

The Concept of *Oromummaa* and Identity Formation in Contemporary Oromo Society

Asafa Jalata

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

The OSA Mid-year Meeting

July 14, 2007

Howard University • Washington, DC

Introduction

- **Examining the essence of *Oromummaa*;**
- **Exploring the relationship between the uneven development of *Oromummaa* and organizational problems;**
- **Overcoming the uneven development of *Oromummaa* and building a more effective national political leadership and organizational capacity**

Oromummaa and Cultural Identity-1

- ***Oromummaa*** as
 - a complex and dynamic national and global project;
 - a national project;
 - a global project;
 - an element of culture, nationalism, and vision;
- **Its foundations and essence**

Oromummaa and Cultural Identity-2

- **Multiple Oromo identities and *Oromummaa*;**
- **Consequences of colonialism and exposure to different cultures;**
- **The attack on Oromo selves at personal, interpersonal and collective levels;**
- **Problems of Oromo elites, such as lack of self-confidence and inferiority complex;**
- **Impacts on organizational culture and norms;**
- **What should be done about these problems?**

Unity, Diversity and Nationalism

- **Existence of diversity and unity;**
- **The lack of open dialogue on these issues and its consequences;**
- **Regional and religious diversity because of colonialism and religious domination;**
- **Political strategies and tactics for mobilization of collective identities;**
- **Building a single standard that respects the dignity and inalienable human rights of all persons**

Oromummaa and Identity

- **Political competition without political diversity;**
- **No clear ideological, political and strategic differences among Oromo liberation organizations;**
- **Problems**
 1. **The lack of political experience,**
 2. **Borrowed cultures, religions and political practices,**
 3. **The abandoning of the Oromo democratic heritage of consensus building,**
 4. **The low level of *Oromummaa*,**
 5. **The existence of political opportunism, and**
 6. **A lack of open dialogue and conversation contributed to political fragmentation;**
- **What should be done about these problems?**

The Oromo Movement and Its Organizational Capacity

- The development of the Oromo national movement has taken several decades because of several factors;
- The movement emerged from underground to public sphere in the 1990s, declaring *Oromummaa* as the master ideology;
- The challenge of building *Oromummaa* at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels;
- The dialectical connection between *Oromummaa* and organizational capacity;
- The uneven development of *Oromummaa* and the emergence of free-riders or profiteers;
- The full development of *Oromummaa* and the building of the Oromo organizational capacity

Political Leadership and Nationalism

- Leaders as teachers, effective communicators, listeners, and students;
- They can stimulate the development of Oromo identity at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels simultaneously;
- Culture, collective grievances, and visions connect leaders and followers;
- Leaders need to be guided by Oromo-centric cardinal values and principles to develop *Oromummaa*;

Political Leadership and Nationalism

- The leadership needs to understand the concept and essence of the changing selves of Oromos and practice them;
- These self-concepts include cognitive, psychological and behavioral activities;
- Leadership needs to provide intellectual directives through policies and conversations by combining their “leading” and “led” selves;
- Leadership needs to facilitate the emergence of a new leadership from followers;
- What should be done?
 1. Changing the wholesale adoption of non-Oromo ideologies and approaches,
 2. Building internal cohesion by developing *Oromummaa*,
 3. Fully mobilizing Oromo human and material resources.

Conclusion

- **Understanding Oromummaa at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels and transforming them and building strong social and political institutions and organizations;**
- **Identifying weaknesses in Oromo society and overcoming the inadequacies of existing institutions and organizations;**
- **Encouraging consensus building, understanding diversity and unity, and engaging in a democratic conversation at all levels based on the principles of *Oromummaa* and *gada*.**