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**MASTER OF ARTS IN OROMO FOLKLORE AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

***OROMO HISTORICAL HERITAGE: HISTORICAL  
SIGNIFICANCE OF ODAA BULTUM GADAA ASSEMBLY***

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SIGNIFICANCE OF ODAA BULTUM GADAA ASSEMBLY**

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**OROMO SCRIPT**

**Phonetic Presentation**

**Vowels**

A	a
E	E
I	I
O	O
U	U
Double	long (as in aadaa)

**Consonants**

B.....	Ba
C.....	Ca
D.....	Da
F.....	Fa
G.....	Ga
H.....	Ha
J.....	Ja
K.....	Ka
L.....	La
M.....	Ma
N.....	Na
P.....	Pa
Q.....	Qa
R.....	Ra
S.....	Sa
T.....	Ta
V.....	Va
W.....	Wa
X.....	ta(?)
Y.....	Ya
Z.....	Za
CH.....	tcha
DH.....	D'a
NY.....	Gna
PH.....	p'a
SH.....	Ša
Double	stressed (as in Abbaa)

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## **Abstract**

*The Gadaa system is a special egalitarian socio-economic and political organization of the Oromo that has its origin in the age-system of the Horn of Africa. Gadaa assembly has been held in the open air meadow (caffee) under the shade of the sacred evergreen sycamore tree (Odaa).*

*The major purpose of this thesis is to show the viability of Odaa Bultum Gadaa assembly values and depict how membership to Odaa Bultum gadaa grades determined the social-political and economic roles and responsibilities of individuals. The central problem on which this study embarks is to put into consideration the interrelation of Oromo historical heritage and Odaa Bultum Gadaa Assembly. It deals with the historical heritage of Odaa Bultum with the focus of the progressions of Odaa Bultum Gadaa among the Harrarghe Oromo society. The Oromo of the area have been selected because of the continuous disastrous changes seen in the subsequent times on the Oromo culture owing to the multi-faceted factors.*

*To keep the reliability of the data the researcher used full time including long time to the night to arrange and transcribe the qualitative data into the computer and try to collect the documented materials from aanaas and godinaa offices through photocopy and mail systems. The research focuses on new site and relies primarily on in-depth interviews. About fifteen elders of different aanaas in West Hararghe zone were interviewed to collect reliable traditions related to the topic. The researcher interviewed some knowledgeable elders for about four hours at different times. By the end of the study, 15 informants (13 males and 2 females) had been interviewed. The informants were asked to reflect on Oromo historical heritage with special reference to historical significance of Odaa Bultum Gadaa assembly. The study also involved focus group discussions in which three to five participants discussed different aspects of Odaa Bultum Gadaa assembly. Finally, a total of three such groups participated in focus group discussion.*

*The researcher observes society's cultural, political, social and economic experiences by going down into remote villages and contacting elders in the society. The information that was collected from the elders was recorded on tape recorder, transcribed and qualitatively analyzed.*

## **III**

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

The *Gadaa* system was the constitution of the Oromo society through which the society administered and defended their territory; maintained and developed their economy. Among the Oromo, the concept of *Gadaa* has three related meanings: a socio-economic, political, military and religious institution; a period of eight years during which elected officials assume power and the class of people in holding leadership. 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. Enrollment/recruitment into the system is not by biological age, but based upon the maintenance of one socially defined generation gap between father and son, an individual remains exactly five stages below his father's level (Asmerom Leggesse, 2000). The system comprised eleven age groups, based on eight-year increments, and male Oromo gained particular socio-political rights with certain stages of the *Gadaa* system (Baxter, 1979). *Gadaa* grades succeeded each other every eight years enjoying privileges of the stage and assuming various responsibilities. Five successive *Gadaa* stages make up a generation that occupies forty years of the *Gadaa* cycle. The first five grades were generally periods of training and military service in addition to shouldering some economic activities. The remaining *Gadaa* grades consist of the adulthood stages that continue up to the eleventh stage. The stages of adulthood were periods of socio-political responsibilities (Asmerom, 1973).

In the history of the Oromo *Gadaa*, the general assemblies for various purposes met at the *Caffee* under the shade of the *Odaa* tree. The whole set of *Gadaa* activity including rituals, initiation, the handover of power ceremony, revising and enacting customary laws and judiciary practices have been held under the shade of *Odaa* tree. As a result of its significance, *Odaa* tree is honored as symbolically the most important of all trees. The minor findings reveal that there has been a deep rooted and wider range of socio-cultural and historical interpretation to *Odaa* (sycamore tree). *Odaa* is customarily believed to be the most holy, respected and mysterious tree, the shade of which was believed as the source of harmony (Dereje Hinew, 2012).

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Folklore is one of the significant aspects of people's socio-cultural life. It is an important part of people's customs, traditions and institutions. In a pre-literate society, it serves as the storehouse of culture and history (Dorson, 1972:35; Boswell, 1962:11). Therefore, studying folklore can strongly serve as a means of studying the people it belongs to. By closely examining its folkloric forms, it is possible to learn the political, cultural and social ideals as well as the economic realities of the society (*Ibid*). *Gadaa* system is one of the main themes studied by scholars of different disciplines. Scholars that studied *Gadaa* system at large gave attention to the nature of the institution, the socio-cultural performance in the system, calendar and the political aspect of the *Gadaa* system. Asmarom (1973) produced the most comprehensive ethnographic research on this indigenous Oromo socio-political organization based on the people's oral historic records.

However, the link between indigenous values and Oromo historical heritage of *Gadaa* Assembly has yet unstudied in depth. Thus, it is unfortunate for the prosperous Oromo historical heritage to come to academic arena and modern type of learning system. Similarly, there is no research done on *Odaa Bultum* assembly. None of the scholars investigated the historical background of *Odaa Bultum* and its significances. Thus, the study at hand is initiated by such tempting situations and attempts to tackle the problem with its focus on *Odaa Bultum* Assembly. The central problem on which this study embarks is to put into consideration the interrelation of Oromo historical heritage and *Odaa Bultum* Assembly. The area has been selected because of the continuous disastrous changes seen in the subsequent times on the Oromo culture because of economic, social and political factors. As Oromo folklorist, the researcher has taken the responsibility to conduct research on this vital topic in which to show how to revive the Oromo historical heritage of *Odaa Bultum*.

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

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The overall objective of the paper is aimed to reconstruct the historical significances of *Odaa Bultum*, and its attachments to the Oromo socio-political and religious life.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- explain different activities of the *Gadaa* Assembly practiced in *Odaa Bultum*;
- identify the notable participants in *Gadaa* Assembly of *Odaa Bultum*;
- elucidate the determinant factors contributed to the decline of *Odaa Bultum* Assembly;
- explicate the ways in which this *Gadaa* assembly will be revived.

### **1. 4. Fundamental Research Questions**

The study concentrates on the following fundamental questions:

- What are the socio-political and economic interactions existed among different Oromo clans and non-Oromo groups who settled around the present Aanaa *Odaa Bultum*/the study area?
- Who are the notable participants of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly?
- What were and are the different traditional social institution and cooperative forms practiced by *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly?
- What were the major reasons that led to the downgrading of *Odaa Bultum* Assembly?
- What are the ways to revive *Odaa Bultum* assembly?

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

The indigenous *Gadaa* system organized and ordered society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions (Baissa, 1971, 1993; Legesse, 1973). All regions of Oromiyaa have had sub-offices of the *Odaa* or Bokkuu. This study has not taken other *Odaa* locations or *Gadaa* centers into consideration. It deals with the historical heritage of *Odaa Bultum* with the focus on the progressions of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly.

### **1.6. Limitation of the Study**

The dominant limitations of the study were time constraints that hinder the researcher to make repeated and staged field work. Some participants were also not cooperative to be interviewed. Transport problem to go to remote area was another strong challenge. Moreover, there were financial constraints to purchase materials needed for data collection, processing and analysis; enumerator's recruitment and training.

Nonetheless, to keep the reliability of the data, the researcher has taken the following measures. To solve the time constraint, the researcher used full time including long time to the night to arrange and transcribe the qualitative data into the computer and tried to collect the documented materials from *aanaas* and *godinaa* offices through photocopy and mail systems. The researcher has hired motorcycle to solve the transport problem, and coped with the budget constraint by using cooperation of friends.

### **1.7. Significance of the Study**

Society had its own world view of understanding this world. A society also could develop, adopt and modify cultural and political institutions. The history of religio-political centers would be more meaningful if it is studied and interpreted as part of the world-view and historical experiences of a given society. The socio-economic, political and religious lives of the Oromo were highly intertwined which would be incomplete without investigating the origin of *Gadaa* system. This study is significant in the sense that it may fill the gap of research related to the historical heritage of *Odaa* assemblies. It can initiate other researchers to restudy the in-depth history of *Odaa* centers and *Gadaa* system, reflect the people's activities as traditional practices and prevalent moral values in the society, and give some insight to new generation about the historical heritage of *Odaa Bultum*.

## **1.8. Research Methodology**

### **1.8.1. Data Collection Methods**

#### **1.8.1.1. Interviews**

In qualitative study, interview is the most basic method of data collection. The face-to-face encounters with people create opportunities for an in-depth understanding of a situation and a context. Hence, the researcher conducted interviews during the limited field stay from January to March 2014 and gathered information by interviewing individuals from different districts in West Hararghe zone such as Ciroo, Baddeessaa, Galamsoo, Ancaar, Hirnaa, Qunnii and Debesso. Although the researcher was new to the locality, he speaks the language, can understand responses and communicate with the people. With the native Hararghe assistant, he got along easily with people in every locality. The assistant, since he has formal education, has knowledge of oral and written history of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa Assembly* and of many other cultural practices of the society. His knowledge about *Odaa Bultum Gadaa Assembly* and the accompanying rituals is remarkable. He has had participated in *Odaa Bultum Gadaa rituals*.

The interview used for the study is both semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The researcher selects knowledgeable elders through snowball sampling because this knowledgeable persons are not found easily and interviews them for a significant number of times. The duration of the interview varied in length between one and four hours, depending on the enthusiasm of the interviewee and the interviews were not uniform for all interviewees since each individual has different forms of knowledge. Individual informants of different status, sex and age were selected on the basis of their expert knowledge, past experience, degree of participation in *Odaa Bultum Assembly* and knowledge of the culture. Ethnographic information is obtained through interviewing the selected key informants. Traditional local government officials were also interviewed to ascertain the data collected from the key informants. By the end of the study, 15 informants (13 males and 2 females) had been interviewed. The information collected from the elders was recorded on tape recorder.

### **1.8.1.2. Focus Group Discussion**

In this method, the researcher held meetings with elders that are talented with rich socio-cultural and historical background of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly. The focus group discussion involved six to eight participants' conversation on different aspects of *Odaa Bultum* assembly. Finally, a total of three such groups participated in the discussion and the information collected was again recorded on tape recorder.

### **1.8.2. Data Analysis**

According to Merriam, S. B. (1998) qualitative data analysis is an on going complex process that involves back and forth movement between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation. Her suggestion seems sound for this study. The analysis was made through the researcher's living experience based on the realities on the ground of the society by using the historical Reconstructionism theory. Based on the findings obtained, interpretations were made and conclusions were reached.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1. The Oromo

The Oromo are the largest group of the Cushitic ethnic groups inhabiting eastern Africa since time immemorial and *Afaan Oromo* is one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa, only Arabic and Hausa surpass it (*Gadaa Melbaa, 1988:9*). The Oromo were one of the very ancient indigenous stocks, on which most other peoples in east Africa had been grafted (*Darrel Bates, 1979:7*). Accordingly, the Oromo movement (1522-1618) to different parts of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan was mostly the return to their original homelands from which they had been pushed by the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries Christian-Muslim conflicts (*Mohammed Hassen, 1994*).

