

THE STRUGGLE OF THE OROMO TO PRESERVE AN INDIGENIOUS DEMOCRACY

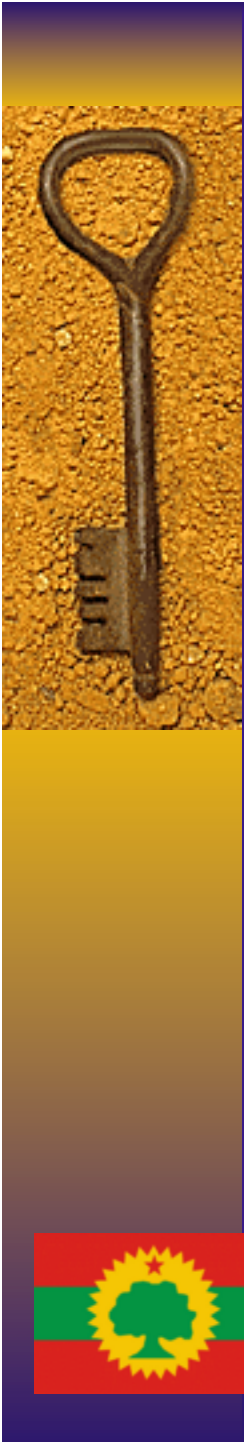


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INTRODUCTION-I

- ❖ The largest national group in Ethiopia; they also live in northern Kenya;
- ❖ They are estimated at 40 million of the 80 million people in Ethiopia alone
- ❖ They are colonial subjects of Ethiopia, and they do not have political representation



INTRODUCTION-II

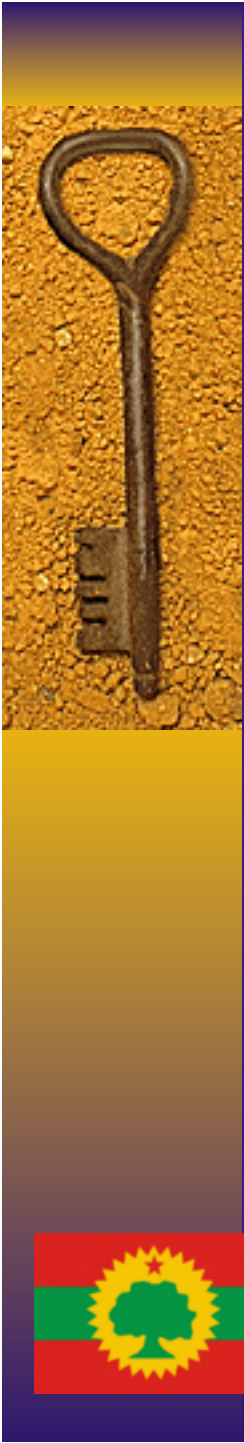
Map of Oromia



INTRODUCTION-III

- ◆ Odaa (sycamore): Symbol of Oromo Democracy





INTRODUCTION-IV

- ◆ The Oromo lived under the *gada* system before their colonization in the last decades of the 19th century
- ◆ This system enabled the Oromo to maintain their sovereignty and freedom
- ◆ The system was egalitarian and democratic
- ◆ The ideological role of the Oromo national movement



THE OROMO UNDER THE GADA SYSTEM-I

- ◆ All Oromo branches lived under one *gada* administration between the 16th and mid-19th centuries
- ◆ The Oromo *gadaa* republic was organized around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions
- ◆ *Gadaa* government was organized on national, regional and local levels





THE OROMO UNDER *GADAA*-II

- ◆ Leaders were elected; they were organized under the presidency of *Abba gadaa* and his two deputies
- ◆ The national leadership was responsible for legislation and enforcement of general laws, for issues of war and peace, conflict resolutions
- ◆ In the mid-17th century, when the number of the Oromo population increased different autonomous gadaa governments emerged



