OROMO PEOPLEHOOD: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW

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> In the formation and development of individual or collective identity, the social condition is an objective agent, arising from economic, political, social and cultural aspects which are characteristic of the growth and history of the society in question. If one argues that the economic aspect is fundamental, one can assert that identity is in a certain sense the expression of an economic reality. This reality, whatever the geographical context and the path of development of the society, is defined by the level of productive forces (the relationship between man and nature) and by the means of production (the relations between men [and women] and between classes) within this society. But if one accepts that culture is a dynamic synthesis of the material and spiritual condition of the society and expresses relationship both between man and nature and between different classes within a society, one can assert that identity is at the individual and collective level and beyond the economic condition, the expression of culture.
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> Amilcar Cabral[1]

The study of the historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, geographical and civilizational foundations of Oromo society is essential to understand the differences between the Oromo and Ethiopian peoples. The study of these differences is important in properly addressing

historical contradictions which have emerged since the colonization of Oromia. First, we introduce Oromia and explain the process of its establishment. Second, we discuss the origin and branches of the Oromo and their modes of livelihoods, the *gada* system (Oromo democracy), world views, philosophy, and religion. Third, we explore the processes of class differentiation and kingdom formation in northern and western Oromia.

Oromia: The Country of the Oromo

Currently our knowledge of the social history of Oromia is very limited and fragmented. For generations, the Oromo have mainly transmitted their history through oral discourse. Since Oromo scholars and others have been discouraged or prohibited by the Ethiopian colonial state from documenting Oromo oral traditions, adequate information is lacking. Due to the dominant role of oral history, Oromo Historiography requires a thorough and critical study of oral traditions. For the Oromo, as for many African societies, the observation applies that "each time an old man [or a woman] dies a library is lost." The Ethiopian colonial state has suppressed the production, reproduction, and dissemination of the intellectual knowledge of the people. Although a few European scholars and Oromos who were forced to live in exile as slaves in the first half the nineteenth century tried to develop Oromo literary work in the Latin alphabet,[2] the colonization of the Oromo by Ethiopia in the second half of the nineteenth century prevented the development of the written Oromo literature.

For most Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars, Oromo history began in the sixteenth century when the Oromo were actively recapturing their territories and rolling back the Christian and Muslim empires.[3] The Oromo had at that time a form of constitutional government known as *gada*.[4] Although we have limited knowledge of Oromo history before the sixteenth century, it is reasonable to think that this people did not invent the *gada* system just at the moment they were expanding and thereby entering "recorded history." During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when various peoples were fighting over economic resources in the Horn of Africa, the Oromo were effectively organized under the *gada* institution for both offensive and defensive wars. Virginia Luling argues that "from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century the Galla [Oromo] were dominant on their own territories; no people of other cultures were in a position to exercise compulsion over them."[5] There is adequate evidence that indicates the Oromo people dominated the areas from Abyssinia to Mombasa and from Somalia to the Sudan (albeit there were no well demarcated boundaries) before they were partitioned and colonized during the scramble for Africa.[6]

Social Organization: the *Gada* System

The traditional *gada* government developed by the Oromos organizes and orders society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions.[7] We do not know when and how this system emerged. However, we know that it existed as a full-fledged system at the beginning of the sixteenth century. During this century, Oromos were under one *gada* administration.[8] Bonnie Holcomb notes that the *gada* system "organized the Oromo people in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy."[9] This system has the principles of checks and balances (through periodic

succession of every eight years), and division of power (among executive, legislative, and judicial branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots.[10] Other principles of the system included balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties.[11] The *gada* government, though based on democratic principles, excluded caste groups (such as smiths and tanners)[12] and women.