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, the Oromo were already organized into two confederations known as Booranaa and Baarentuu to which all Oromo subgroups trace their genealogies (*Mohammed Hassen, 1994:4-9*). The Sabboo-Goonaa, Kontam-Daarimuu/Gujii, the Maccaa-Tulamaa and the Raayyaa-Asseebuu sub-moities are said to be extended from the Booranaa while the Sikkoo-Mandoo/Arsii and the Ituu-Humbannaa are claimed to be the branches of the Baarentuu (*Gemetchu Megersa, 1994*).

Practically, however, it is not possible to trace in detail the manner in which further division of the clans and lineages occur (*Haberland, 1963: 775*). Whenever members of the Oromo clans are asked to identify their descent, they always provide the name of their moieties rather than their lineages as the Oromo evolved the overarching structural mechanisms that helped to fashion Oromo relations within themselves and with outsiders for incorporating new members. The Oromo clan (*qomoo*) is consisting of several descents who not all need to be Oromo. The heart of every clan is compounded of a cluster of roots tracing their descent to the ancestor who gave his name to the clan. The Oromo avoid the distinction between the biological and social descents. The complexity of the Oromo kinship system is demonstrated by the existence of similarly named putative descent groups on the macro and micro kinship levels across the whole spectrum of Oromo society (*P.T.W. Baxter, 1994*). Because of these complexities and the paucity of data, it is impossible at this time to fully reconstruct the Oromo kinship system.

## 2. 2. The *Gadaa* system

Understanding the history of *Gadaa* centers (*Odaa*) requires understanding the essence of *Gadaa* itself. *Gada* is the most complex word of Oromo socio-economic and political organization with multiple meaning. It is said to have been derived from the term *gaaddisaa* (shelter or shade that protects from the heat of the sun) or the Oromo words *Ga* (law) and *Daa* (God), which meant God's law (*Alemayehu, 2009*). Tsegaye G/Medhin (1964) presents the etymology of *Gadaa* as *ka'aada*, which is the combination of *ka* (means *uumaa* or creator) and *aada* (norms) together it means norms of God. Legesse (1973: 81) stated that, the word *Gadaa* stands for several related ideas. First of all, the concept is standing for the whole way of life. More specifically, however, it refers to any period of eight years during which a class/*Lubaa* stays in power. The term also has the meaning of time measurement, *Gadaa* means eight years (*Tesema Ta'a, 1980*).

According to Hoebel's definition, *Gadaa* is a well-developed age-based system upon which the religious, political, economic and social life of the Oromo people was formed. As part and parcel of African age set systems, *Gadaa* must have also been developed as a mechanism of motivating and fitting members of the society (particularly men) into social structure. It harnesses the energies of the youth to the ends of the society and gives to each age group a strong awareness of its own status (*Hoebel, 1958: 411*). It provides clear structural reference for members of the society so that they may develop a consistent and stable sense of self and others. Identity confusion, which is one typical problem of the technologically sophisticated societies of the current world is, therefore, unthinkable in the *Gadaa* System since any age set strictly provides its members with values and motives with which they should guide their lives (*Shaffer, 1994; Weston, 1996*).

In order to decipher the structure of the *Gadaa* System, one needs to identify two different, but interrelating systems of peer group structure. According to Legesse (1973: 50-51):

*A system is in which the members of each class are recruited strictly on the basis of chronological age. The other is a system in which the members are recruited equally strictly on the basis of genealogical generations. The first has nothing to do with genealogical ties. The second has little to do with age. Both types of social organizations are formed every eight years. Both sets of groups pass from one stage of development to the next every eight years.*

The unilineal movement in the *Gadaa* System begins at birth. The concern of each grade was vividly stated by Legesse (1973) and Hamer (1996: 546-547). In the *Gadaa* system, the cross cutting issues of generation, age, sex and class were the guiding criteria in the accountability sharing and principal variables in the ways of group formations or differentiations along with role assignments among diverse social groups. The allocations of specialized functions in each stage segmentated along effective lines were socially and culturally constructed phenomena in conformity with the overall general property relations. *Gadaa* effectively enforced the age and gender based divisions of labor in Oromo society (Alemayehu, 2009:168; Negaso, 2001:125).

Over the years, *Gadaa* acquired what is referred to as “a system of temporal differentiation of society having little done with age” (Asmarom, 1973:137). This makes *Gadaa* totally different from the age-set system because sons follow their fathers moving up one grade at a fixed interval regardless of their age and membership in the *Gadaa* is not according to the age of a person. *Gadaa* is a corporate grade-based system where members are recruited based solely on genealogical generations (*Ibid.*). Evidence for this can be found in the practices of the Borana, and also the Orma Oromo of Tana River (Kelly, 136).

In the *Gadaa* System, the structural elevation follows an established procedure. Promotion from one grade to the next confers a culturally bestowed identity. All males born within a specified eight-year period passed through the grades, based on the age difference of eight years. A son is initiated into the first Grade only after his father has completed a cycle of forty years. Among some Oromo clans, each grade went through a cycle of eleven grades except for the fifth, which lasted thirteen years, and the seventh grade which lasted three years (Legesse, 1973).

Transition from one grade to the next higher set was marked by elaborated ceremonies. For example, boys from birth to eight years (*Dabballee/Suluda/Maxxaarrii/Seelee*) were dressed and treated like girls. Their hair was kept long and decorated with cowry shells. They were given utmost love and attention both by their parents and community at large because at this stage they were regarded as possessing special capabilities to be intermediaries between humankind and God, Waaqa. However, the fact that boys at this age were treated like girls does not mean that the girls and women in general held low status. In fact, mothers to such children were highly regarded and were given utmost respect in their community (Donald Levine, 2000:131).

Within the *Gadaa* grades, different specialization of labor and hierarchies and rituals were recognized as one advances from one stage to the next. When members entered the *Ruubboo/* junior *Gaammee* grade, they were given proper males name and their hair was cut boy's style and they started to assume responsibilities under their father's guidance. They were responsible for looking after the livestock within the vicinity of their homestead and females helping their mothers in milking. It was at this stage that the boys formed symbolic association with livestock, and they were given a heifer that would multiply to become their own herd (*Legesse, 1973*).

At the third grade i.e. *Foollee/Goobama/senior Gaammee*; the boys were considered young adults and entrusted with responsibilities such as taking family herds into far/*Darabaa/Fooraa* for an extended period. At this stage, masculine values were taught and tested (*Legesse, 1973*).

At grade four (*Kuusaa*), the most significant activity was the institution of the Hayyuu council. The members were selected based on both family and individual reputation. It was then that the members were required to undertake a prescribed war party, and after completion of this task, some members were admitted as senior councilors affiliated to the *Gadaa* membership (*Legesse, 1973*).

The grade five, *Raabaa Doorii* extended for thirteen years, and it was during this stage that members were entitled to marry, but there were some prerequisites to fatherhood; members were required to observe some rituals and ceremonies. For example, they observed a number of taboos and norms like praying under a special tree, singing at a shrine. Men carried extensive responsibilities during this stage, such as safeguarding the community's major resources against external aggression. This was done through military leaders known as *Abbaa Duulaa* who led in war and conflicts. By the end of the forty-year period, every man had experienced every major duty within the *Gadaa* system (*Donald Levine, 2000:131*).

By the time they reached grade six, called *Gadaa/Lubaa*, the men assumed prominent ritual and political leadership roles. They were regarded as highly experienced and held in high regard within their community (*Donald Levine, 2000:132*).

Finally, grades seven, eight, nine, ten and eleven were generally stages of retirement from active participation, instead their sons and grandsons took over these responsibilities, but still men at these stages were consulted for advice, both formal and informal (*Donald Levine, 2000:133*).

*Gadaa* was also a system created to socialize men and distribute different skills and powers in the social and political set-up of the clan at each stage of the *Gadaa* grade (*Hoebel, 1958:411*). According to *Hector Blackhurst* (1996:243-44), “Oromo political structure as it existed before [the sixteenth century] expansion began was flexibly centralized in that major office holders were located at fixed points but power was sufficiently diffused throughout the system to enable local-level decision making to continue without constant reference back to the centre. However, the whole system was renewed spiritually and structurally by the meetings at the Caffee where legal matters were discussed and the law laid down or reiterated.

Oromo clans differentiated themselves from one another and also from other communities as they practiced *Gadaa* in such a way that it intersected and connected with other traditional institutions like linkage through co-operative labor. For example, in the case of co-operative labor, the pastoralist Oromo tied their *Gadaa* practices to the pastoral way of life. The effective operation of the *Gadaa* institution depended on the ability of the people to coordinate their movements. Jointly, these institutions functioned as the “check and balance” system that created a complex of networks linking individuals and that controlled conflicts by preventing the monopolization of power and authority by a single class (*Herbert, 1965:27*).

Women did not participate in the *Gadaa* system, nor did they have any organization based on age. This was similar to women in other regions (*Bernard, 1985:45*). However, within the *Gadaa* system, Oromo women’s status and their roles were categorized in three general stages namely: youth, adult life and old age. Women’s roles and powers were based on seniority. A similar view is held by the anthropologist, *Ifi Amadiume* (1987:190), who argues that the bargaining power of women in the Nnobi region of Nigeria rested on age. Similar evidence is also revealed in the Oromo Borana. In a polygamous marriage, the first wife, which in this case is also the eldest, exercises more power and enjoys greater privileges as compared to a second or a third wife. For instance, she has more wealth measured in terms of heads of cattle.

Based on this, one can argue that in the pre-colonial period, African women's roles were complementary to those of men, thus promoting gender equality. For example, in most Oromo groups, *Gadaa* leaders did not make their decisions alone but worked with several groups. One such group was women who brought into perspective their ritual specialization and control of their "domestic sphere" through the Ateetee Ritual and the Siqqee Institution (Asmarom, 1973:23-24; Gemetchu Megersa, 1994).

In Oromo traditional religion there are ritual experts called Qaalluu (male) or Qallitti (female) who keep the relationship between *Ayyaanaa*/spirit and the Oromo people. It is possible to say that the Qaalluu office has significant roles in the society. One of the major roles of the Qaalluu is that Qaalluu acts as a political leader or has political importance in the *Gadaa* system. According to Melbaa (1988: 20) the Qaalluu village is a spiritual centre, where political debates are organized for the candidates of the *Gadaa* offices. It is the Qaalluu himself who organizes and oversees the election of *Gadaa* leaders. The important ceremonial articles (collective symbols) such as *Bokkuu* (scepter) and *Kallachaa* are kept in the Qaalluu village (Gemetchu Megersa, 1994).

The *Gadaa* class in power honors the Qaalluu by taking gifts and making pledges of reverence during ceremony called the Muuda or anointment ceremony. Abbaa Muuda was the most great and ancient of all Qaalluus (Gemetchu Megersa, 1994).

### **2.3. ODA: THE HOLY SYCAMORE TREE**

Various explanations were given for the reason why *Odaa* became a socio-political center. To begin with; *Odaa* grows in the areas where there is abundant water, which is a source of life and fertility. Among other trees, according to the tradition, *Odaa* remains wet even during long period of drought. The widely told tradition claims that Waaqaa invoked spirits of dedication to big trees, rivers and big mountains and the areas were referred to as sacred. In the Oromo world-view, Waaqaa is believed to have communicated with people through intermediaries called *ayyaanaa* (spirit), which is the organizing principle (*Gemechu, 1994*).

Hence, the sycamore tree of different kinds are regarded as an abode of spirit among the Oromo and used to provide the Oromo with ritual performances and praying site. For fear of reprisal, every issue had to be conducted under *Odaa* calmly and peacefully as well as based on truth (*Dereje, 2012*).

However, almost all the documents on Oromo and *Gadaa* are not critical enough on *Gadaa* Centers (*Odaas*) in general and Oda Bultum in particular. It was only Dereje Hinew (2005), who endeavored at least to make survey on such centers but mentioned almost nothing about *Odaa Bultum*. Therefore, this research aims to study the unique features of Oda Bultum.

