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 Oromumma 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 Oromumma;

• 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 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 Oromummaaa;
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.