should have to slaughter the cow provided by the wrong doer. Then after the cow has been slaughtered, the *dadhi* or the local drink made of honey is drunk and a meal eaten. Finally, the women bless the man and sing an *ellelfata'* song. They sing:-

*Siinqeen tiyya jiituu*

*Jiituun nama hinmiituu*

*Qe'een sii haajiituu*

*Ellel ellel ellel ellel ellel*

My fertile *siinqee*

The fertile does not do harm to people

Let your dwelling be fertile

*Ellel ellel ellel ellel ellel*

The above song is sung after the cow was slaughtered and it is full of blessings that express the women's happiness on the punishment occasion as well as the apology of wrong doer is accepted. At last, the women tie on the man's arm, a piece of meat and skin of the slaughtered animal, and go to their home. The women also take parts of the skin of the slaughtered cow to show that they have been respected by having a cow slaughtered for them. If they get a longer piece of skin (which is referred to as 'gadi'), they use it to tie their cows while they milk them. While they are on the way to their home they move singing their song as follows:

*Aayyoo hoffallee tiyyaa hoffallee jirraa*

*Haadha baada'aa maali alaa gootaa olgali aayyoo*

*Barri waada'aa maali alaa gootaa olgali aayyoo*

*Loon galanii maali alaa gootaa olgali aayyoo...*

*Elel elel elel elel elel elel*

This song translated as:

Successful Mother/s, we have made it  
Mother of all, what are you doing out? Go home mother  
The year is blessed, what are you doing out? Go home mother  
The cattle are back home, what are you doing out? Go home mother...  
*Elel elel elel elel elel elel*

The main message that the above song is built upon is that the women returning back from reconciliation have been successful. Also, this song contains the voices that preach the happiness they got from *Waaq* (God) for everything they planned.

Here is a story of a man who has beaten his wife with *qanafaa* Bulbula. As one of my informant, 34 years old Barite Midaksa told me from her experiences on my FGD, at Bulbula.

Barite narrates me as follow;

Last year one of our neighbors has beaten his wife with *qanafaa*. Then she run out of her home and one of our neighbour women seen her and asked her reason why she goes out un timely. Then she answered her that her husband beaten her then, we picked our *siinqee* and ululating. We gathered together, and moved to the man's home, as we reached their, he lied prone in front us and asked us, for apology. And also the community elders have taken our case to handle. Then we asked the man for something to slaughter. Since the man is poor he lied in front of us and offered himself to us saying I my self is a cattle, slaughter me. Then we stood him up saying we cannot slaughter a man and we asked him what else he is able to do and he has given us a 100 Ethiopian berr. We had taken it and moved to our home singing an *elaltata* song.

## B. Conflict between 'Mother' and Son

*Siinqee* can resolve the conflict between 'mother' and son or conflict between sons and daughters. According to my informants, the 'mother' here does not refer only to a biological mother but also includes those who can be taken as a mother due to her role as per the culture. Women among *WayyuShanan* of Arsi Oromoo gather together when a man beats his 'mother' just as they do when a man beats a woman with 'qanafaa.' *WayyuShanan* community never permits mothers to be deprived of rights /violated their right, to be beaten. Women are highly respected. A man who is mentally and physically and spiritually healthy must not beat a 'mother', or other women who can be his 'mothers' in the clan. So, when a 'mother' is beaten by her son, the women tell each other saying, '*mucaan maraatee dutee haadha rukute*' meaning 'the boy has gone crazy, he shouted at and beat his mother'.

## C. Conflict between Spouse in the Case of 'Dambi'

According to my informants, among Arsi Oromoo of *WayyuShanan* community, women have a right to participate in different institutional meetings. In the time of drought or famine, women gather for *dambi* to pray to God, to give them rain. They do not return home until the rain comes. While praying, all participating women bring foods and drinks with them and prepare and eat at the place of *dambi*. They may stay days and nights outside praying. At the time of *dambi*, if a woman comes home late and her husband beats her, *iyyasiinqee* (call for help) may happen. When he refuses to allow her to go for 'dambi' to pray, the same happens to him.

But the process of calling and helping for the case of *dambi* is different from that of when husband beats his wife with 'qanafaa' and when a son beats his 'mother'. The punishment is also different. My informants told me that all the women who participate on the prayer go to the disputants' home, singing *elelfata* song by raising their *siinqee* and they take hold of food items at the home such as butter, honey, ground grain of all types. They then take these to the place of *dambi* to prepare and eat and drink while they pray. If the woman is also absent on her own will, the women gathered for *dambi* go to her home and rob all that she has processed such as raw foods and ready-to-cook foods. If the woman does not participate for a reason, they participate symbolically by sending their *siinqee* through other women. Such symbolic representation can take place for any type of dispute resolution gathering.

#### D. Conflict between Other Social Groups

Based on the information I gathered from my informants through interview and FGD, *siinqee* institutions can resolve conflicts other than those explained above. It can resolve conflicts such as war that may happen in community through making the way for living together. In a society conflict may arise when someone trans pass a border of plowing land of farmers, grazing land, when a sheep, cattle, horses or donkeys reaches for a seeds on the farm land. On the other hand when someone fights with some body, when there is theft, insult, there may probability of societal conflicts. Through all the above people may be in conflicts to the level of clan, family, ethnic or through nation.

My informants told me that Arsi community living around this area has been conflicting with other surrounding Oromoo ethnic groups and other nation and nationalities for a long period of time. Arsis, are known for conflict with ethnic groups leaving in Shawa, Sidama, Sodo, Borana and other different clans. So that *siinqee* institution can resolve all types of conflicts starting from small conflicts like those due to resources and those happen while making a life, to a higher war or violent conflicts.