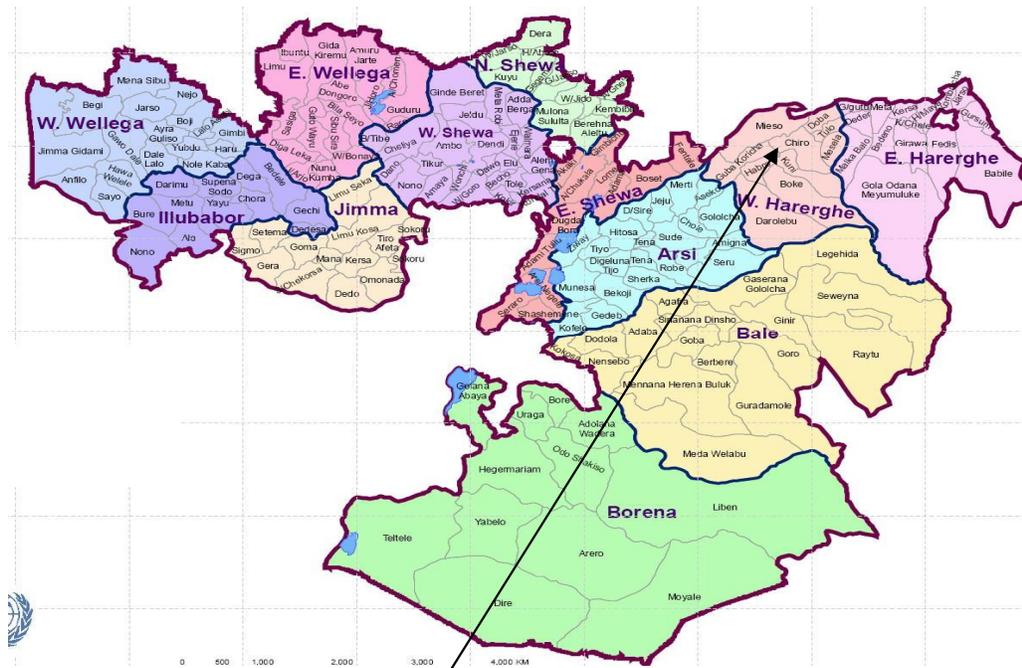
## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

#### 3.1. The Hararghe Oromo

The Oromo of Hararghe are bounded by the Arsii in the west and south, the Karrayyuu and Jillee Oromo in the North West, the Afar in the north, and the Somali in the north, east and south east. They call their natural homeland Gooroo *Fugug*. They are basically regrouped into three major clans, among whom the Ituu occupy the western part of Hararghe highlands called *Carcar* or “*Ona Ituu*” extends from Awash River to a line drawn south of Dirree Dhawaa. Ituu are divided into ten sub-clans: *Baayyee*, *Waayyee*, *Addayyoo*, *Arroojjii*, *Baabboo*, *Gaadullaa*, *Waacaalee*, *Alгаа*, *Gaamoo* and *Qaalluu*. The natural boundary between Ituu and Aniiyyaa is the Raamis River. The Aniiyyaa live south of the Ituu and west of the Erer River occupying the lowlands of *Gaara Mul’ataa*. Their home area is called *Diida Aanniiyyaa/Burqaa Tirtiraa*. The boundary between Ituu and Afran Qal’oo is Burqaa River near *Baroodaa* town. The boundary between Afran Qallo and Aniiyya is the Mojoo River. The Afran Qalloo lay to the east of Ituu and North of Aniiyyaa. They are largest of the three groups both in population and area. The four decedents of Qalloo (Afran Qalloo) are Aalaa, living west of the city of Harar and the Erer River; Oborraa, living between the Ituu and Aalaa; Baabbillee, living east of the Erer River, and Dagaa (Huumee, Noolee and Jaarsoo). Huumee (Mana Hiiyyoo and Bursuug) live between Laaftoo and Faafam rivers-with capital at Funyaan Biraa (Gursum). Noole live east of Dirree Dhawaa and north of Harar. Jaarsoo live in the northeastern corner of Oromiyaa Region (Afendi Muteki, 2001).

Obviously, the Hararghe Oromo belong to the Baareentoo confederation that moved toward the east of the Gannaalee River before and during the Oromo expansion of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Hararghe Oromo are friendly and hospitable people. In the Harar uplands, some of their clans like Noolee and Baabbillee mixed with the Somali and the Hararghe Oromo, although not all were converted to Islam through the influence of the Harar city-state, which also became instrumental in spreading Islam to all other southern parts of Ethiopia. Clandestinely, the Ituu have remained largely followers of traditional religion since not much has been done to evangelize them. Few others have also joined the Christian communities (Afendi Muteki, 2001).



### 3. 2. West Hararghe

#### 3.2.1. Location and Relief

West Hararghe is one of the Zones in the Oromiyaan Regional State of Ethiopia. West Hararghe is bordered on the south by the Shabalee River which separates it from Bale, on the southwest by Arsi, on the northwest by the Afar Region, on the north by the Somali Region and on the east by East Hararghe. The zone covers an area of 15, 065.86 square kilometers. The highest point in this Zone is Mount Arba Guugguu (3574 meters) (Ethiopian Central Stastical Agency, 2007 Census).

### 3. 2. 2. Natural Wonders

There are natural caves of different sizes in the mountainous parts where Galamsoo is situated. The most famous of them are the three caves known as *Hachare-Aynage*, *Ruki'essa* and *Barro* found near Machaaraa town, 40 km south of Galamsoo. The first scholarly study of them was undertaken in 1996 by a team of experts from University of Huddersfield (England), afterwards nicknamed *The Huddersfield Expedition* (Andy Baker, 2007; Asfawossen Asrat et al, 2008). Since then, the caves have become important sites of geological and anthropological studies.

Hallayyaa Buchuroo is a deep gorge where the Oromos in ancient times, used to throw and execute (in to the chasm) criminals who were found guilty of intentional killing of innocent people (Addis Admas Gazette June 27, 2001).

Haroo Carcar (Chercher Lake) is 10 km east of Galamsoo. It varies in its area coverage from time to time ([www.maplandia.com](http://www.maplandia.com)). Currently, it is the largest natural lake in eastern Ethiopia (assumed this rank as Lake Haramaya disappeared few years ago). The lake is as large as 4 km with a breadth of 2 km at its peak. Yet sometimes it is swindling with another temporal lake which appears at its vicinity during heavy rainfall season. This latter is called *Sal Malee* meaning a place where everybody washes body without being shied of seen naked (Afendi Muteki, 2001).

*Dindin Forest and Wild Life Sanctuary* is found 35 km west of Galamsoo. It is one of the protected forests in Ethiopia and extends to Arba Gugguu Mountains of northern Arsi. Currently, the forest is a home of many species of animals including the endemic Mountain Nyala (*Ancaar Culture and Tourism office, 2013*).

### 3. 2. 3. Places of Archeological Importance

*Corooraa* is an archeological site 40 km west of Galamsoo, where *Chororapithecus*, the 10 million years old fossils of a primate family (ape) were found in 2007. According to *Nature Journal*, these are the first fossils of a large-bodied Miocene ape in African continent north of Kenya. When the fossils were excavated, the news media (including *Nature Journal*) reported the place wrongly *Chorora Formation at the southern margin of the Afar rift*. *Corooraa* is of course in the southeast part of the Rift Valley, but its exact location is the east section of Aanaa Ancaar in West Hararghe zone ([www.maplandia.com](http://www.maplandia.com)).

### **3. 2. 4. Places Referred as Ancient Settlements**

*Qurquraa* is a village located about 30 km away from Galamso (in western direction) near *Hardim* town and referred by Oromo elders as a long time existing settlement area. This notion may induce us to identify it as a place repeatedly mentioned by the same name in the famous book known as *Al Futuhul Habash, /the Conquest of Abyssinia/* (Ulrich Braukämper, 2003; Mohammed Hassan, 1999; *Ancaar Culture and Tourism office, 2014*).

*Abboonah* is another village (a market area) referred by locals as a long standing settlement. Since the village is commonly called by the natives with a prefix *Daro* (saying *Daro Abonaah*), this one also might be identical to a town of the *Dawaro* Sultanate that was mentioned in *Al Futuhul Habash* by the same name (*Futuh al-habaša, 2003*).

Around Galamsoo, we can find ruins of the ancient buildings of the legendary people of *Harallaa*, whom the Oromos narrate as people of great length, extra ordinary strength and superior wealth, but devastated by hunger, epidemic and volcanic eruption because of their extravagance and disbelief. Today, the remnants of the stone built necropolis, store pits, houses and mosques are observable in all of the of Hararghe highlands. Their mysterious legends reach as far as Karrayyuu in the west and Jigjiga in the east (*Ulrich Braukämper, 2003*).

### **3. 2. 5. Demographics**

The 1994 *Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Oromia Region, Vol. 1, part 1* reported that a total population for this Zone in 265,147 households was 1, 271, 894, of which 653,529 were men and 618, 365 women; 95, 864 or 7.54% were urban dwellers. This also included an estimate for the inhabitants of one rural and one urban *kebeles/Gandaas* and parts of two urban ones, which were not counted but estimated to be 2, 978, of whom 1, 524 were men and 1, 454 were women. The four largest ethnic groups reported were the Oromo (85.85%), the Amhara (11.45%), the Somali (1.17%), and the Argobba (0.81%); all other ethnic groups made up 0.72%. Afaan Oromoo ranked first language (85.35%); followed by Amharic/13.2% and Somali/1.12%; the remaining 0.33% spoke other mother tongues. The majority of the inhabitants have been Muslim with 85.44%, while 11.28% have professed Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity.

Based on the 2007 census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency (CSA), this Zone has a total population of 1, 871, 706 of whom 958, 861 are men and 912, 845 women. The zone has a population density of 124. 23. A total of 395, 127 households were counted, which results in an average of 4.74 persons to a household, and 380,019 housing units. While 160, 895 or 9.36% are urban inhabitants, a further 10, 567 or 0.56% are pastoralists. The three largest ethnic groups are the Oromo (90.12%), the Amhara (7.24%) and the Somali (1.26%); all other ethnic groups made up 1.38%. Afaan Oromoo is spoken as a first language by 89.47%, Amharic spoken by 8.82% and Somali by 1.2%; the remaining 0.51% spoke all other mother tongues. The Muslims and Orthodox Christians accounted for 88.05% and 11.11% respectively (Ethiopian CSA, 2007).

The average West Hararghe rural household has 0.5 hectare of land compared to the national average of 1.01 and 1.14 for the Oromia Region, and the equivalent of 0.6 heads of livestock. 8,364.00 tons of coffees were produced in the zone in the year 2005 E.C. This represents 7.27% of the Region's and 3.7% of Ethiopia's total output. 16.4% of the population is in non-farm related jobs, compared to the national average of 25% and a regional average of 24%. 429 water projects had been completed on 25 May 2006, which combined with other ongoing projects would bring water to 72,300 inhabitants and raise the percentage of access from 37% to 47%. 55% of all eligible children are enrolled in primary and 8% in secondary schools. 92% of the zone is exposed to malaria, and none to Tsetse fly. 9% of the inhabitants have access to electricity. The zone has a road density of 23.6 kilometers per 1000 square kilometers compared to the national average of 30 kilometers. This zone has a drought risk rating of 372 (*World Bank Memorandum, Four Ethiopia's: A Regional Characterization, May 24, 2004, accessed 23 March 2006*).

### **3.2.6. Major Economic Activities in the Study Area**

Mixed agriculture, which is characterized by crop production and livestock husbandry, is the main economic activity and the major source of livelihood in the study area. Agriculture is predominantly rain-fed. The principal staple food (durra cereal diet) grains in the area include sorghum, maize, teff, wheat, barley, beans, sesamen, rice etc. Some vegetables and fruits are also grown mainly in highland area of the district. Coffee, caat and groundnut are the major cash-generating crops grown in the area (*Ancaar Agriculture and Rural Development Office, 2013*).

Livestock husbandry is an integral component of mixed farming particularly in lowland areas of the districts. Cattle, goats, sheep, donkey, camel and poultry are from among the major type of livestock reared in the area. The Hararghe Oromo herdsmen determine a man's status by the number of livestock. The contribution of crop production and livestock sub-sectors to household food security is deteriorated overtime in the context of small land holding due to adverse environmental problems that are observed in the area. Accordingly, households could not able to support their livelihood by engaging themselves on risky agricultural activity alone. Hence most of households have been forced to involve in different livelihood activities to sustain their live. Petty trade, caat trading, coffee trading, wage labour, and trade in live stock are the major nonfarm activities in the area (*Ancaar Agriculture and Rural Development Office, 2013*).