There are five *miseensas* (parties) in *gada*; these parties have different names in different parts of Oromia as the result of Oromo expansion and the establishment of different autonomous administrative systems.[13] All *gada* officials were elected for eight years by universal adult male suffrage. The system organized male Oromos according to age-sets (*hirya*) based on chronological age, and according to generation-sets *(luba)* based on genealogical generation, for social and political and economic purposes. These two concepts – *gada*-sets and *gada*-grades – are important to a clear understanding of *gada.* All newly born males enter a *gada*-set at birth, which they will belong to along with other boys of the same age, and for the next forty years they will go through five eight-year initiation periods; the *gada*-grade is entered on the basis of generation, and boys enter their *luba* forty years after their fathers.[14] In incorporating the age-classification system, *gada* is similar to age-sets practiced by the Masai, Kikuyu and the Nuer. However, its use of genealogical generations as its organizing elements makes it different and unique. Discussing the philosophy of Oromo democracy, Legesse argues, "What is astonishing about this cultural tradition is how far Oromo have gone to ensure that power does not fall in the hand of war chiefs and despots. They achieve this goal by creating a system of checks and balances that is at least as complex as the systems we find in Western democracies."[15]

Wars, Recovery, and Expansion

In 1522, the Oromo had already begun to participate in the extensive and intensive struggle in the Horn of Africa. This was before the Muslims seriously confronted Christian Abyssinia in 1527. In the first half of the sixteenth century, after two centuries of domination, the Muslims destroyed Christian rule and established their own under the leadership of one Ahmed Gragn for more than a decade.

The Oromo were caught in the wars of the Christian and Muslim empire-builders, and according to Darrel Bates, "The Galla [Oromo] . . . of the southern and western highlands had suffered in their time from both parties, and were waiting in the wings for opportunities … to recover lands which had been taken from them."[16] Internally, an increase in both population and cattle had exhausted the scarce resources; externally, the wars with both the Christians and the Muslims endangered the Oromo's survival as people.

Butta wars occurred every eight years by the Oromos, when power transferred from one *gada* grade to the next, and were organized for revenge, or for defensive and offensive purposes. In the beginning of the 16th century, when they began to intensify their territorial recovery and expansion through the *butta* wars, all Oromo were under one *gada* government.

This factor, according to Legesse in his detailed study of *gada*[17], and the ability of the *gada* system to consolidate the people both militarily and organizationally, enabled them to expand or recover their territories and accommodate their increased population and stock.

Their recovery and expansion signaled their survivability.[18] The Oromo fought twelve *butta* wars between 1522 and 1618, recovering, expanding, and establishing Oromia to its present boundaries.[19] In the course of their continued expansion into various regions, different groups established autonomous *gada* governments. Various Oromo groups kept their relations through the office of *Abba Muda*[20] (the father of anointment) and formed alliances during times of difficulty.

Establishing Oromia Homelands

The two main Oromo groups, Barentu and Borana, expanded in two adjacent directions. The former mainly expanded to the areas presently called Hararghe, Arssi, Wallo and northern and eastern Shawa; and the latter mainly expanded to the areas presently called western Shawa, Kaffa, Gamu Goffa, Sidamo, Illubabor, Wallaga, and the Gibe regions by using their superior cavalry, surprise attack and better organization, that the *gada* system afforded.[21] Before they began their separate expansion, the Macha and Tulama - the two branches of the Borana Oromo - held their *chaffee* or *taree* (assembly) at Oda Nabi in Fatagar.[22] Until they formed their separate *gada* governments, they had one government and used to send their delegates to this place to attend every *gada* assembly. [23] The Macha Oromo formed two confederations after they were separated from the Tulama Oromo: the *Afre* confederacy (the confederacy of the four) and the *Sadacha* confederacy (the confederation of the three).[24] After they left Oda Nabi, the Macha Oromo established their new center at Oda Bisil.[25] Oda Bisil was located between the Gedo, Billo, and Gibe rivers.