Arsi women of *WayyuShanan* community when seeing, peoples in group fighting each other, they can raise their *siinqee* and ululating to stop the fight and mediate to reduce the harm it may causes. The numbers of women who partici-pe in the mediation do not matter, they can be three to four women, or more to resolve. Women raise their *siinqee* to the sky, and ululating. Using their *siinqee* is not mandatory when they are far from their home to pick their *siinqee* because they do not waste a time, as the conflict may cause a serious damage in a short period of a time. So they can raise their bare hand to sky to intervene. Going to pick their *siinqee* may wastes a time they pass between conflicting parties, raising their *siinqee* or bare hands just uttering, *elel elel elel elel*. Those conflicting parties can stop their fight in respect of the women even while they are with their bare hand. It is because of that women by themselves are a symbol of peace keeping and peace. But other women at their home those who hadn't been participating but hears the sound of ululating women that is participating on resolving or managing the fight, picks their *siinqee* and goes for solidarity in mediation in whatever the way the conflicting parties relates to the women, they never discriminate. They never ever say who is who, but what they favor is peace.

In addition to all the above cases my informants told me that women can mediate if they sow a conflict at wedding ceremony, funeral ceremony and other type of ceremonies. Their aim is to prevent a damage that may occur due to the conflict. After the women intervened between conflicting parties, they put their *siinqee* between the conflicting parties and continue to sing an ululating or *elefata* song until community elders come out to handle.

#### 4.2.1.6 Siinqee Migration and Its Procedures

If the rights of a mother or a currently delivered women harmed the issue may take a long time to reach resolution. If arbitration takes longer than a day the gatherings of women do not go back to their home, even they stay all night there with an arbitrating *jaarsaas*. All the full night they continue to sing their *atete* song. When the issues do not resolve until the dawn of the next days they go for migration. Based on the information I gathered from my informants on their movement they sing ululating song. They say in their song, we leave our county, we descend (move down) to *shalla*<sup>21</sup>. This happen when the conflicting man refuses to accept or admit and do not want arbitration only. While the gatherings of women going for migration, elders kneel for them and they throw their clothes (*wayya*) under them and ask not to do this migration, they beg the women not to bypass them. It is because when a woman migrates leaving their home, children and resources and passes a river stream, it is believed that bad thing may happen to their home, family and to the societies as whole. They says '*gaachanni namarra lufa*' which means a good event is believed to pass over once self.

Therefore, elders call for other additional elders and appeals to '*Bokkicha*' and a leader of the clan. Actually there are five leaders called *Bokkicha* or *Abba bokku* in *Wayyu Shanan* community. They appeal to the senior of these five. For example in this area, they appeal to Haji Mussa and Abdurahman Dhakabi. Both the elders and *Bokkicha* stops the women and re begin arbitration. When the man accepts, they take his slaughter pay and bless him. But when he refuses them again they have to curse and leave him.

#### 4.2.1.7 Siinqee Curse and Its Procedure

According to my informants Oromoo women as they are able to get while blessing, they are also very scaring/frightening while cursing. The gatherings of women, that went out to resolve a dispute

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<sup>21</sup>*Shalla* is a river somewhat far away from my research area. It is located at the boundary of the *woreda*.

or to find a solution to it, do not return back to home without reaching a solution or reaching their aim for conflicts between individuals or groups. If they can they try to find solution or arbitrate by them self as I already pointed out in previous section. But if cannot do or arbitrate the case, they can pass it to elders. If elders also unable to solve it, they do whatever the possible solution and if it is still beyond their capability, until the man by himself returns back for apology and resolution they curse and sanction him from any social life.

So that, Arsi women can reach for help when they saw a disputing parties and they make or pave the way for dispute or conflict to end with arbitration before a serious damage could happen. If the arbitration did not bring solution they can go for *godansa* (migration). When elders stop them to migrate and still there is no arbitration, the final duty is curse to conclude the issue or the case. According to my informants curse is not only in speech, but if a women do not reach at their aim accomplished/or do not arbitrate and not went home without slaughtering of animal and went home without blessing it is taken as a curse. Even though they do not say it out of their speech it is believed that their atete' feels bad. Atete is a cult of women. When atete feels bad or spirit of women felt bad, it is believed that and things happen to the man that caused a problem, or to other different resources or to community at large, these bad things may include, drought and famine, lightening, death of children or what is happening after that are not good for the life of human beings and all living things.

My informants told me that for whatever the scenario it is, the women went out for *iyyasiinqee* or *siinqee* help never back home empty stomach or without eating or drinking something there at the conflict resolution setting. When the disputing men, refuses to arbitration and to accept relative of him, may be his brother, his father or other pays slaughter animal to those women not to go home empty stomach. It is because as said above, the damage caused may pass the men and may also destroy them.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Conflicts can happen every where human beings are exist. It arises if disagreements come up from difference in the interests, ideas, ideologies, and it is happen between individual or group, at institutional, regional, national and international levels. Whatever the causes and sources of conflict, all societies have their own ways of resolving conflict. Widely throughout the world the

purpose of conflict might be different as explained by different scholars of social sciences because for some group the conflict purpose is to control over important natural resources while for other group is to control the political authority. Also for some group the purpose can be about the religious fundamentalism where for other group it may be about racism and so on. However, for the all conflict justifications the aim of resolution somehow similar because the conflict resolution necessity is to create socially, psychologically, mentally peace societies.