### **3. 2. 7. Customs**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday is the principal market days in most of west Hararghe towns. There are many open market places in the towns. The cattle market is open only on the principal market day. Females dominate the business in the open markets. The cattle market, however, is totally run by males. The zone is one of the primary suppliers of the humped bull, popularly known as *Harar Sangaa* (Harar Bull) (*Afendi Muteki, 2001*).

Eastern Oromo dialect is spoken in the towns, but the natives of the surrounding areas of Carcar highlands retain some peculiar usages. For example, coins are usually called *niiraa*, (from Italian lire), and its counting vary by successive units of two. For example, at Galamsoo, the Ethiopian five cents coin is called *niira lama* (two lire), the ten cents called *niiraa afur* (four lire), and 20 cents called *nira saddeet* (eight lire). On the other hand, the Ethiopian birr is called *qarshii* and the ten birr note is known as *bawandii* (from English *pound*) (*Afendi Muteki, 2001*). From the thrice a day dines, the breakfast is called *faxara* (from Arabic *futur*), the lunch is known as either *subaata* or *qadaa* (from Arabic *ghada*) and the dinner is called *dhiheena*, *hirbaata/hiraata* (from Harari *hiraat*). The meals include traditional Oromo cuisines like *marqaa* (porridge), *shummoo*, *affeellama*, *qiixxaa* etc; the traditional Harari dish called *hulbat marakh* and dishes of the Arabian origin like *mulawwah* (bread), *faxiiraa*, *haniid* etc. It is said that some 40 years ago, Arabic was the language of commerce in the towns, a custom survived to this date. The *Amhara* have the same food preparation style as that of the *Amhara* who reside elsewhere in Ethiopia.

However, they also share the customs of the Oromo in many cases. For example, the Arabian *mulawwah* and the Harari's *hulbat marakh* are experienced by most of the *Amhara* too (Camilla Gibb, 1996; Mohammed Hassen, 1999).

Caat is chewed by many people of different age groups. A variety of superior quality of caat is called *qarxii* and it originates mostly around a rural area. Other varieties are known by such names as *urata*, *'qudaa*, *chabbala*, *tachero*, *walaha* etc... (Afendi Muteki, 2001).

*Eid al Fitr* and *Eid Al Adha* are the two Islamic festivals celebrated with high honors in western Hararghe. The festivals are usually accompanied by private ceremonies. The remarkable event associated with them is the children's songs at the epoch nights of these festivals. The children also request their parents to buy *eid cloths*. *Milad Al Nabi* or *Mawlid* is the most notable festival celebrated in mass. The main festival lasts for 3 consecutive days, and it is held chiefly at the *Hadra* of *Sheikh Omar*. Professor Ulrich Braukamper (2003) witnessed that when he visited the *Hadra* in 1973, the attendants of the feast number in 10,000s. The Christian population usually celebrates *Epiphany* (called *Ximqat* in Amharic) with great honor than other Christian festivals.

Houses in the towns are usually built with at least two rooms. One of these, *deera* serves as a bed room and is where the family keeps its most valuable materials. In the big size room, guests are welcomed, and important ceremonies are undertaken. Inside this room, a big sized mud-built raised platform, which serves as seat and called *dinqa* or *madaba*, is found with Persian and Arabian rugs on it. Kitchens are usually located outside the main house and called *alawaadaa*, derived from Oromo phrase *alatti waaddaa*-roast a meat outside. The typical rural dwelling is a *tukal*; a circular hut made of acacia branches covered with grass mats. The cone-shaped roof has an opening to allow smoke to escape ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirab\\_Hararghe\\_Zone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirab_Hararghe_Zone)).

Another most common custom in the towns, which is remained a notable to this day, is that all male residents are nicknamed. A boy is given a nickname by his friends when he is in early 10s. He remains with it whether he likes it or not, but when becomes closer to the 40s, his formal name starts to outshine again (Camilla Gibb, 1996; Mohammed Hassen, 1999).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 5.3. Foundation Of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly

The name *Odaa Bultum* was given for the following reason. While Shanana/the five Bareentumaa making trek from the Gannaalee River to *Odaa Bultum* every day in their slumber a person died from them. When they reached on edge of *Odaa Bultum*, they were separated into two groups and one group slept under Garbii Guuraa (Acacia near *Odaa Bultum*), while the other slept under the shade of *Odaa Bultum*. The next morning the group slept under Garbii Guuraa checked whether a person died from them or not. There was no person died and they asked the other group that slept under *Odaa Bultum*, “*Nuti nagayaan bulle isin hoo nagayaan bultanii*, we passed the night in peace what about you?” and the group checked and replied, “*Nutillee nagayaan bulle isin hoo nagayaan bultanii? We also had a peace night, are you okay?*” Before this day, there was no greeting each other by saying “*Bullee Bultanii! Good Morning!*” When they met each other they had said, “*Il-teenya, Il-teenya walitti horra, horaa, badhaadhaa, joolleen urgooytuu, waaconattuu...*” After the groups slept in peace under *Odaa Bultum* and Garbii Guuraa the groups greeted each other by saying “*Bullee Bultanii*” Then their representative announced that, “*Odaa jalatti ummata Oromoorraa duuti haftee nagayaan bulle kanaan Odaa Bultuma Oromoo naaf je’aa!*” call this *Odaa* ‘*Odaa Bultuma Oromo.*’ Consequently, it was in such a way that *Odaa Bultum* has got its nomenclature (Informant: Dureessaa Jibroo).

Additionally, their representative announced, “*Odaa kana Odaa Gumii Raabaa Doorii Shanana Bareentummaa jalatti hundeeffamee gadaan keenya jalatti hundeeffamee, heeraafi seerri keenya jalatti tumamee ittiin bullu tahan je’ee muri, oidaan jiddu galeessa wiirtuu amantiifi siyaasaa Shanana Bareentumaati tahan je’ee muri,*” and decided that *Odaa Bultum* should be the place where *Gadaa* Assembly met every eight years. After this, all the five Bareentumaa identified *Odaa Bultum* as the place where their Oxen boomed; their heifer became pregnant; their horse immersed; their donkey yelled; they grounded there; built a house there and lived there. After that they agreed to celebrate the *Gadaa* ceremony every eight year at *Odaa Bultum* (Informant: Dureessaa Jibroo).

After they completed the eighth year, in 1192 the five Barentuma made a conference to celebrate *Gadaa* ceremony for eight days and founded *Odaa Bultum* Assembly. The attendants initially:

- Instigated the focal of politics, economy and social *Gadaa* administrations, and made *heera*/constitution and *seeraa*/working laws for each of them;
- Elected the three higher *Gadaa* officials (*Abbaa Caffee*/father of legislative assembly, *Abbaa Heera Caffee*/ head of constitutional assembly, and *Abbaa Dubbii/Afyaa 'ii*/ speaker); anointed them, and gave them a name '*Lallabduu Sadeen*';
- Elected ministers of justice (*Abbootii Heeraa sadeen*) and called them '*Jilba sadeen*';
- Elected the well-known *Gadaa* officers like *Abbaa Meedhichaa* (attorney general);
- Elected the leader of Oromo Indigenous Religion/Waaqeffannaa, '*Qaalluu Ruufaa*';
- Elected *Abbaa Kormaa* to slaughter animals at festival (*Informant*: Sufiyan Ahmed).

Since *Odaa Bultum* is found closer to or in the middle of ona Ituu at a place called Hora Baaduu, fifteen kilometers from Baddessa town and 25 km to the east of Galamsoo, the congregation ordered the Ituu to prepare and organize all the following necessary things in the place of the continuous festivity of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly:

1. Killa saddeet (eight killa) and killa Qorii saddeet (Eight Killa Qorii);
2. Mijuu ciicoo saddeet (eight Ciicoo of Mijuu);
3. Jimaa haqaaraa saddeet (Eight Haqaaraa of caat);
4. Korommii gugurraattii asxaa hinqabne saddeet (Eight black she-goats);
5. Dhibaaayyuu saddeet (Eight Libation);
6. Siinqee saddeet (Eight Siinqee);
7. Daadhii okkotee saddeet (Eight gallons honey wine);
8. Annani okolee saddeet (Eight Okolee/containers Milk);
9. Buna jabanaa saddeet (Eight pots coffee);
10. Handaaroo saddeet (Eight Handaro);
11. Eight Goojjoo/hats and one Goojjoo on the place of Jiddoo Baaduu;
12. The stone and three *sunsumaa*/hearths to set fire into eight places to cook Killa;
13. Eight holes behind *Odaa Bultum*;
14. The place where the guests sat (*Informant*: Mahammad Ahmad Quufee).

The symbolic representation of eight is that the Gadaa grades are transmitted in every eight years and also the celebration of Gadaa are held in the interval of eight years.

Then, the ceremony was started by setting fire under *Odaa Bultum* in eight places and blessing followed by the following processes of the participants.

- They put traditional beer made from honey in the galloons;
- They slaughtered eight *killa* and left three for the next morning of *Sirna Kitimaa*.
- They slaughtered eight Korommiis for *Kitimaa ulaa Waaqaa* process.
- They proclaimed the nine rules of *Gadaa* laws—*Heera Fannoo Sagalii*.
- They assigned specific *Gadaa* ceremonies to be celebrated every eight years at *Odaa* Qunnee by Garba Hanee clans, at Galamsoo/Madar by Kuraa clan, at Galmee Gooroo Doddotaa and Bululoo near the town of Watar by Afran Qalloo and at Hayisa Raaree Aadam Boruu Hallayyaa Jaldoo by Humbanaa Abbaa Anniyyaa (Informant: Mahammad Ahmad Quufee).

The congress of *Caffee Gadaa* assembly, called *Kora Gadaa* or *Yaa'ii Gadaa*, which was held at *Odaa Bultum* would be undertaken for eight consecutive days and it had been attended by delegates called *Luba*. Each *Luba* must have a minimum of 40 years age and he would be elected by a local assembly of sub-clan. Then all *Lubas* would gather at *Odaa Bultum* and they would elect the future leaders. The congress was hosted by a group of appointed deputies which was lead by *Abbaa Caffee*. The *Lubas* would stay in eight huts made from hay. (The number eight indicates the eight years of one cycle of *Gadaa*).

Under the instruction of *Abbaa Caffee* the *Lubas* would elect *Abba Gadaa* who would be the future ceremonial head of state. Under *Abbaa Gadaa's* moderation and the participation of every *Luba*, the assembly would evaluate the pervious performance of the administration and issue new laws and make strategic decisions. At the end of the congress, the assembly would form a new administrative through democratic election. The election criteria were bravery, oratory skill, knowhow of the society's norms and customs, good discipline, good health etc... (Handicapped people wouldn't be elected). On the whole, all nominees must have passed through the five cycles of *Gadaa*; that is, they must be of 40 years of age but less than 48 years.

The assembly would elect six people who would fill the administration. The six people would be lead by *Abbaa Bokkuu* (the president) who was the head of the government; the other five would be members of his cabinet and each of them had ministerial position. The five ministers were called *Abbaa Biyyaa* (which was roughly equal to Minister of Land and Administrative Affairs), *Abbaa Duulaa* (equal to Minister of War), *Abbaa Horii* (equal to Minister of Economy), *Abbaa Seeraa* (equal to Minister of Justice) and *Abbaa Diidaa* (equal to Minister of Transport and Foreign Affairs). Generally, the five ministers were called *Shanan Gadaa*. The office of the governor (president) was known as *Mana Bokkuu* (House of the President). It was these two houses that would run the day to day administrative affairs of the state in the forthcoming eight years.

In all of its activities, the administrative body was supported by a council called *Mana Hayyuu* which was filled by a group of skilled and scholarly people called *Hayyuu*. These *Hayyuus* were usually people who reached the age of *Gada Moojjii* (meaning retired from Gadaa or retired from administrative age). *Hayyuu* can be re-elected but *Abbaa Bokkuu* and the five ministers (*Shanan Gadaa*) serve only one term.