From this new strategic location, the Macha Oromo confederations began to intensify their expansion in all directions into Ennarya, Gumar, Bosha, Janjero, Hadiya, Gurage, Bizamo, Shat, Konch and Gojjam. The *Sadacha* confederation continued its expansion to the Gibe region, settling and establishing the five Oromo Gibe kingdoms in the first half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, from the branches of the *Afre* confederation the Oromo kingdoms of Leqa-Naqamte and Leqa-Qellem emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in the region presently called Wallaga. Some Oromo branches continued their fighting against the expanding Christian Empire in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth *gada*-grades - Dulo (1594-1602), Melbah (1602-1610) and Mudana (1610- 1618) respectively. Although the Oromo halted back the expansion of the Christian empire, they could not establish their dominance over Abyssinia. However, most of the Muslim principalities came under the control of the Oromo, except a few enclaves that later played a major role in spreading Islam among some Oromo groups.

The Oromo conquest and settlement were qualitatively different from the process of Ethiopian colonialism which took place within the context of a racist and capitalist world-economy. Reflecting values inherent in the *gada* system, the Oromo structurally and successfully assimilated and integrated the conquered minorities. Through adoption, marriage and cultural assimilation, these conquered peoples were Oromoized. It is impossible today to differentiate the assimilated Oromo from the Oromo proper. The *gada* system allowed the Oromo to politically and numerically strengthen themselves in the Horn of Africa until the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The Structure of Gada

The *gada* system has a very logical structure, but because of the interlinking of the two concepts of belonging and responsibility that are at its core, it is not easily accessible at first glance. Several descriptions are offered here. John Hinnant says:

this system:

[*Gada*] divides the stages of life, from childhood to old age, into a series of formal steps, each marked by a transition ceremony defined in terms of both what is permitted and what is forbidden. The aspect of *gada* which throws the concept of age grading into confusion is that of recruitment. A strict age-grade system assumes that an individual's social passage through life is in tune with his biological development. An individual enters the system at a specific age and passes through transition rites at intervals appropriate to the passage from childhood through full adulthood to senility. However, recruitment into the *gada* system is not based upon biological age, but upon the recruitment that an individual remain exactly five stages below his father's level. Recruitment is thus based on the maintenance of one socially defined generation between father and son.[26]

Describing how it works in the Borana region of Oromia, Asmarom Legesse says:

[*Gada*]is a system of classes (*luba*) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each *gada* class remains in power during a specific term (*gada)* which begins and ends with a formal transfer ceremony.[27] The concept *gada* has three related meanings: it is a period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous ones; it is the grade during which a class of people are in power by having politico-ritual leadership; it is the institution of Oromo society.[28]

And:

[society is organized] *into two distinct but cross-cutting systems of peer group structures. One is a system 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 genealogical generations. The first has nothing to do with genealogical ties. The second has little to do with age.* [author's emphasis]. Both types of social groups are formed every eight years. Both sets of groups pass from one stage of development to the next every eight years.[29]

Despite the emergence of various autonomous *gada* systems,[30] the central principles of the system remained intact. And the possession of the defining institutions of *qaallu* (the spriritual leader) and the common *gada* government seems to have been what Mohamed Hassen terms "'the special mark' of the Oromo nation."[31]

Membership. We have seen that Oromo males are involuntarily recruited to both age-sets and generation-sets. Male children join age-sets as newly born infants. Males born in the same eight-year period belong to an age-set. But they enter into the system of *gada* grades forty years after their fathers, and since one grade is eight years, fathers and sons are five grades apart. Male children can join advanced grades at birth, and may join men or old men who are considered to be members of their genealogical generations. Older men mentor young males in teaching rules and rituals, but the former treat the later as equals since there is no status difference between the two groups in a *gada* class. Members of a *gada* class share the same status and roles and perform their rights of passage from one grade to another collectively.