THE OROMO UNDER GADAA-III

- ◆ These autonomous governments formed alliances, federations and confederations to maintain Oromo political and cultural solidarity and to defend their security and interests from their common enemies
- ◆ The more Oromo moved away from their centers and engaged in farming and trade, they developed class differentiation in a few areas



THE OROMO UNDER GADAA-IV

- ◆ Class differentiation gradually led to the transformation of the system into the mootii system (autocratic kingdoms) in Western Oromia
- ◆ War leaders emerged as autocratic hereditary leaders by usurping democratic leadership



THE OROMO UNDER GADAA-IV

- ◆ During the 2nd half of the 19th century, when the Oromo power was decentralized Europe was expanding to Africa
- ◆ Ethiopian war lords by allying with European colonial powers colonized the Oromo and effectively suppressed *gadaa* in most parts of Oromia
- ◆ Despite internal and external problems, *gadaa* has remained the hallmark of Oromo nation



THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTIC OF *GADAA-I*

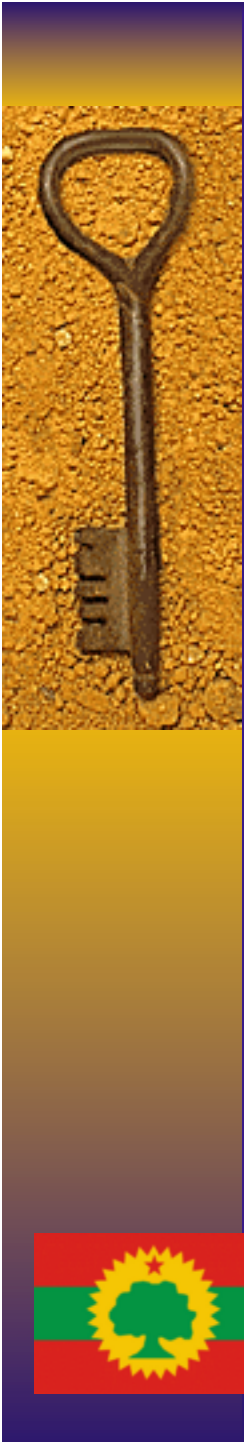
- ◆ *Gadaa* has three interrelated meanings: a) it is the grade during which a class of people assumes politico-ritual leadership, (b) a period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous one, and (c) the institution of Oromo society
- ◆ It has the principles of checks and balances, (a) such as periodic transfer of power every eight years
- ◆ (b) divisions of power among executive, legislative, and judiciary branches



THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTICE of *Gadaa*-II

- ◆ (c) balanced opposition (among five *gadaa* grades), and (d) power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of depots
- ◆ Males are involuntarily recruited to age-sets and generation-sets or *gadaa* grades
- ◆ Male children join age-sets as newly born infants, and males born in the same eight-year period belong to an age-sets





THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTICE of *Gadaa*-III

- ◆ Male children, however, enter into *gadaa* grades forty years after their fathers-fathers and sons are five grades apart
- ◆ They can join advanced *gadaa* grades at birth, and may join men or old men who are considered to be members of their grades
- ◆ Older men mentor young males in teaching rules and rituals; there is no status difference between the younger and older men



THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTICE of *Gadaa*-IV

- ◆ Between the 3rd and 4th *gadaa* grades, boys become adolescent and initiated into taking serious social responsibilities
- ◆ Senior leaders and experts instruct and council young men in the importance of leadership, organization, and warfare
- ◆ Young people learn the practical skills of warfare, military organization, and fighting
- ◆ The age-sets were used for mobilizing troops



THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTICE of *Gadaa*-V

- ◆ The rule of law is the key element of *gadaa*; those who violate the rule of law are recalled before their tenure
- ◆ *Gadaa* leaders implement the laws that are made by representative of the people; representatives can amend or change laws every eight years
- ◆ *Gadaa* accepted the Oromo people as the ultimate source of authority, and nobody is above the rule of law



THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTICE of *Gadaa*-VI

- ◆ Officials are elected by established criteria, and receive rigorous training in *gadaa* philosophy and governance before they enter into the administrative grade
- ◆ Today, for example, in the Boorana Oromo community, *Gumii Gayyo* (the assembly of multitudes) brings together important leaders, age-sets councilors, and others to make or change laws and rules of every eight years



THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTERISTICE of *Gadaa*-VII

- ◆ However, under the Ethiopian colonial system, the surviving *gadaa* does not have the sovereignty it used to have
- ◆ The Oromo national movement currently promotes the ideology and principles of the *gadaa* system
- ◆ The movement also attempts to restore Oromo women institution called *siqqee*



THE STRUGGLE TO REVITALIZE *GADAA-I*

- ◆ Some Oromo nationalists and scholars attempt to refine and adapt some elements of *gadaa* principles in developing *Oromummaa* (Oromo culture, identity and nationalism) to achieve national self-determination, statehood, and democratic governance
- ◆ They have already started to develop national and global *Oromummaa* based on *gadaa* principles



THE STRUGGLE TO REVITALIZE *GADAA-II*

- ◆ Core Oromo nationalists struggle to revitalize the Oromo national struggle by applying some elements of *gadaa*, aiming at establishing a future Oromia state, sharing sovereignty with other democratic forces
- ◆ They attempt to mobilize the entire Oromo nation spiritually, financially, militarily, and organizationally to take coordinated political and military actions



THE STRUGGLE TO REVITALIZE *GADAA-III*

- ◆ Some Oromo scholars recommend that the Oromo national movement should start to formulate procedures, strategies, and tactics for building a national assembly with supreme authority called *Gumii Oromiyaa*
- ◆ At this national assembly, representatives of all Oromo sectors, all serious and independent Oromo liberation fronts and organizations should carry out their national obligations



THE STRUGGLE TO REVITALIZE *GADAA-IV*

- ◆ Oromo nationalists believe that to achieve the main objective of the Oromo national movement developing national and global *Oromummaa* is required
- ◆ As a national project, *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo to mobilize diverse cultural resources, interlink Oromo personal and collective relationships, and assists in the development of Oromo-centric political strategies and tactics for empowering the Oromo nation



THE STRUGGLE TO REVITALIZE *GADAA-V*

- ◆ As a global project, *Oromummaa* requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons operating in a democratic fashion
- ◆ Global *Oromummaa* is based on the principles of mutual solidarity, social justice, and popular democracy
- ◆ So the Oromo national movement accepts the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in promotion of global humanity



REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES-I

- ◆ Currently the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian minority regime of Ethiopia with the help of the West is brutalizing and terrorizing the Oromo people and targeting the Oromo Liberation Front for destruction
- ◆ This terrorist regime maintains political repression, tight control of all aspects of its militarized colonial state, including security and military institutions, and judiciary and other public bodies



REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES-II

- ◆ The regime targets all Oromo nationalists by linking them to the Oromo Liberation Front
- ◆ State terrorism is employed to discourage the Oromo from participating in their national movement
- ◆ Such terrorism manifests itself in the form of war, assassination, murder, castration, torture, burying alive, throwing off cliffs, hanging or lynching, rape, poisoning, confiscation of properties, and forcing people to submission by intimidation, beating, and disarming citizens



REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES-III

- ◆ The methods of killing include burning, bombing, cutting throats or arteries in the neck, strangulation, shooting, and burying people up to their necks in the ground
- ◆ State terrorism and massive human rights violations did not stop the Oromo people from intensifying their national struggle for recreating Oromo statehood and sovereignty that they had once enjoyed under the *gadaa* republic





CONCLUSION

- ◆ Retrieving the best elements of Oromo democratic traditions and establishing a politico-military organization are necessary to overcome the current political challenge the Oromo nation faces from the current Ethiopian government, its Oromo clienteles, and its global supporters which all are hindering the reemergence of Oromia statehood, sovereignty, and democracy