The laws and rules issued at *Odaa Bultum* would be ratified at *Garbii Darrabbaa*, a place located at two Kms north of *Odaa Bultum*. There, a congress of lawyers would study the laws and strategies issued by *Caffee Gadaa* assembly on the constitutional basis; unconstitutional law would be called *Heer malee* and rejected, and the constitutional laws would be accepted as the working directive of the state. The member of *Garbii Darrabbaa* congress would be called *Abbaa Heeraa* and he was also elected by lower (local) assembly. A man who was elected as *Abbaa Heeraa* would be called by this title until the end of his life. (Note: *Abbaa Seeraa* is different from *Abbaa Heeraa*. The former was Minister of Justice; the later was member of the law making congress. In modern term, we may call the latter one congressman).

It is also noteworthy to mention *Raabaa Doorii* which was the Council of Defense. This council runs the military affairs of the state and it was lead by *Abbaa Duulaa* (Minister of War). Military campaigns and defense programs would be implemented only after they have got good support by the *Raabaa Doorii*. On the other hand, the budget of the army and mandatory military service programs would be decided by this military council (Informant: Hussein Jemal).

In the process of law making (*Seera Tumaa*), all eligible Oromo people had to participate. The power to make laws belongs to the people. All people have the rights to air their views in any public gathering without fear. All those participants could air their views freely, regarding a topic under discussion. After an intensive discussion, a final summary would be presented by the Chairman, (*Abbaa Bokkuu*). He then would ask questions like any addition to or deletion from the statement given. There was no room for majority vote. A single objection leads to adjournment without decision. When unanimity achieved, the chairman would strike the ground with a whip (*Alangaa*) in his hand, and the bill under discussion would become the law. After the discussion, the All the members of *Gumii Raabaa Doorii* of Shanan Bareentumaa and warlords started to group the society according to their living place and teach them about decreed heeraa. They collected comments and suggestions from the society about the laws proclaimed. They gathered old and brilliant people to raise their ideas and suggestions on the decreed laws. They collected ideas to be added to the law or removed from the decreed laws. They put what they gathered from the society in one place and reported to *Gadaa* officials. They taught the society to prepare candidates for the next *Gadaa* election (Informant: *Ziyad Aliyi*).

The laws declared integrated civil, criminal and all other social customs like the rules of marriage (*fuudhaa-heerumaa/gaa'elaa*), the regulations of conflict resolution/*araaraa* including blood compensation payment (*gumaa*), the principles of adoption/*guddifachaa* or amalgamation/*moggaasaa* of the non-Oromo to the Oromo and the laws of cooperative works like *guuzaa*.

As a high moral principle that enhances the implementation of the law (*Seeraa*), safuu/custom:

- ✚ is a sign of love and peace among the Oromo;
- ✚ is a sign of peaceful life and maintains harmonious coexistence among all people;
- ✚ maintains coexistence and harmony between humans and *uumamaa*/nature;
- ✚ maintains a good relationship between God and man;
- ✚ maintains a good affiliation between the old and the young;
- ✚ maintains a proper relationship between the poor and the rich;
- ✚ Insures that partnership of a stranger is safe.

*Safuu* is implanted into the brain of the Oromo from childhood, and typical Oromo names also indicate safuu culture of prosperity, growth, love and peace. Throughout their life, all Oromos are given the chance to learn to live the right way. Therefore, Oromos refrain from killing, stealing, lying and violence (Informant: *Ziyad Aliyi*). According the above Bultum laws, lending money to be paid back with interest is illegal. Whatever one borrows, one returns the original capital only. However, borrowing cattle is handled differently. One may borrow a milking cow from a well-to-do family, but such a person is not allowed to sell or transfer the cow to others. The borrower can return the milking cow or oxen borrowed whenever he wants. However, he may return part or wholly if and only if he is able to purchase more cows by using the labor of the borrowed cattle. He does this only on his free will to gain good reputation. There is no law or exercised culture that may force him to return the cattle to the original owner. It is only his conscience that may motivate him to pay his liability to the owner with thanks. One may borrow grain for consumption, while one is equally producing as the lender. If such is the case, the borrower must return to the lender the amount he borrowed in same kind at the next harvest time. Failure to do so will restrict the borrower from further grant from his customer and from his community as well (Informant: *Mahammad Ahmad Quufee*).

After eight years, the term of the first gogeessa was completed on January 15, 1199; Shanan Barentumaa and the representatives of eleven Booranaa clans gathered at *Odaa Bultum* from January 15-22 and celebrated the second round festivity of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly. Before this 15<sup>th</sup> January, the clans of Ituu brought all what they prepared and they welcomed the guests and people who came to celebrate *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly. After all the guests and other peoples came, the program was started with the following ceremonial processes of the Shanan Bareentumaa Oromo (Informant: *Duessa Jibro*).

- First of all, they cut dry firewood from *Odaa Bultum* and fired into eight places.
- They prepared *daadhii* (honey wine) into eight places and put in the eight Goojjoo.
- Then, the blessings of Boorantichaa, Qaalluu and Bareentichaa followed turn by turn.
- After this, they slaughtered eight *Killa* and left three of *Killa* for the next morning
- Next day, they conducted the *Killa* processes.
- Then they enacted laws and went to Agamsa Baaduu to collect necessary facilities.

- They disclosed the laws enacted and the amenities collected from the society.
- They slaughtered eight she-goats, ate, drank and went to home (Informant: *Caaltuu Hasan*).

The proclaimed laws in this festival have nine roots and 77,777 (seventy seven thousands seven hundred seventy seven) paragraphs. The new rules issued would be ratified at *Garbii Darrabbaa*, a place located at two kilo meters north of *Odaa Bultum*. There, a congress of legal experts called *Abbooti Heeraa* elected by lower (local) assembly would study the laws and strategies issued by *Caffee Gadaa assembly* on the constitutional basis; unconstitutional law would be called *Heer malee* and rejected, and the constitutional laws would be accepted as the working directives. A man who was elected as *Abbaa Heeraa* would be called by this title until the end of his life. *Abbaa Heeraa* was member of the law making congress; in modern term, this may be called congressman (Informant: Mahammad Ahmad Quufee).

According to oral tradition, six *Abbaa Gadaas* namely *Jaarraa Mardi'aa* (1193-1200), *Roobaa Dhungataa* (1201-1208), *Roobaa Gamoo* (1209-1216), *Roobaa Goboolee* (1217-1224), *Dooyyoo Daarimuu* (1225-1232) and *Harahar Hargeya* (1233-1241) successively ruled at *Odaa Bultum*. It was said those two years before the entry of *Sheik Abadir* into Harar in 1234 A.D. that *Harahar Hargeya* rose to the position of *Abba Gadaa*, but chronicle referring to Harar puts that a group of missionaries under the leadership of *Umar al-Rida* (Shiek Abadir) . . . reached the town in 1216. This is during the administration of *Abba Gadaa Roobaa Gaamoo* rather than *Harahar Hargeya* (Informant: Mohammed Ahmed Quufee).

The kinship system among the Hararghe Oromo is based on patrilineal line i.e. descent is considered through male links and the society is divided into two intermarrying halves known as moieties. Some of the Hararghe lineages are *soddaa* (affine groups) to each other. An individual male or female Hararghe belongs to either one of the major moieties by birth, but females change to their husband's moiety as soon as they get married. Marriage between different clans is possible among the society. Men usually have only one wife, and children are considered a necessity: the more children and grandchildren a man has, the greater his prestige. An 'ego' is related more to his father and through his father to *obboleeyyan* (brothers) then to *Miilloo Abaadaa* (close agnatic kins) and this goes on.

There are *Miilloo Abaadaa* and *Gumii Raabaa* (councils of agnatic and clan respectively) in each clan. This, however, does not mean that there is no relation on maternal side in social life. The 'ego' is also related to his mother's relatives like her brother, sister and their children. The terms *Abbeeraa*, *haboo*, *durbii* (uncle, aunt and cross cousins respectively) show the relations. A male 'ego' cannot marry his maternal close kins' daughters. Marriage between cousins and cousins' children, even if they are from different moieties, is all considered *haraama* (incest). Prohibition of endogamous marriage is strictly enforced or abided by Hararghe Oromo society. The paternal and maternal side's differentiation comes mainly on the promotion of economic interests and ritual performances (Informant: Mohammed Ahmed Quufee).

Furthermore, one basic values of the Hararghe Oromo is *tokkummaa*, which is identification with the group. Their socio-political and economic life revolves around this system, to which cooperation is central chiefly in work arrangements. Although warfare against enemies is honored, peace within the group has been rigorously demanded by the *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly especially since Harhar Hargeya (Informant: Mohammed Ahmed Quufee).

The Ittu Oromos say the man who built the mosque at Galamso was actually "Aw-Seid", a saintly figure who tried to Islamize the Oromos of Carcar province in ancient times. His given name was "Seid Ali". Latter on the public added a prefix "Aw" to his name to indicate his sainthood (this is done in the manner of the Somalis and the Hararis who call their saints and national heroes so).

The elders say when the Oromos were reformulating their constitution and workings laws ("*Heera*" and "*Seera*") at "*Odaa Bultum*" in early 13<sup>th</sup> century, they asked "Sheikh Abadir" of Harar to send with them a scholar who would assist them by giving legal advices. So Sheikh Abadir send "Aw Seid" to Oda Bultum up on certain agreements; that "Aw Seid" would live and act according to the law of the Oromo land, that he would assist the Oromos in drafting the laws; that he would remain as a legal adviser of the people, that the Oromos take care of him and his family; that he would practice his religion freely and build his mosque at his place of residence, that he can work and own properties.

Based on the aforementioned agreement reached between the Oromos and Sheikh Abadir of Harar, elders say, “Aw Seid” came to the Oromo land and built his residential house at Galamso. He was officially adopted to the Oromo citizen and made “ilma gosaa” (adopted son) of the Warra Qallu clan (one of the ten clans that make up the Ittu Oromo). On the adoption ceremony, the Oromos gave him the name “Ussu” (Informant: Ahmed Mahammad Bookee).

As time passed, dispute arose between the Oromo and *Aw Seid*. The origin of the dispute is narrated in different lines. Some elders say *Aw Seid* changed many of the traditional Oromo laws and the land of Oromo suffered from serious drought that persisted for three consecutive years. The people felt that they became sinful for altering their forefathers’ law. The leaders gathered the people, who asked for the return of the ancient laws. The *Caffee* Assembly called an extraordinary congress to reformulate the laws, and sent back *Aw Seid* to Harar where he passed the rest of his life and died (Afendi Muteki, 2001). Other elders, on the contrary, say that a son of *Aw Seid* was killed by certain Ituu man but the Oromo paid the blood money as if he was *amba* (non-citizen). *Aw Seid* asked for higher payment arguing that his dead son was already a *lammii* (citizen) because he was born in the Oromo land. He couldn’t reach an agreement with the Oromo so that he became frustrated and returned back to Harar (Informant: Ahmed Mahammad Bookee).

An act that strengthens this view happened in 1991 G.C. when the renaissance of *Caffee Gadaa* assembly was celebrated at *Odaa Bultum* after its disappearance for more than hundred years and thousands of the Oromo who attended gave many cattle to the clan of Aw Seid as unpaid blood money of his dead son. The Oromo say when their land was conquered by Emperor Minilik, their forefathers told them that the trouble was happened to them because they annoyed a big saint contrary to the Oromo ethical code (the ancient Oromo used to respect saints of any faith and wouldn’t attack the shrines of those figures) and they established a tradition urging the future generations to pay *Aw-Seid’s* son blood money whenever they would regain their freedom. As the name of *Aw Seid* appears many times in the list of the saints of Harar (in his full name *Aw Seid Ali*), the validity of this Oromo oral tradition is unquestionable (Informant: Ahmed Mahammad Bookee).