Cultural Knowledge. Although some Oromos accepted Islam by force or as resistance to Ethiopian colonial domination, and others were forced to accept Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity or willingly accepted other forms of Christianity, their world views "are still hidden under the surface."[32] Oromo prayers, blessings, and greetings manifest the Oromo world view. "The words of prayers, blessings and greetings continuously create and recreate connections between the organizational and the cosmological structures," Paul Baxter writes, "such as the moieties and *gaada* [sic], and workaday."[33] Discussing the original system of Oromo thought and world view, Lambert Bartels asserts that "whether they became Christians or Muslims, the Oromo's traditional modes of experiencing the divine have continued almost unaffected, in spite of the fact that several rituals and social institutions in which it was expressed have been very diminished or apparently submerged in new ritual cloaks."[34]

In Oromo society, knowledge and information have been mainly transmitted from generation to generation through the institutions of family, religion, and *gada*. Young Oromos are expected to learn important things that are necessary for social integration and community development. They learn appropriate social behavior by joining age-sets and generation-sets. From their families and communities and experts, they learn stories, folk tales, riddles, and other mental games that help acquiring the knowledge of society. As age-mates, they share many things because of their ages; members of generation-sets also share many duties and roles because of their membership in grades or classes.

Roles & Responsibilities. At the stage of grade four "the *gada* classes and the age set come into being as a formal corporate group: Leaders are elected for both groups. The name of the most senior man in each group becomes the name of the group as a whole. *The two groups then become cross-linked, cross-cutting, structural units that operate as complementary institutions so long as they are both represented by living members* "[35][author's emphasis].

Between the third and fourth *gada* grades, boys become adolescent and initiated into taking serious social responsibilities. The ruling group has responsibility to assign senior leaders and experts to instruct and council these young men in the importance of leadership, organization, and warfare. They also learn songs, parables, proverbs, cultural

and historical maps, and other social skills that they can use in public speech to praise the living and dead heroes or to criticize and ridicule. Oratory, the art of public speaking, is highly valued in Oromo society; "… the forms of delivery, the wit of the speaker, his tone of voice, his posture, eye contact and ability to command the attention of the audience" are skills to be honed and admired.[36] Young men are also trained to become junior warriors by taking part in war campaigns and hunting large animals; they learn the practical skills of warfare, military organization, and fighting so that they can engage in battle to defend their country and economic resources.[37] Baxter argues that Oromos have used age-sets because generation-sets "cannot be an efficient means to mobilise troops, and a quite distinct organisation based on closeness of age . . . exists for that purpose."[38]

Ceremonials and Leaders. In the Borana community, where many elements of the *gada* system still exist, the assembly known as *Gumi Gayo* (the assembly of multitudes) brings together every type of important living leader, such as living– *Abba Gaddas*, the *qaallus*, age-set councilors, clan leaders and *gada* councilors, and other concerned individuals – to make or amend or change laws and rules every eight years.[39] The *Gumi Gayo* assembly has the highest degree of authority than the *gada* and other assemblies, and what *Gumi* decides cannot be reversed by any other assembly.[40] .

The *Abba Boku* (the father of scepter) was a 'chairman' who presided over the assembly. According to G. W. B. Huntingford: "The Abba Boku and his two colleagues are chosen from the oldest or most distinguished families, which are known as `families of Hayu.' The principal function of the Abba Boku is to preside over the parliament … to proclaim the laws, and to act when necessary as ritual expert in the *gada*-ceremonies."[41] *Abba Gada* is another name for *Abba Boku.* The *Abba Dula* (the defense minister) was also one of the leading figures in the *gada* government. He was the leader of *qondala* (army) and was elected by the people. His main responsibility included assisting the *Abba Boku*, especially during the time of war. The *Abba Boku* was also supported by a council, known as *shanee* or *salgee*, and retired *gada* officials. *Gada* laws were passed by the *chaffee* (assembly) and implemented by officials. The *gada* government functioned both on local and regional levels. There was no taxation under this system except that *gada* leaders and their families were provided with necessary materials, such as food.[42]