However, the resolution mechanisms depend upon the causes of conflict, nature of conflict, cultural background of the participants, religious background of the participants and other social and legal framework of the area. Ethiopia is widely known country in Horn Africa that holds many ethnic groups among, which the Oromoo are the widely known nation. Oromoo nation has its own indigenous culture to solve the conflict raised among its group and other nation, nationalities and people of Ethiopia.

There are many indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms among Oromoo in general and of Arsi in particular. Oromoo people have various conflict resolution mechanisms. Among those indigeneous conflict resolution mechanisms the most common indigenous dispute settlement mechanisms in my study area are *siinqee*, *jarsummaa*, *gumaa*, *manbadha* and *qixxee*. Today most of these indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are used in parallel with the formal court system. Among the indigenous conflict resolution institution found in my study area, *jarsummaa*, *gumaa*, *siinqee* are frequently used indigenous institutions functioning side by side with courts to settle conflicts.

*Siinqee* institution is one of the well known and respectful conflict resolution institutions of Arsi Oromoo women. As an institution of conflict resolution *siinqee* institution is known by resolving conflicts from small dispute, to violent conflicts that can occur in their respective community. Researchers such as Esrael, (2009) and Bamlaku, etal, (2010) have stated that in Ethiopia it is commonly known that women and men do not have the same right of using resources, they do not equally participate in politics and decision making. They have much difference of experience in conflict resolution. Men dominate the political, economic, and social arena in all cultures. However, in my study area the evidence from my observation is differing from their idea. The gathering of women under *siinqee* institution fight against a person or groups that would injure and do wrong things on any woman in the community.

*Siinqee* has many functions among the *WayyuShanan* community. As an institution, *siinqee* covers all aspects of Oromoo women's lives. It protects the rights of Oromoo women. It gives women a significant ground to fight against gender related violence in their community. The main purpose of *siinqee* is building sisterhood among women and allying to fight against male oppression. No one can stop women from practicing socio-cultural and religious practices in the community. The gathering of women under the institution of *siinqee* can fight against a person or groups that would injure and wrong any woman in the community.

Arsi women do not remain silent if there is a dispute or conflict in their community; instead, they look for a peaceful resolution through their indigenous institutions. Among this society, women are believed to be symbols of mediation and peace building. This institution is known for its function in resolving conflict among the Arsi Oromoo community. Arsi women, being in groups can resolve most conflicts, from minor to violent disputes. *Siinqee* institution plays a major role in resolving conflict between husband and wife/wives with *kanafa*, conflict between mother and son or conflict between sons and daughters and conflict between other social groups, etc. *WayyuShanan* community does not tolerate mothers being deprived of their rights, particularly to be beaten by their sons.

If something happens to a woman, all the women do ululating and gather for help calling one another. Once a *siinqee* call has been given, women in the community leave everything behind to attend. If there is a sick person, household items lying outside, small children who need attendance, cooperative works are all abandoned to answer the call to the women's gathering. If a conflict once happens, it may take more than a day to settle. If arbitration takes longer than a day, the gathering of women does not go back to their homes; they stay all night with arbitrating elders. If the wrong doer does not accept his fault, the elders and the women could pass curse and other social sanctions on the offender who has disturbed the peace of the whole community.

The *Siinqee* institution takes its name from a stick which has come to symbolize a socially authorized set of rights exercised by Oromoo women. This institution is highly respected in Oromoo community. No one crosses women's path as they are holding *siinqee* wheter they are on their way to resolving a conflict, returning from one or returning from prayers regarding the whole

community. In *WayyuShanan* community, especially during conflict resolution and during rituals such as *irretchaa*, *dambii*, *falaa*, etc. all people including the *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Abbaa Bokkuu*, *Abbaa Duulaa*, *Abbaa Alangaa* and other officials or other individual give them respect and receive blessings from the gathering of women.

In general, the Arsi Oromoo use the *siinqee* institution as a crucial alternative to the formal legal system. In some cases, people completely prefer to be adjudicated through *siinqee*, opting to give up rights which the formal justice system grants them. This is due to the fact that most members of the community still uphold communal harmony instead of focusing on their individual rights. In other cases, we have seen how the indigenous and formal systems work together to solve the community's problems. In a few cases, particularly with the youth, people totally opt for the formal justice system. All in all, *siinqee* remains a significant social institution among the *WayyuShanan* Oromoo.

The indigenous institutions of conflict resolution among the *WayyuShanan* are among the cultural practice that needs special concern. The fact is that the issues of role of women in conflict and conflict resolutions are so fragile needs careful and an in-depth interpretation. We often talk about the role of women in conflict resolution institutions and roles they can play in their society as groups and individuals. The study on Women's respect and rights among the Arsi Oromoo itself is of value, as it provides an alternative human rights account, at a time where both NGOs, national governments and other bodies put substantial effort into issues of women's rights and gender violence. Applying western notions of human rights, without taking into consideration the local context, might demolish mechanisms, values and institutions that traditionally have given women respect and protected them from violence and abuse. Rather it good if it is prepared with cultural sensitivity and takes in to consideration the local philosophy of human rights.

In addition, such issues are complex areas of anthropological studies. It is policy makers and government who have the power to do with the needs and wants as well as the preference of their society. The main reasons why people prefer the indigenous institutions are because it Sfocuses on re-establishing social harmony and reconciliation, the doubt about the effectivity and honesty of the state legal system, the state courts' disrespect of some deep-rooted cultural elements found in the community, and etc. The participation of women in political and conflict resolution mechanisms is

very important. Even if the society subordinate the women and considered as they have no equal knowledge as a whole in country as to the men they have full knowledge and skills to resolve conflict. I do not think the present work to be a final material on the topic. It needs more and more study to make changes about the attitudes towards women. I, therefore, suggest an in-depth further research.