#### **5.4. The Status of *Odaa Bultum* in the History of *Gadaa* System**

*Odaa Bultum* was one of the five known Oromo meeting places. *Odaa Bultum* was the junior senior of all the five *Odaas* of the five Oromo groups. The reason it was regarded as junior was that after the Caffee *Gadaa* had been proclaimed under other four *Odaas*, at the end it was decreed under *Odaa Bultum*. It is said to be the senior *Odaa* because of the verity that though Miilloo Abaadaa was instituted in other *Odaas*, the needs of the Oromo were not satisfied, but after Miilloo Abaadaa was instituted at *Odaa Bultum*, all the Oromo necessities fulfilled and the laws declared together for the first time. At *Odaa Bultum* that has been regarded as the well-spring of Oromo wisdom, the Oromo experienced tremendous civilizations. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century/medieval period, *Odaa Bultum* was the settlement area, politico-religious centre and where a revival was made to *Gadaa* System and new laws were enacted (Informant: *Mahammad Abraham*).

The tradition of the Bareentumaa administration system is kept under *Odaa Bultum*. Originally, *Odaa Bultum* was the common center of the Baarentuu. However, after Dhumugaa Abbaa Arsii moved to Ona Arsi/Jabala Nuur in Arsi-Baalee, and the Karrayyuu moved to Fantallee, *Odaa Bultum* remained an important cultural and administrative center for the three clans of the Hararghe Oromo (Ituu, Afran Qal'oo and Anniyyaa). The Ittu elders count 69 *Gadaas* (i.e. 552 years) since the *Odaa Bultum* assembly has been begun separately to serve the Hararghe Oromo.

Since the *Odaa Bultum* is surrounded by the Ituu, it has been considered as if it belongs only to the Ituu, but *Odaa Bultum* was the common assembly of the three clans of the Hararghe Oromo. It was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the three groups set up their own local assemblies (Informant: Mahammad Ahmed Quufee).

#### **5.5. *Gadaa* Grades of *Odaa Bultum***

Children born in the same *Gadaa* of eight years/*Hiriyaa* have passed through the same grades/generational stages. A son gets introduced to a specific grade, which correlates to the class of his father (though in some cases, children may belong to a Gogeessaa apart from their father), and subsequently changes his grade every eight years as a member of his group. Early born sons cannot be assigned to a legitimate social father and thus cannot be correlated to any set in terms of generational affiliation.

While rightly born sons/*Ilmaan Kormaa* perfectly fit into the principle, the late born sons/*Ilmaan Jaarsaa* that born to a man that have passed the stage of fatherhood cannot and the option they have is to run behind their elder brothers. However, the Ituu arranged a pragmatic system for these sons by allowing them to be introduced to the grade of their elders and treated as equals despite difference in their age. Children who are born when their generation-set has already passed through the whole series of grades cannot participate in the *Gadaa* since the position of one's father rather than one's age is the basis of the formation of generation sets.

The Gadaa system served the Oromo society as the basis of a democratic and egalitarian political system. Under Gadaa there is power to administer the affairs of nation and the power to make laws belong to the people. There are eleven Gadaa grades (stages of development through which a Gadaa class passes). Every male Oromo is categorised according to his age.

The names could vary in different part of Oromia. The *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly organised the society into sets/grades of about 7-11 as follows:

Maxxaarrii /Dabballe	(0-8 years of age)
Ruubboo /Foollee or Gaammee Xixiqqaa	(9-16 years of age)
Goobama /Qondaala or Gaammee Gurguddaa	(17-24 years of age)
Kuusa	(25-32 years of age)
Raabaa Doorii/luba	(33-40 years of age)
Gadooma	(41-48 years of age)
Yuba I	(49-56 years of age)
Yuba II	(57-64 years of age)
Yuba III	(65-72 years of age)
Gadamoojjii	(73-80 years of age)
Jaarsa	(80 and above years old)

Each of the grades has duties. For instance at the age of 16 they enter the age of Goobama. At this age the boys may go long distances for hunting or perform heavy duties. Three years before the end of the Goobama grade, they come together and nominate the future group leaders (hayyu council), who eventually constitute its presidium and thereby the executive, judicial, and ritual authorities. At the age of the Kuusa grade, the previously elected officials are formally installed in office although they do not yet assume full authority except in their own group. At the grade of Raaba Doorii, members are allowed to marry and at the end of this class the members enter Luba, or Gadaa.

The most important class of the whole system is the Gadaa or Luba class. It is at this grade that the group attains full status, and takes up their position as the ruling Gadaa class. The former ruling class, or the Luba, hands over the position peacefully to the coming one and they enter the Yuba class where they act as advisors.

Gadaa officials and their duties among the Hararghe Oromo as follows:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Abbaa Bokkuu                | President   |
| 2. Abbaa Bokkuu                | First vice president  |
| 3. Abbaa Bokkuu                | second vice-president   |
| 4. Abbaa Chaffe                | Chairman of the Assembly (Chaffe)                                     |
| 5. Abbaa Dubbii                | Speaker who presents the decision of the presidium to the Assembly    |
| 6. Abbaa Seeraa                | Memorizer of the laws and the results of the Assembly's deliberations |
| 7. Abbaa Alangaa /Meedhicha    | Judge who executes the decision                                       |
| 8. Abbaa Duulaa                | In charge of the army   |
| 9. Abbaa Sa'aa /Abbaa dinagdee | In charge of the economy  |

## **1. Maxxaarii/Seelee (birth-8 years of age)**

As they are immature, no specific roles were associated with them but their family ought to give attention to them by supplying necessary things like food, drinks, and clothes; washing their body, keeping their health/treating when they got sick; put cowry shells on their hair to protect them from evil eyes or dreadful/harmful things etc. Just as girls, they have been privileged that the members of the society are expected to love them. The families have to show witness of their affection for their calm and sensible spirit. Customary law has prohibited parents from punishing them. The members were identified with their amazing hairstyle known as *Gaammee*, which is a symbol of childhood. This grade is known as socialization age into the society and the *Gadaa* culture. Families (especially mothers) were expected to sing cultural songs that praise children of this age. At initiation ceremony to the next *Gadaa* grade, they have hairs shaved off symbolizing to have another identity (Informants: *Duressa Jibroo, Waktole Mekonnin, and Hussein Jemal*).

## **2. Ruubboo (Gaammee Xixiqqaa/Junior Gaammee, 9-16 years of age)**

In this stage, the members are equipped with the historical and cultural tradition of the society, and begin military training. The contents of training are to inculcate in the minds of children certain societal values of the people such as respect and dignity for humankind, accountability and responsibility to the community, patriotism and love for the fatherland, and family identity and history.

To train mind, especially during the nights, they play jokes (*baacoo/qoosa*), songs (*weedduu*), stories (*oduu-durii*), proverbs (*mammaaksa*), poetry (*walaloo ciigoo*), *jijimsee* etc. Some other methods of instruction are war songs known as *geerarsa* and *faarsaa* (praising). Even though training on critical thinking is not limited to this stage, probably, the main contribution of traditional Oromo education to children of this age is in the area of mental (cognitive) development. Girls are key role players in playing puzzles and *hiibboo* (riddles). Riddle is the most commonly used instructive technique in the development of critical thinking. Other than its significance in developing the mental capacity of children, riddle entertains the young learner by presenting things in different perspectives.

Elders also taught the Ruuboo by tracing their genealogy (*hidda latiinsaa*) several generations back and narrating historical events in society such as major battles fought; natural disasters (drought, epidemics, and crop failure); migration etc. In this regard, boys of this age are provided with instruction in Oromo ethics and societal values (Informant: Kedir Ahmedu).

There were no political obligations attached to the gaammee xixiqqoo as a *Gadaa* grade. However, they had to assist their families in domestic life according to their capacity. Children in this grade had their own responsibility of looking after the calf, sheep and goat. Because of this their family might give them, as *handhuuraa*, livestock like a heifer or an ox or sheep or goat or baby camel for initiation.

In addition, for their own physical strength, while tending the animals; they have also practiced... running (*fiigichoo*), racing competition, running over hurdles, long and high jump (*utaalchoo*), swing pendulum (*soochee*); some hunting related games like throwing (*darbannaa*) spear through moving circular object known as geengoo. In such away, they have acquired the quality of muscular strength and accuracy for the future career (*Kedir Ahmedu*).

### **3. Goobama (Gaammee Gurguddoo/Senior Gaammee, 17-24 years of age)**

This is one of the most important stages in the *Gadaa* grades when the members shoulder many responsibilities with excitement and engage in military training. In domestic life, they have engaged in how to prepare and use plowing materials in agriculture, utilization of property, family management and social life by observing the *aadaa* (culture) and *seeraa* (law) of the society. Youngsters are also heartened to work and retain assets for their future life. This is why most of their *mirriiga/geerarsaa* bears the quality of hard working and being self-sufficient detesting poverty. They should perform heavy works like taking cattle long distance in search of pasture (*darabaa/foora*). They are expected to know the custom, habit and way of life of the society. The members might guard the Luba (men in power) and mostly included in military service under the leadership of Abba Duulaa. The Goobama had to develop a quality and capacity of fighting against injustice at least in their clan (Informants: Ahmed Mahammad, Ahmed Mahammad Bookee, and Raabiyaa Aliyyii).

Every Goobama except with special physical cases is required to train how to fight and hunt. They have obtained military campaign tactics and fighting skill from their immediate senior stage and military *Gadaa* officials. It was customarily mandatory for military experts to train members of this stage. The crucial practices in training were horse riding and games of cavalry. The future cavalry in the military segment have to be trained at this stage. This included the use of horse in fighting, spear throwing, handling of shields and defending the group to be fought (*Jabessa, 1970*). Most of the time, they are also engaged in body building exercise and wrestling with their age mates and practicing guerrilla fighting. The training is supported by recitation of military achievement of brave men (Informants: Sheikh Abdella Ibro and Tahir Hussein).

At the end of the grade for three years, the members are taken to remote areas for apprenticeship where they have involved in selective hunting of wild animals or other target for test of competency. The failure to demonstrate the required model of training has no excuse after which the members are assigned to perform other activities. Success in the apprenticeship is considered as the greatest achievement of the stage. Buttuu, a special military regiment (those who snatch) are recruited from such successful gallant fighters.

The Buttuu are capable of multi-dimensional tactics by the use of horse and face to face attacks. Towards the end of this grade, members are required to show the skill of warfare in the presence of *Gadaa* officials (Informants: Sheikh Abdella Ibro and Tahir Hussein).

#### **4. Kuusaa (25-32 years)**

This is a matured stage for formal military campaign under the direction of the Abbaa Duulaa. The kuusaa are attached with dual tasks in the society: military service and training for *Gadaa* leadership. As junior warriors the kuusaa are purely fighters categorized into sections of cavalry, soldiers and special fighters. They would continue undertaking military training of the earlier grade. The Abbaa Duulaa and senior warriors train this class advanced military talent like wrestling, skill of defending attack, raiding and other skills. Members of this grade have elected the future nucleus of *Gadaa* leaders (*Gadaa* councils) among themselves. *Gadaa* officers of this batch are elected when *Gaammee* to Kuusaa passage rites are performed. Hence, for the next sixteen years, the *Gadaa* council has continued taking training and accumulating experience on *Gadaa* leadership.

The candidates are made to physically participate in *Gadaa* leadership and gain knowledge in their stage and the next *gadaa* grade. The ruling Qondaala group has assigned experts to train and council the Kuusaa in the importance of leadership, organization, and warfare at remote areas separately from society. In such away, they exercise challenges and take lesson how to overcome the expected problems. Geerarsa (war song), proverbs and cultural and historical mind mapping, as well as other social skills that they can use in public speech to praise heroes have also been parts of their trainings. They have also practiced the art of public speaking-oratory (Informants: Sheikh Abdella Ibro, Tahir Hussein and Bisrat Kebede).

### **5. Raabaa Doorii/Raabaa Xixiqqaa and Raabaa Gurguddaa (33-40 years)**

This is the remarkable stage at which individual has gained art of leadership and philosophy. It is noteworthy to mention that *Raabaa Doorii* has served as the *Council of Defense*. This council ran the military affairs of the state and it was led by *Abbaa Duulaa* (Minister of War). Military campaigns and defense programs would be implemented only after they have got good support by the *Raabaa Doorii*.