In electing leaders "[t]here is a general understanding among the electors and among the men competing for offices that personal qualities, achievements, mystical attributes, and public service are the most important factors . . . it should be stressed that it is not the candidate himself who is being judged but rather his whole lineage and in particular, his lineal ancestors . . . "[43] Despite kinship being such an important factor in Oromo society, those who are elected to office are expected to serve without regard to kinship ties.[44] Nobody is above the rule of law in Oromo democracy. Lemmu Baissa expresses the view that the *gada* system "as a whole "provided . . . the machinery for democratic rule and enjoyment of maximum liberty for the people."[45]

Gender Divisions. Despite *gada* being an egalitarian social system, women were excluded from passing through age-sets and generation-sets. *Gada* effectively enforced a gender-based division of labor in Oromo society, although it allowed two equally important separate and interdependent economic domains. Explaining how the *gada* system brought these two domains together by establishing mechanisms of balancing, regulating, and safeguarding these domains, Qabbannee Waqayyo argues that:

… men have controlled the mobile resources – those that required going out from the homestead --- herding, defense of livestock and land, tilling new fields, plowing, etc. Women have controlled the stationary resources – – the house, the grain and other products of the fields once they are brought into *gotara* for storage, etc. Even the cattle around the house are under their control; women milk them, decide how much milk goes to the calves, how much to the people in the household for drinking, how much for butter or cheese to eat or sell, how much to guests who bring valuable information, become friends in time of need, etc. …[46]

The balancing of the domains of women and men and maintaining their interdependence has been a precondition for keeping peace between the sexes and for promoting *saffu* (moral and ethical order) in society.[47] "By exercising a real day-to-day control over the disposition of the resources at every point of the decision-making process in ways that are protected by the value system of society," Waqayyo writes, "the woman wields determinative influence in the society as a whole."[48]

The value system of Oromo society has been influenced by the *gada* and *siiqqee* institutions. In precolonial Oromo society, women had the *siiqqee* institution, a parallel institution to the *gada* system, that "functioned hands in hand with *Gadaa* [sic] system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances."[49] These two institutions helped to maintain *saffu* in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private spaces, social status and respect, and sisterhood and solidarity by deterring men from infringing upon their individual and collective rights.[50]

If the balance between men and women was broken, a *siqqee* rebellion was initiated to restore the law of God and the moral and ethical order of society. When there were violations of their rights, women left their homes, children, and resources and traveled to a place where there was a big tree called *qilxxu* and assembled there until the problems were solved through negotiation by elders of men and women.[51] According to Kuwee Kumsa, "Married women have the right to organize and form the *siiqqee* sisterhood and solidarity. Because women as a group are considered *halaga* [non-relative] and excluded from the *Gadaa* grades, they stick together and count on one another through the *siiqqee* which they all have in common . . . in the strange *gosa* [lineage] where women live as strangers, *siiqqee* represents the mother and they even address each other as `daughters of a mother.' They get together regularly for prayers as well as for other important individual and community matters. If men try to stop women from attending these *walargee* (meetings), it is considered against *saffu.*"[52]

Oromo women used different *siiqqee* mechanisms to maintain their rights; such mechanisms included the law of *muka laaftu* (soften wood), the *abaarsa* (curse), *iyya siiqqee* (scream), and *godaana siiqqee* (trek). Kumsa comments that "[b]ecause of their liminality, women wield a special religious power where they draw an enormous moral and ritual authority. Men, therefore, try to avoid their curse and seek their blessings . . . `Women in general are symbolically and politically liminal and correspondingly enjoy special sacred power as a class.' . . . people respect and revere a woman because *Waaq* made her to be respected and revered . . . [I]nterference with a woman's sacred authority

is regarded as violating *seera Waaq* and *saffu.*"[53] A man who violated women's individual and collective rights could be corrected through reconciliation and pledging not to repeat the mistakes or through women's reprisal ritual: A group of women "ambush the offender in the bush or on the road, bind him, insult him verbally using obscene language that they would not normally utter in the direct presence of an adult male, … pinch him, and whip him with leafy branches or knotted strips of cloth. In extreme cases, they may force him to crawl over thorny or rocky ground while they whip him . . . They demand livestock sacrifice as the price to cease their attack. If he refuses, they may tie him to a tree in the bush and seize one of his animals themselves. Other men rarely intervene …"[54]

With the colonization of the Oromo people and the destruction of *gada* and *siiqqee* institutions Oromo women have been subjected to three levels of oppression: racial/ethnic, class and gender oppression.