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## 6. Women's Position in Indigenous Peace Building Process: The Role of Siiqqee Institution in the Oromoo Gadaa System

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### Abstract

*The role of gender in peace building is currently at the forefront of global peace agenda since excluding women from peace process tantamount to neglecting half of the humanity. Though the efforts that woman has to add up to culture of peace has hardly been considered, no sane society can undermine their contributions. In the Oromoo nation, women have well established functions in the decision-making, conflict resolution and peace building that sustains the Oromoo egalitarian Gadaa system. The concept of peace from the Gadaa perspective was utilized to anticipate the roles of Siiqqee in peace building process. Relying on the roles of Siiqqee institution, within the Gadaa system, this paper explains the gender aspect of peace building in the Oromoo indigenous system. It also unearths the Oromoo women's actual experiences and potential contributions to the peace building which helps identify the gaps in policy and practices, and suggests alternative ways of incorporating them into peace initiatives. In order to explicitly recognize the distinctive peace building roles played by the Oromoo women under the Siiqqee institution, explanatory qualitative research approach is employed, utilizing both primary (through key informant interviews) and the secondary data. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through content and thematic analysis. The findings reveals that the Gadaa system promotes culture of peace, whereby the Siiqqee institution in particular, has immense roles in building peace. Rooted in the Gadaa system, the Siiqqee institution encouraged the Oromoo women to consolidate their holistic devotion capable of bringing structural changes required to enhance equality, social justice, solidarity, and sustainable peace and development. For generations, through Siiqqee institution, the Oromoo women have been serving; essentially as symbol of peace, operationally as peace educators and diplomatically as peace envoys in the societal relations. The totality of this makes the Oromoo women know the cost incurred from conflict and thereby get equipped to transform it in advance. As a result, they are proven of vital roles in building bridges, at a far different from mere walls, using the power of Siiqqee to enhance and uphold social cohesion. Thus, the Siiqqee institution as a reservoir is full of important indigenous values that enrich gender capacities necessary to guarantee a lasting peace. In conclusion, as active engagement of women in the building sustainable peace deemed imperative, the role of Siiqqee as a timeless essential, should be well recognized at national and international levels. It is, therefore, indispensable, as found recommendable, to effectively coordinate, reinstate and uphold the open up viable space, where Oromoo women can play their efforts and leverage up their indigenous share through Siiqqee institution.*

**Key Words:** Gadaa System, Peace Building, Siiqqee Institution, and Oromoo

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Since conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in every society, the process of peace building is expected to recognize the grassroots efforts of the respective communities. Building a lasting peace that sustains overall development requires full participation of citizens (Agbajobi, 2010). Peace building activities *either from below or above* must include the issues of all stakeholders, specially the women, to bring a durable peace elsewhere. Specially, local ownership in peace building is considered as a lens for understanding sustainable peace from the local by the insider's bottom-up view (Coning, 2013).

Today, as peace building from below is fittingly considered, the important roles of indigenous mechanisms in promoting peace has become increasingly more prominent. Thus, (re)considering the important cultural values of grass-root community is decisive to bring about positive change in Africa. As Tim Murithi argued, in peace building process, adopting a context specific approach is paramount to address effectually a particular problem appropriated to promote peace based on indigenous mechanism (Murithi, 2009).

In the context of Africa, succinctly capturing the essence of various conceptions and representations of indigenous African peace building mechanisms and what they mean to Africans and those who follow events on the continent is preponderant. This can be witnessed from an increasing resort in Africa to indigenous mechanisms of justice, peace, and reconciliation where these mechanisms have gained in appeal as possible alternatives to approaches of peace building that are largely western designed. The revival of indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution and peace building from below such as *bashinganthaye* in Burundi, *gacaca* in Rwanda, and *mato oput* in north-central Uganda are among others.

According to Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) report in 2007, the potential contribution of indigenous approaches in peace building can be reinforced from the pre-colonial systems of Africans which were decentralized with social control and carried out by local entities opposed to the post/neo colonial period. They were mostly consensus based systems promoting solidarity and common bond of the society (ECA, 2007). The indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and peace building in Africa had spectacular features which is uncommon in the global space. The notable feature of peace building stood Africans in the vantage position of demonstrating their culture and according it a radiant splendor and flame. Mutisi (2012) explained the uniqueness of endogenous conflict resolution systems by virtue of their indigeneity and use of local actors, cumulatively enables Africans in the promotion of sustainable peace in post-conflict contexts. Furthermore, ensuring peace building processes in post conflict environment successfully needs the considerations of gender roles. However, it is difficult to build a durable peace if the grass root communities, women more specifically, don't put their hands to the plough in creating what they

would see as peace (Maina, 2012). Despite the immense roles of indigenous approaches in Africa, some feminists, whether from an academic or activist position, have criticized indigenous approaches in the issues of conflict and peace as it have ignored the importance of gender (Villegas, 2010).

Gender equality and the in/exclusion of women in decision-making is paramount within the processes of building peace. In this regards, the positions of Kaberuka (2014) and Isike and Okeke (2009) are highly convincing for their views that women have always been at the center of peace building processes across different pre-colonial African societies under their respective indigenous mechanisms. As peace building contributions made by women in African communities through their indigenous approaches is significantly important, the problem of gender inequality in these approaches needs to be wisely addressed in order to foster the roles of such indigenous mechanisms today.