Moreover, the budget of the army and mandatory military service programs would be decided by this military council. The army was called *Raayyaa*. The most trained and the best equipped section of the *Raayyaa* was known as *Qeeyroo* or *Qeerroo* (to mean fierce and fast as leopard). According to the information obtained from different sources, the chain of command of the army looks like the following:

1. The smallest unit of the army had nine personnel and it was called *Saglii /Seylii*. Each *Seylii* was commanded by *Abbaa Seylii*.
2. Three *Seylii* formed *Muraasa* which was led by *Abbaa Muraasaa*.
3. Three *Muraasaa* formed *Buttaa* and it was led by *Abbaa Buttaa*
4. Three *Buttaa* formed *Cibraa (Cifraa)* and this was commanded by *Abbaa Cibraa*
5. Three *Cibraa* formed *Gubbaa* and this was led by *Abbaa Gubbaa*
6. Three *Gubbaa* formed *Hoomaa* and this was led by *Bobbaasaa*
7. Three *Hoomaa* formed *Raayyaa* commanded by *Abbaa Duulaa* (Informants: Hussein Jemal and Waaqtolee Hayiluu).

In addition to serving as senior warriors to defend their country against external aggression, Raabaa Doorii members are required to be trained in Oromo calendar, the planetary system, and the details of major public holidays. The stage is also a period of preparation for leadership. They could serve as apprentices to the ruling council and observe the ruling council; attend their meetings but are not given any decision-making opportunity. One of the social privileges associated to them has been performing marriage, but are not expected to have children mainly at early years/Raaba Xixiqqaa because generation gap with their sons would be violated.

Having completed the first part, in the fortieth year of the grade, they could perform the fatherhood ceremony. Subsequently, they would be allowed to nurture children (Informants: Sheikh Abdella Ibro and Bisrat Kebede).

#### **6. Gadooma /Qondaala (41-48 years of age)**

This is the optimum age of having maturity, knowledge, skill, experiences and capacity of shouldering and discharging responsibilities. This is the most important class of the whole system at which the class has attained full status and momentarily ascent the ladder with an emblem. Utmost authority has been offered to this group based on their wisdom, behavior and achievement, not on descent. The most significant stage in the life of Oromo males come when they enter this stage, in which the councillors who have proved their leadership ability, could assume power, gain full privileges, have all the laws or customs in hand and act as the political leaders. They start leadership with the ceremony known as hand over of Bokkuu power transfer or a *Buttaa* ceremony in which war would become a ritual obligation for the *Gadaa* classes and successful warriors celebrate these rites of passage with special honors (*Informants: Mahammad Abraham and Sufiyan Ahmed*).

The transition between the old leadership to the new one is smooth. The Oromo prevented power from becoming absolute and from falling into the hands of men who stand at the head of political-military hierarchies by creating a complex system of checks and balances. The Oromo accomplish this by balancing the power of one *Luba* (*Gadaa* class) against another, one half of the society against the other. The attempt to extend the term of office beyond the fixed term of eight years on the part of the *Gadaa* leaders violates the basic laws of the Oromo constitution.

In the Oromo constitution, the laws govern the activities of the people, and leaders are accountable to the national assembly. *Gadaa* officials of different positions are recruited from this miseensa based on the recorded competency of the former *gadaa* grades. Its leaders exercise full decision-making power and responsibility regarding military and civil matters. It was at this stage that every ‘reigning set’ left its mark on the nation through its political and ritual leadership qualities (Informants: Sheikh Abdella Ibro, Tahir Hussein and Bisrat Kebede).

The term *Abbaa* refers to title of ownership of the position. The *Abbaa Gadaa* or *Abbaa Bokkuu* in different parts of Oromo land is the leader of the *Gadaa* in power or bearer of the symbol of authority respectively. The representatives of the whole nation elect him. All members of the society who are of *Gadaa* grade/age are allowed to elect and to be elected.

In some cases, when the son of the previous *Abbaa Gadaa* proves to be strong, knowledgeable and wise, the Hararghe people select him as the new *Abbaa Gadaa* (main councillor). Otherwise, everybody has the chance to be elected as the new *Abbaa Gadaa* depending on his achievement. When the previous *Abbaa Gadaa*'s term completed and election of the new one concluded, the former should give *Bokkuu* (sceptre)—the symbol of power transition to the latter (Informants: Sheikh Abdella Ibro, Tahir Hussein and Bisrat Kebede).

The executive branch of *Gadaa* leadership consisted of a president (*Abbaa Bokkuu*) or the father/ carrier of scepter, who was the head of the government holding a position similar to a magistrate, and had two deputy presidents and a cabinet of 5 ministers (the hayyuu council) consist of *Abbaa Biyyaa* (Minister of Land and Administrative Affairs), *Abbaa Duulaa* (Commander-in-Chief of the Army), *Abbaa Horii/Abbaa Sa'aa/Abbaa Dinagdee* (Minister of Economy), *Abbaa Seeraa* (Minister of Justice/the Judge) and *Abbaa Diidaa* (Minister of Transport and Foreign Affairs). A council known as Shanan Bareentumaa or *Saglii* and retired *Gadaa* officials especially a council called *Mana Hayyuu* that was filled by a group of scholarly skilled people/*Hayyuu*, usually who reached the age of Gadamojjii, also supported the *Abbaa Bokkuu* and the administrative body in all of their activities. *Hayyuu* could be re-elected, but the *Abbaa Bokkuu* and the five ministers serve only one term (Informants: Kadir Ahmadu and Waaqtolee Mokonnin).

The Hararghe people said that *Waaqa* (God) cannot go before *Abbaa Gadaa*. This shows that *Abbaa Gadaa* is the most respected person in the Oromo society. However, his peers treat him as the first among equals. The Raabaa Doorii assembly can remove (*buqqisuu*) those officials who failed to fulfil their duties and digresses *Gadaa* norms. The seat of the *Gadaa* government is located at the residence of *Abbaa Gadaa*, the house that would run the day to day administrative affairs of the state in the eight years periods of the *Gadaa* class.

This office of the governor (president) was known as *Mana Bokkuu* (House of the President). The office of the government is the shade of the *Odaa* (the holy sycamore tree), which is the source of peace and the centre of religion, in open air meadow/*Caffee*. *Caffee* is the Oromo version of parliament. There are three levels of *Caffee* i.e. inter-clan, clan and local (Informants: Ahmed mahammad and Sufiyan Ahmed).

**7. Yuuba I (49-56), Yuuba II (57-64) and Yuuba III (65-72)** are partially retired advisors of *Gadaa* government and educators of the gogeessa by moving from place to place. They receive a great deal of respect as wise experienced authorities and repositories of law.

#### **8. Gadamojjii (73-80)**

These are senior sacred advisors distinguished by conducting series of socio-cultural rites.

#### **9. Jaarsa (above 80)**

This is final retirement phase of physically weak old age that has to be cared by the close relatives and the society. These are fathers of the rulling class and grand fathers' of Maxxaarrii. The members are considered as holy like the newborn babies because babies are on the way from *Waaqa* to the society while the *Jaarsa* are on the way to return to *Waaqa* (Informant: *Hussein Jemal*).

## **5.6. The Five *Gadaa* Parties (*Gogeessaa*) and *Marsaa Gadaa* (*Gadaa* Cycle) Of *Odaa Bultum***

### **5.6.1. Class (*Miseensa* or *Gogeessa*)**

In a way one can think of the *Gadaa* as five party political systems. Each party assumes power for eight years other 40 years (this 40 year period is called the *Gadaa* cycle). The parties are *Roobalee*, *Meelbaa*, *birrajii*, *Michillee* and *Duuloo*. These parties transfer power from each other in that distinct order for one *Gadaa* cycle. For example, *Roobalee* is in power 1193-1200, *Meelbaa* 1201-1208, *Birrajii* 1209-1216, *Michillee* 1217-1224; and *Duuloo* 1225-1232. *Roobalee* is in power in 1233 to start the *Gadaa* cycle again.

### **5.6.2. Grade (*Gadaa*)**

Parties go through five eight-year periods called grades/*Gadaa*. The five grades in the 40 year cycle are: *Maxxaarii* (0-8), *Ruuboo* (9-16), *Goobama* (17-24), *Kuusaa* (25-32) and *Raabaa Doorii* (33-40). When a son is born or adopted, he enters the system one *Gadaa* cycle (i.e. 40 years) away from his father, but in the same party as his father. For example, as a father retires from the *Gadooma* as *Duuloo*, his sons join the *Maxxaarii* as *Duuloo*. As *Duuloo* moves through the cycle, it assumes different roles in each of the five *Gadaa* grades that prepares it for *Luba*. This is to say that when a party retires from an 8-year administration (the fathers), the party goes through five 8-year phases of preparation to reassume power 40 years later (the sons).

While *Gadaa* grades are the phases of development through which the members pass, *Gadaa* class/*Gogeessaa* refers to the group of people who share the same status and who perform their rites of passage together. The Oromo people grouped themselves into five parties that peacefully transferred the unrenowable power every eight years. The Ituu Oromo use the concept of *Luba Gadaa* to demonstrate five temporal units in relation to the *Gadaa* period. The following are the five *Gadaa* parties/*Luba Shanan* that rotate in their proper order:

- *Horataa* was the senior *Lubaa* group in *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly. While this *Lubaa* was originating, the religious leader blessed “*Oromoon hortee diida haa guuttu luba kanaan ‘horata’ naaf jedhi*” and gave the name *Horata*/breeding. In some other parts of *Oromiyaa*, *Horataa* is remembered and was named after years of fabulous cattle breeding. These good years have been phrased with the song that goes as *ya Horata maal godhataa*.

- *Sabbaaqaa* was the second Lubaa in *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly. “*Amma Oromoon hortee diida guuttee haa sabbaaqxuu (dachaa haa taatuu/be doubled) Luba amma seene kanaan sabbaaqaa naaf jedhiin,*” (give the name Sabbaaqaa).
- The third Lubaa was *Fadataa*. After sabbaaqaa completed its term, the Oromo coined the name fadataa for the reason that the Oromo society reproduced and spread over the world (*Oromoon hortee sabbooyxee, amma fadattee haa babal’attu!*).
- *Dhiphisaa/Dibbisaa* was the fourth Lubaa. At the end of fadataa and at the beginning of Dhiphisaa, there were problems that challenged the Oromo society. Thus, it was named as Dhiphisaa (“*Luba seensa isaarratti rakkanne kanaan Luba Dhiphisaa naaf jedhiin*”)
- *Daraaraa/flower* was the junior Lubaa in *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly (informants: Dureessaa Jibroo, Bisraat Kabbada and Hussein Jamaal).

Furthemore, eventhough the above Gogessaa have more practical significance at *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly, the Hararghe Oromo also recite the following historic Gogeessa that are said to have existed at *Odaa Bultum* before the above ones and named after a phenomenon occurred during the governance of one particular party:

- **Miseensa/Gogeessa Gadaa Roobalee**

Roobalee was the most senior party at *Odaa Bultum* since *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly was started with Roobalee. Roobalee was named after rain and is related with period of heavy rainfall and hence has a song that goes as ‘*ya Roobalee Ya Roobashii*’. It is known by its prediction of abundant rain and the country is expected to get bountiful rain so that the earth becomes wet; the cattle breed well and get enough water; the societies get enough milk and butter from cattle; crops become well; honey bees make the honey without any obstacle, and all parts of the country become affluent. It is known by its reproductivity, long life, peacefulness, loveliness, funny and healthiness. There is no hunger, no war, no diseases of human and cattle (Informants: Bisraat Kabbada and Hussein Jamaal).

- **Gogeessa *Gadaa* Meelbaa**

Meelbaa means Miila Baha. This *gadaa* party is known by:

- Those who have no power can get power (*miilli aangoo hin qabne aangoo argatu*);
- Wealthy man becomes poor, the poor gets wealthy;
- Those who are biased become trustworthy;
- The people accessed their truth and those who hide their truth would be exposed;
- Offense of the society avoided and justices would shine etc.