Most importantly, the concept of understanding peace has been reshaped to include the gender variable under positive peace served to expand the notion of peace from a mere absence of direct violence to fill it with strategies of social justice, and democracy among others. To achieve this goal, *reinstating and/or harnessing* the indigenous capacities for peace should be a guiding principles of peace building in contemporary Africa. For this reason, coordination of peace building activities at different level of societies (especially women) is of utmost importance. Particularly, indigenous knowledge system and the structures of leadership (like the Oromoo Gadaa system and others in African society) have vital roles in building sustainable peace in Africa as homo-grown approaches.

Therefore, this paper addresses the opportune concepts of *indigenous culture and gender questions* in peace building from below- indigenous approaches of peace building and inclusion of women's role there- as central focus point. This can be enriched for the reason that there was a significant shift from top-down peace building in favor of practices and principles collectively referred as peace building from below.

The paper brings various competing views together in order to address gaps and challenges produced by different scholars and sought for viable way out. Despite, the arguments against the Gadaa system for its suggested "exclusion" of women (which this paper disdains objectively), the roles of *Siiqqee institution* can be among the parts of the core in contemporary peace building project from below. Wittingly, the criticisms of Gadaa system for its *gender insensitivity* are profoundly disregarded. So, it is found reasonable to identify the roles of Oromoo women through their *Siiqqee institution* as it can be appropriated and play an exemplar role in resolving conflicts and building peace in contemporary Africa at large. The motive is hereby to include the *Siiqqee institution* into a model of African feminist peace building which can be utilized as an ideological rallying point to transform conflict and create conducive environment for sustainable peace. The

rationale behind arise from the premise that , the role of *Siiqqee institution* in the Oromoo Gadaa system would provide a useful insights into the relevance of indigenous approaches as well as inspire positive social change which promotes women's role in peace building at all levels.

## 1.2.Statement of the Problem

Under United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) 1325 Resolution on *Women, Peace and Security* in 2000, it was argued that sustainable peace can only be reached if both women and men are included in the peace process (United Nations, 2002). Because, when women are not represented, neither are their interests and their exclusion, affects the whole society, threatening justice, peace and stability. As the roles of women expected to be prominent in the peace building processes formally and informally, their contributions are often overlooked in indigenous approaches specially. These efforts remain less well known, are not well publicized, and are rarely integrated or reflected in formal peace processes.

Today, the continuing role and influence of indigenous approaches in Africa is hard to miss because the call and urgency for inclusion of indigenous knowledge and institutions in conflict resolution and peace building is premised on a number of factors (Osie-Hwedei and Galvin, 2015). Hence, it is important to (re)consider the status of women in these indigenous peace building approaches.

Among the African societies, the Oromoo are rich in indigenous institutions of conflict resolution, justice administration and peace building based on their own world outlook under the Gadaa sytem Keneni (2012). However, the status of women in the wider Gadaa system appears as *a contested concept* as several writers have reflected divergently so far. Several have argued as the Oromoo women were "excluded" in the Gadaa sytem, particularly in the Gadaa grade-sets for political participation. Above all, according to SIHA's report in 2012, the Oromoo "Women are not directly a part of the Gadaa and they do not have a role in the Gadaa grade systems [and] customary law mechanisms under the Gadaa system are inherently male-biased as men are the only decision-makers and judges in these traditional dispute resolution systems". On the other hand, others have reversed the above perispective arguing for the "inclusion" of women in the Gadaa system with their own institution and its respective functions parallelsim to the men. Notably, for Wami (2015) "In all cases without the women's participation there is no Gadaa System. Women are the pillar of the Gadaa system."

Since the moves towards gender equality are central to positive peace, the main cleavages of inequality in all societies it has to be addressed as part of peace building. Moreover, reflection on African women's actual experiences of peace building from indigenous perspective would help to identify the gaps in policy and practice that promotes the ways in which women's peace practice can be better supported and incorporated into peace initiatives today through home-grown approaches. Hence, in supporting the second argument mentioned in the aforementioned groups, it

is important to validate the roles of women as part of the Oromoo community being indispensable and irreducible in the wider Gadaa system through Siiqqee institution from peace building perspective particularly.

Generally, this paper purports that indigenous peace building approach based on Oromoo Gadaa system well offers the greatest opportunity to redress gender role through the women's *Siiqqee institution*. Because, conceptualization of indigenous peace building is particularly pertinent in terms of the relationship between gender relations and justice. Agreeing that peace building involves operational and structural activities for more sustainable and peaceful relationships, this paper add the gender equality, mutual respect, and inclusivity which are all among the hallmarks of Gadaa system. The overall attempt fosters an indigenous theory of peace building and promote the feminist ethic of care defined under the *Siiqqee institution* that was appropriated by the Oromoo Gadaa system to wage peace and maintain societal harmony in the society and beyond.

### **1.3.Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to explain the role of Oromoo women in peace building through indigenous *Siiqqee institution* known through the Gadaa system. The following specific objectives are meticulously identified;

1. To conceptualize peace and peace building from the Oromoo indigenous Gadaa system.
2. To explore implications and roles of Siiqqee institution in the indigenous peace building within the context of Gadaa system.
3. To explain indigenous role of gender within the Gadaa system and draw useful lessons worthy learned from women's indigenous peace building process in the Oromoo Gadaa System.