- **Gogeessa *Gadaa* Birmajjii**

Birmajjii literally means *Bara Moojii* i.e. gloomy year. In this *Gadaa* party

- There could be external wars and internal conflicts/disagreement and killing each other; no love and happiness;
- There could be hard time for human, cattle and crops: shortage of rain, water and grass; diseases; pests; destruction; destitution and bad hungriness/ severe famine
- The society might migrate from place to place.

To avoid these problems/challenges and for the fullness of this *Gadaa* party, people pray to Waaqa daily by preparing rituals and religious dances. However, in other places, Birmajjii is connected with peace and satisfaction, named after happy festival and dance time and the Oromo phrased it by song that goes as *ya Birmajii ya sirbashii*. Birmajii is also notorious for rendering justice to the people (Informants: Dureessaa Jibroo, Bisraat Kabbada and Hussein Jamaal).

- **Gogeessa *Gadaa* Michillee**

Michillee comes from the word *Machallaa*, which is made from goat skin and the beautiful one can be seated upon by one person only. In this gogeessa, every society is working only for oneself and one can't help others because what he/she gets in the year can't feed others (*Jireenyi hawaasaa harkaa gama afaanii qofa*). Michillee is also linked with instability and in other places, *Michillee* was named after war victory since Oromo had great victory over their enemy and showed this by the phrase Michillee the best friend of war (*Ya Michillee michuu duulaa*).

- **Gogeessa *Gadaa* Duuloo**

Duuloo was named after preparation for a big external war, which is indicated by the song *Duuloo qopheessaa duulaa/Gadaa Duuloo duulatti ergu*. The small local wars that created between different clans of the Oromo society were not hard and simply managed. According to Boran diction, the phrase Duulo duulee signifies waging of war or conducting of military expedition. The Ituu likened Duuloo to the vulture.

*Gadaa* classes are basically cyclic but it is not a closed cycle. The *Gadaa* class (Luba) may be likened to individuals playing pool game in terms of the rotation of power, but all are independent of one another and play in their own ways since each one of the *Gadaa* class has diversity and unity. Nevertheless, the consecutive *Gadaa* parties overlap with each other since the outgoing party stays in office with the incoming one for the first four years, as an advisor but not as decision-maker whatsoever. The same tempo cycle repeats itself after every eight years. Thus, a party stays in office for twelve years: eight years with power and four years as an advisor. The Ituu called the *Gadaa* cycle (Marsaa *Gadaa*) period of forty years *Jaarraa*. In ancient time, the Oromo did not prefer to use *Jaarraa* for hundred years, but *Gurba*.

The Ituu believe that each *Gadaa* class in ascending to political power brings into all affairs the inclination which is appropriate to it and leads the people according to its natural tendency. Each *Gadaa* class had special qualities of leadership and had accomplished extra-ordinary contribution to their society. The coming to power of each *Gadaa* class once within forty years (i.e. 5 X 8) ensures the maintenance of quality leadership thereof. Hence, good performance of a class on power increases the good-will of the class and reserves a credit for its future elections (Informants: Duressa Jibroo, Bisrat Kebede and Hussein Jemal).

#### 4.5. The Decline of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly

In the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the power of *Mana Bokkuu* and *Shanan Gadaa* offices shrunk while the *Raabaa Doorii* became the most powerful body in the state. The *Abbaa Duulaa* started to exercise full authority over the state. On the other hand, wealth became the most important criteria to be elected as a leader. Skilled and wise people lost a chance to serve the society at any position. This had created a leadership crisis and the Oromo of Hararghe lost their common strength. Up on the arrival of foreign invaders, their ancient and democratic administrative system totally collapsed. The protracted wars among the Oromo, the expansion of trade and the need to protect commercial interests, internal economic transformations and subsequent social changes, the coming of new beliefs and religions (Islam and Christianity), and the intermittent confrontation between the Oromo and Abyssinians gradually weakened the *Gadaa* system.

The rivalry among the Oromo rulers did not allow them to form a common front against a common enemy that was to ruin all of them (Informants: Dureessaa Jibroo, Bisraat Kabbada and Hussein Jamaal).

The *Abbaa Duulaas* (fathers of war) used this opportunity to stay on their post for a much longer period than that required by the *Gadaa* rules. Some of the *Abbaa Duulaas* usurped the power of *Gadaa* officials and declared themselves *mootii* (kings) until they were incorporated into the Abyssinian Empire of Minilik II (1865-1913). In 1900, Minilik declared *Gadaa* system and the Oromo pilgrimage to the *Abbaa Muudaa* center illegal, owing to their nationalistic influences on the Oromo unity. Oromo culture today is near fading away owing to the influence of the Abyssinians' culture that was enforced upon the Oromo for many years.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5. 1. CONCLUSION

Hararghe is part of a larger ethnic group, Oromo. Oromos are known for their egalitarian ruling system called Gadaa, an age grade system combined with sophisticated socio economic and political system. Although the power of Gadaa system has been eroded due to introduction of different cultures and successive supplantation by outside political systems, none has managed to significantly impact Gadaa system in Hararghe society.

Gadaa system was established in 12<sup>th</sup> century under a rule of Jaarraa Mardi'aa (1193-1200). It is believed that Hararghe Oromo have been under one rule for about 69 abba gadaas after Gadaa was instituted. This will translate to 552 years, for one abba gadaa will rule eight years. Due to limited resource which resulted from growing population, Oromos decided to expand their territory. It is during this period that Hararghe headed to the East. Despite unprecedented challenges they encountered, the Hararghe maintained this sophisticated and extremely efficient system as it was instituted by founding fathers up-to-date.

The *Gadaa* system has served as the basis of democratic and egalitarian political system in Hararghe society. Under it the power to administer the affairs of the nation and the power to make laws belong to the people. Every male member of the society who is of age and of *Gadaa* grade has full rights to elect and to be elected. All the people have the right to air their views in any public gathering without fear. The head of *Gadaa* is known as *Abbaa Gadaa* (Father of the *Gadaa*), equivalent of president in modern governments. *Gadaa* has eleven grades. The *Gadaa* classes are recruited on the basis of genealogical generations. Luba can be defined as a segment of a generation that assumes power for a period of eight years, whereas *Gadaa* is the years when the members of the class stay in power as the rulers.

In the Oromo world view, the traditions attached to the evolution of *Gadaa* and the beginning of the use of the shade of *Odaa* are highly intertwined and have religious social and political concepts. As it was the case in other parts of Oromiyaa, the Oromo of Hararghe had a traditional self-administration system. The highest body of the administration was the Caffee *Gadaa* assembly which used to hold its congress every eight years at *Odaa Bultum* which is located in Ona Ituu at a place known *Hora Baaduu*, fifteen kilometers distance from Baddeessaa town. The finding reveals that originally the term *Odaa Bultum* has a concept of peace; a place of blessing, fertility, prosperity etc. The *Gadaa* center *Odaa Bultum* was named in the memory of this peace as the term reflects. It was the Oromo parliament that might have been established in 12<sup>th</sup> century (1192) to the memory of sleeping in peace under the shade of it.

Historical data claim that at *Odaa Bultum*, the Oromo experienced tremendous civilizations in the legal and socio-political as well as religious life. It was under *Odaa Bultum* that the tradition of the Bareentumaa administration system is kept. Originally, *Odaa Bultum* was the common assembly center of the Baarentuu. However, after *Dhummugaa Abbaa Arsii* moved to Ona Arsi/ Jabala Nuur in Arsi and Baalee, and the Karrayyuu moved to Fantallee, *Odaa Bultum* remained an important cultural and administrative center for the three clans of the Hararghe Oromo (Ituu, Afran Qal'oo and Aniyjaa), but regarded as the well-spring of the Oromo wisdom.

## 5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Researcher proposes the following recommendations:

- The traditional laws of *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly are often more important than the introduced modern western laws and people prefer to be relied upon them for their decision makings and getting access to various rights. And thus there should be an increased collaboration and networking between the introduced modern constitutions and traditional indigenous institutions. ‘Systematic combination’ of regular and legal institutions in the renaissance of *Odaa Bultum* Assembly may facilitate cross-cultural understanding thereby improving the socio-cultural development of the country.
- Full authority should be given to the indigenous (*Gadaa*) institution in the Hararghe Oromo daily life as the role of local communities’ in reconstructing of *odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly is decisive for the prolonged fruitful utilization
- In particular, the state should recognize and support the indigenous customs and enforce their practical application. The involvement of government bodies in reconstruction processes about *Odaa Bultum Gadaa* Assembly should be considered.
- It will be beneficial if the knowledge, practice, social administrative set ups and traditions of the local people are incorporated in the effort of reconstruction of the diminishing *odaa Bultum Gadaa* assembly.
- The traditional community leaders (*abba hayyus*) have to be empowered and the administrative settings of the kebele administration should be integrated with these leaders since they have good acceptance by the local people.

## Glossary

Abbaa Alangaa: father of prosecution (prosecutor)

Abbaa Dinagdee: father of economy

Abbaa Dubbii: father of speech (defense counselor)

Abbaa Duulaa: father of defense (of war)

Abbaa *Gadaa*: father of *Gadaa*

Abbaa Muudaa: father of anointment

Abbaa Seeraa: father of law (Legal counselor/judge)

Bokkuu: scepter (symbol of power)

Caffee: general assembly

Gurba: one hundred years of *Gadaa* cycle

*Gogeessa/miseensa*- membership in *Luba Gadaa* (*Gadaa* patriclass)

Gosa: clan

Gumii Raabaa Doorii: *Gadaa* General Assembly of *Odaa Bultum*

Handaaroo: feast container (?)

*Handhuuraa*: umbilical cord, heifer given to children or adopted individuals in process of hair shaving

Haqaaraa: a pack of caat

Heera: constitutional (supreme) law

Meedhicha: Ownership

Miilloo Abaada: close agnatic kins

Muuda: anointment

*Odaa*: sycamore tree

Qaalluu: indigenous religious expert or institution of the Oromo

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of Informants

No.	Name	Age (Approximately)	Cultural position	occupation
1	Ahmed Mahammad	60	Elder	Kebele officer
2	Ahmed Mahammad Boke	82	Elder	Farmer
3	Bisrat Kebede	35	Participant	Expert in Culture & Tourism Office at Ciroo
4	Caaltuu Hassan	71	Elder woman	Farmer
5	Dureessa Jibroo	29	Age-group	Expert in Culture & Tourism Office at Ciroo
6	Hussein Jamal	39	Observant	Expert in Culture & Tourism Office at <i>Odaa Bultum</i>
7	Kedir Ahmedu	78	Elder	Farmer
8	Mahammad Abraham	67	Participant	Health officer
9	Mahammad Ahmad Quufee	69	Elder of the society	Farmer
10	Rabiya Aliyyi	70	participant	Merchant
11	Sufiyan Ahmed	49	Participant	Farmer
12	Sheik Abdella Ibro	80	Elder	Farmer
13	Tahir Hussein	40	Participant	Teacher
14	Waktole Mokonnin	35	Observant	Teacher
15	Ziyad Aliyi	45	Participant	Merchant

## **Appendix B: Interview Questions for Informants**

The following questions were translated to *Afaan Oromoo* and presented to the informants. The questions were used for the purpose of triggering the informants to speak.

1. Would you tell me your name?
2. What do you know about the culture of Hararghe people?
3. Would you tell me about *Gadaa* of the Shanan Bareentumaa, and the roles of *Abbaa Gadaa* and *Qaalluu* at *Odaa Bultum*?
4. May you explain the *aadaa*/culture, *safuu*/custom and *heeraa*/constitution of the Ituu people?
5. What are the roles of the village elders in Harerghe custom?

**Appendix C: Pictures**



Picture 1: *Odaa Bultum* (Bultum Sycamore tree)



Picture 3: the new building of Galma

*Abbaa Gadaa of Odaa Bultum*



Picture 4: the shade of *Odaa Bultum*