## **2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

This part has the following purposes. One is to provide a framework for the study by demonstrating the importance of the subject (indigenous peace building approach) and show how the study fits into previous researches. The other is to provide necessary tools to analyze the roles of indigenous approaches in peace building process. The section will point out literatures that motivates the study, both in regards to the indigenous knowledge systems in Africa and about the role of women in such indigenous approaches. It also outlines a summary of approaches taken in the literature on African women in conflict resolution and peace building. Thereafter, it will be justified why women should be included in peace building and hence why it is important to (re)consider the importance of indigenous approaches.

## **2.1. Indigenous Mechanisms of Peace Building in Africa: *Why African Indigenous Design Concepts Matters?***

### **2.1.1. Peace Building**

Even though the conception of peace vary from people to people, it can be measured by the well-being of the individual and his or her community appraised by physical, material, and spiritual considerations. According to Anderson (2004), cited in Dewo (2008), nearly all western languages define peace as the absence of war or violence but in non-western languages peace emphasizes spiritual or inner tranquility governing a harmonious relation between different parts of the system. Along this, for Hansen (1988), a concept of peace that Africans defend and justify makes it possible for the majority of people on this planet to enjoy physical security, a modicum of material prosperity, the satisfaction of basic needs, emotional well-being, political efficacy and psychic harmony. The Oromoo conception of peace was well explained by Dewo (2008) where he identified the holistic understanding of peace for everything (from individual inner peace to peace with the nature) believing that in the Oromoo cosmology everything is interconnected through a myriad of webs and threads. Thus, for the Oromoo making peace with nature is as essential as being at peace with oneself and others.

The term peace building was coined by Johan Galtung in 1975 with the publication of the three approaches to peace: *Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peace building*. Thus, peace building is a relatively new field and there has been its widespread adoption since it was introduced. Drawing on the work of Johan Galtung and others the concept of peace building entered public usage in Secretary-General Boutros Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* in 1992. He defined peace building in relation to a conflict continuum that passed from pre-conflict prevention through peacemaking and peacekeeping (Call and Cousens, 2009). Also, peace building can be associated with the post-conflict phase as an action to identify and support structures which tends to strengthen and solidify peace. Importantly, according to Munuve (2015), peace building refers to all efforts required on the way to the creation of a sustainable peace zone.

Today, it is argued that, the meanings and practices of peace building are culturally specific, and any investigation of best practices, therefore, requires a careful analysis of local approaches. This includes the study of indigenous African conflict resolution practices *inter alia*. The relevance of endogenous approaches to peace building is widely recognized due to the inadequacy of Eurocentric and other models to effectively address peace and security problems within Africa. The critics of endogenous African approaches assert that these methods are neither completely adequate nor practicable in advancing peace building and post conflict reconstruction, while proponents argue that such endogenous methods represent a model of alternative or restorative justice that fosters the prevalence of peace culture sustainably.

As grassroots and indigenous leadership structures have an important role to play in securing and sustaining peace, peace building spectrum advocates for *micro-level peace building* centered on the local contexts referring to activities that take place at the subnational level or at the level of local communities (Murithi, 2009). Hence, peace building is generally associated with the promotion of positive peace and this paper adopts the definition of peace building from the Canadian Peace building Initiative Strategic Framework cited in the work of (Agbajobi, 2010): *Peace building is the effort to strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. The overarching goal of peace building is to enhance the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence. Ultimately, peace building aims at building human security, a concept which includes democratic governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equitable access to resources, and environmental security. Peace building may involve conflict prevention, conflict resolution, as well as various kinds of post-conflict activities. It focuses on the political and socio-economic context or humanitarian aspects. It seeks to institutionalize the peaceful resolution of conflicts.*

Generally, for this paper, *indigenous peace building* is deemed as an alternative vision of positive peace requiring not only all types of violence are minimal or nonexistent, but also the major potential causes of future conflict are removed. It encompasses an ideal of how society at grass root level experiences egalitarian society with inclusive democratic political structures along with open and accountable government requiring equality between all societies and, as is far less often mentioned, genders.

### **2.1.2. The Call and Urgency for African Indigenous Peace Building Approaches**

The variation of understanding peace determines the mechanisms to maintain, build, make, and keep peace. In Africa, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and institutions to conflict resolution and peace building shows the resort to indigenous mechanisms for peace building. So, the question of what African knowledge systems have to offer in the ongoing project of theorizing peace and conflict makes necessary to [re]examine the understandings of peace suggested by indigenous ideas (Kadenyi, 2008). Therefore, the following part will address *Why the African indigenous design concepts matters in peace building today?* And the basic reasons are presented as follows.

***The emerging demand for peace building from below-*** since the 1990s, the question of conflict resolution field constitutes either as truly global enterprise or whether it is based upon hidden cultural has been raised (Woodhouse and Duffey, 2008). In response to this, John Paul Lederach has also stressed on the importance of the *indigenous empowerment* to transform conflict based on the human and cultural resources within a given setting. This helps to understand the long-term goal of conflict transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the indigenous setting from below.

***Cultural insensitivity of the trends in peace building process-*** the expansion in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building, has propelled the *culture question* in conflict resolution and peace building. As Tim Murithi identified, the contribution of culture to peace for the alternative models of transitional justice in effective peace building based on cultural attitudes and values is important in Africa (Murithi, 2009). According to Osaghae (2000) cited in Beth (2014), the search for [indigenous] strategies of conflict resolution looks for social formations that can be applied to the today's conflicts. Thus, emphasis has placed on the way where the indigenous strategies can be appreciated within the culturally congruent framework placing the highest importance on the culture of peace (Myers and Shinn, 2010). The outsider's imposition in the design of peace building approaches fails mostly, as the peace practitioners often come into a conflict in Africa with subconscious cultural assumptions ignoring the potential options for solving the problems (Lacroix and Neufeldt, 2010). Therefore, a way to get the turn into indigenous methods of peace building and learn from them is timely as such approaches are often very creative and outside the box in comparison to what western practitioners come up with.

***The claim for continental ownership for the solutions of the problems -*** in Africa today, there is a policy in the making as a response to Africa's desire in determining its own destiny by taking responsibility for the continent's issues using the initiatives suited by Africans themselves. These are popularly known as *African solutions for African problem* supposed to guide the activities of renewed regional and sub-regional organizations mandated with conflict resolution and prevention in the continent based on three complementary pillars- *ownership, commitment and shared values* (Osie-Hwedei and Galvin, 2015). This signifies the urge for local ownership and participation by Africans themselves with the critical need to engage local actors through their own endogenous wisdom in peace building work.

***Legitimacy of indigenous approaches in the eyes of recipients and target groups-*** according to Coning (2013), "External peace builders need to re-affirm the principle of local ownership and re-commit to make it the starting point of their approach to state and peace building. No one seems to challenge the essential logic that for any peace process to be sustainable it has make to sense for, and serve the interest of the people directly involved." This clearly indicates why endogenous knowledge in Africa tends to be legitimately accepted by Africans to deal with their issues. Because, these endogenous knowledge in African societies are premised on the vigorous role of the communities drawing a greater legitimacy with transparency and active participation as well which promotes effective peace building practices in the continent.

***The need for self-development with peace as a guarantee from the inside-*** the urgency of using culturally appropriate peace building process stems also from the intricate relationship between peace and development where peace guarantees the conditions within which development can take place. In Africa peace is of utmost importance, and enables efforts for socio-economic development (Osie-Hwedei and Galvin, 2015). Thus, according to Angula (2008), Africa's underdevelopment can

partly be attributed to the fact that current paradigms of socio-economic development have ignored African knowledge systems lacking organic roots in the culture and knowledge system of the African people. The development process, therefore, lacks context and relevance to the African people it cannot come from outside but from within. Self-development as lasting demand should start from the African knowledge systems learning from what people already know to what they need to know to solve their problems.

*The need for harnessing democratic governance based on indigenous mechanisms-* the questions of democracy across African countries has led to the search for importance of African indigenous institutions of governance as alternative solutions to the leadership crises. As Tesfaye (2012) argued, the indigenous institutions of governance across African states are more democratic and egalitarian than the modern African states' legal institutions. Thus, in order to foster the democratization process in Africa the roles of indigenous approaches are hard to miss. In Africa, there are indigenous practices for peace building that can provide lessons on healing and reconciliation (Murithi, 2009). So, it is imperative to find ways of learning lessons from the indigenous approaches to promote governance by combining indigenous and modern systems that enable Africans to reconstruct their continent drawing upon their cultural heritage.

## **2.2. Women and Peace Building Process in Africa**

The new approaches to gender and culture as stepping stones of sustainable peace have lately been taken up in several efforts to promote the role of women in peace building processes. In response to this, UNSCR 1325 has boosted the production of policy guidelines, planning toolboxes and lessons learned reports, reiterating the moral imperative of taking women into account.

Based on peace and conflict research through a gender lens, there has been little documentation or analysis of women's peace building activities. According to Agbajobi (2010), peace building is a multidimensional goals that necessitate a multifaceted response from many actors, including old, young, men and women. Thus, excluding women from peace process is a serious omission as it denies the rights of women in expressing their views and concerns regarding the resolution of conflict and peace building.

As there is increased attention for gender considerations, women continued to be excluded from peace building efforts in the contemporary world (Bell, 2013). Particularly, Chhabra (2005) and Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) addressed adequately the position of women as a common problem in contemporary peace building projects and /their limited involvement in the institutional design of peace building strategies. Also, according to the Berghof Foundation (2012), gender roles are often reinforced through all sections of society and gender relations underlie many of the women's experiences across the globe. Thus, a gender lens recognizes women and men are differently affected by conflict, violence and peace, and play different roles in relation to them.

Around the world, women have labored to build and maintain peace at the community level because they appreciate the ways that inequality and injustice hinder human development can make the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements more constructive (UNIFEM, 2005). Also, according to Munuve (2015), women are more creative and effective in waging peace based on their emotional strength to transcend pain and suffering, and their predisposition to peace that provide them with greater potentials for peacemaking. It is therefore often the case that ideas about some of women's distinctive qualities become identified with the way forward in peace building, and strategies therefore focus on ways to enhance, support and extend the work that women are thought to be well-equipped to undertake.

For Kaberuka (2014), women's peace agency is rooted in the values of their womanhood and an ethic of care that values relationships, inter-connectedness and empowerment from which springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love. These values are necessary requirements for amicably resolving conflict and for sustaining peace. Their peace agency in these societies can be located in their cultural and socio-political roles as well as their contributions to the overall well-being of these societies. Complementing this, Isike and Okeke (2009) argued that, women in pre-colonial African societies had traditional peacemaking and peace building roles as they were involved in mediating and preventing conflict within and between societies. Here, in most pre-colonial societies, virtues of patience, tolerance, humility and subtle persuasiveness were seen as essentially female attributes which were reinforced through socialization patterns that promote women primarily as child-bearers, good wives, caregivers, arbitrators of conflict and peace promoters in the family and community.

But, contemporarily, in many African societies women are often relegated to the background and marginalized both in formal peace negotiations and in the rebuilding of war-torn societies (UNESCO, 2003). Though women have a role in peace efforts within African's cultures, it has not been capitalized by institutions involved in peace missions. Women have played a key role in productive peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction of conflicts in Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone nevertheless (NAP, 2012).

Specially, the findings of Osie-Hwedei and Galvin (2015) and Woodhouse and Duffey (2008) reveals that Somali women have acted as intermediaries between opposition clans, and through traditional women's networks that support women and their families during conflict. They have played as peacemaker through inter-clan marriage and they are employed as go-betweens or intermediaries between opposing clans to make contact and open discussion. That is why locally-based clan reconciliation conferences, have recognized the resources of Somali women's groups and employed them as bridge builders to initiate and nurture lasting peace.

Generally, the position of Chhabra (2005) is quite important as she argued for the continuation of women's role which have made and will make significant contributions towards the culture of peace. Women are largely known to be responsible for nurturing positive cultural practices and they

offer non-violence to violence and have to be integrally involved in seeking solutions to issues intrinsic to building peace. Thus, women's fullest potential can be realized and it is deemed necessary to unearth their image of a culture of peace mandating gender in peace efforts especially from indigenous perspective in Africa.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

A gendered analysis of peace and security is fundamental, since women experience both war and peace differently to men. According to the feminist discourses, peace is not just the absence of war but it involves social justice and a consciousness and transformation of gender identities within the family and community. By stressing the possibility of women's active participation in peace building and war making, the idea of a flexible gender system helps to expose the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the history of African women (Kadenyi, 2008). Also, as womanism purports to interpret black female experiences globally Mobolanle (2009), this paper examines to what extent womanism delineates the indigenous Oromoo women's experiences in relation to peace building. Therefore, as Mobolanle (2009) argued it, an indigenous African approach on gender should involve a healthy appreciation of African cultures, and the centralizing of motherhood as positive experiences for African women. Based on this idea, feminist theory to meet the specific needs of African women's wherein gender discourse we can be diversified.

Generally, this paper favors what Dzifa Doris (2004) call *the divine attributes and womanhood* as a positive value of African women's attributes such as calm or patience, mercy, beneficence, care and comfort, forgiveness and reconciliation, peace and love. These sacred women values could help to resolve conflicts and build peace by mitigating the structural and operational problems there. Thus, the primary values of African Womanhood is creative life-giving, fruitfulness, which is the greatest principle against any tendency towards conflict that seeks to build sustainable peace. This African genesis and womanhood also endows the Oromoo women with both the privilege and responsibility of their creative artisan of life and moral (good) character to build peace under *Siiqqee institution*.

### 4. Methods and Materials

Qualitative approach seems to be the most appropriate method for this study given that it is a means of understanding the complexity of a situation by exploring and explaining the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a given social problem (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative research is also opted because it has been associated with a feminist sensitivity, best allowing women's voices to be heard and the emancipatory goals to be realized. In relation to this approach, the study is shaped by what Creswell (2009) calls *Social constructivism worldview* where meanings are made based upon on the context where people live and work. Typically with this strategy, detailed data are gathered and formed into categories and themes from both primary (through key informant interviews) and

secondary sources. The collected data are analyzed and interpreted using the content and thematic analysis. The fact that the themes are based on a number of sources and other researchers' findings is also adding to the reliability and validity of the paper at hand.

## 5. Results and Discussions

This part is classified into two sections as it helps to clearly understand the results and provide discussions to meet the intended objectives of the paper. The first section covers the descriptions of peace from the Oromoo Gadaa system perspective and its structures and machineries there for promoting positive peace building. This allows to gain better understanding on the roles of Oromoo women in in peace building. Because, the Oromoo conception of peace under the values Gadaa system allows to anticipate the roles of women in building peace through their respective *Siiqqee institution*. The second section covers the meanings and definitions of *Siiqqee institution* and its practical implication in indigenous peace building process under the Gadaa system.

### 5.1.The Indigenous Oromoo Gadaa System from Peace Building Perspective

To start with, Gadaa system is an indigenous socio-political democratic system of the Oromoo people in Africa that regulated political stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligations, moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the Oromoo society (Hinew, 2012). The indigenous Oromoo Gadaa system incorporates elements of contemporary peace building approaches to maintain social harmony and peaceful coexistence notions such as: culture of peace, gender equality, solidarity, peacemaking, development, human rights, justice, natural resource and environmental management among others as milestones upon which positive peace can be built.

In the context of the Gadaa system developed by the Oromoo as unique culture and democratic form of administration, peace building takes a stand in the argument that the Oromoo world view understanding of peace building is broader and more holistic than the way the others are using it. Thus, it relevant to discuss the concept of peace building in a broader context to understand what it entails for the Oromoo's stance which is used in this work. Therefore, Gadaa system as indigenous peace building approach explained below from positive peace building elements including culture of peace, human rights protection, economic well-being, ecological well-being, reconciliation, and non-violence among others.

***Indigenous Oromoo Gadaa system as a culture of peace***-the United Nations defines as culture of peace, in its Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace as *a set of values, attitudes and behaviors that reflect respect for life, human beings and their dignity and that bring to the forefront human rights, the rejection of violence in all its forms and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity and tolerance, as well as understanding among peoples, groups and individuals*. Thus, in a culture of peace, according to Schilling (2012), people assumes a global