The Weakening of the Gada System

It is necessary to recognize those internal factors such as class and state formation processes and their articulation with external factors such as Turko-Egyptian colonialism, European and Ethiopian colonialism, the emergence of an Oromo collaborative class, and the spread of Islam and Christianity undermined the political and military roles of the *gada* system in the nineteenth century.[55] These changes did not totally uproot Oromo values and traditions. There are still some elements of these values and traditions in Oromo society. The *gada* system still helps in maintaining peace, and transmitting knowledge, and practicing rituals between some moieties and groups in southern Oromia.[56] Today, also, Oromo nationalism incorporates *gada* cultural and political values.

Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions have facilitated systematic and organized cultural destruction and repression of Oromo culture for more than a century. All of these cultural destruction and repression have occurred to deny Oromos the free cultural spaces and political voices that are essential to create and build institutions that can facilitate autonomous social development. A free cultural space has been described as an "environment in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue."[57] The overriding authority of the Ethiopian colonial state with the support of the imperial interstate system has tried its best to destroy the Oromo cultural identity, with resultant ramifications, by denying Oromos the freedom of having their own cultural institutions and developing an authentic Oromo culture. Oromos have been denied opportunities necessary for developing their own institutions and the Oromo system of knowledge that could have facilitated the transmission of cultural experiences from generations to generations.

Despite the fact that a few Oromo groups were forced to accept Ethiopian Christianity and the Amharic language, the majority of Oromos accepted Islam and other forms of Christianity in opposition to the Ethiopian colonizing structures. In fact, the

majority of Oromos still speak their own language, known as *Afaan Oromoo*. There has been an Oromo collaborative class that betrayed and consorted with Ethiopian colonialism, abandoning the Oromo interest, culture and language.

Recent decades have seen an emergence of a revolutionary Oromo intellectual class, who returned to their Oromo cultural references to restore Oromo identity, and develop Oromo nationalism. Particularly in the 1990s, Oromo culture, literature and language began to flourish because of the development of Oromo nationalism. With the maturation of Oromo nationalism there has been a growing demand for the restoration of the Oromo democratic traditions of *gada*.[58]

The Origin and Branches of the Oromo

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, the Oromo were already organized into two confederations or moieties known as Barentu and Borana.[59] All Oromo subgroups can and do trace their genealogies to these confederations. Practically, however, it is not possible "to trace in detail the manner in which further division and the formation of" these moieties, sub-moieties, clans, and lineages occur.[60] According to the Oromo oral tradition, these Borana and Barentu moieties descended from the same family stock called Oromo.[61]

Despite the fact that Oromos claim that they descended from the same family stock, Oromo, they do not limit their kinships to biological ancestry. The Oromo kinship system has been based on a biological and social descent. Oromos recognize social ancestry and avoid the distinction between the biological and social descent since they know that the formation of Oromo peoplehood was based on a blood and social kinship. Oromos have had a long history of cultural contacts with nonOromos through war, marriage, economic relationship, and group adoption.[62] When there were wars and conflicts between Oromos and their neighbors on economic and cultural resources, such as land, water, territory, trade route, and religious and political issues, the former imposed specific cultural policies to structurally and culturally change the conquered people in order to Oromoize them and consolidate Oromo society. Oromo laws strictly forbade the distinction between social and biological descent.[63] Baxter explains that "the adoption of adults, and often all their dependants, used to be a common practice, which thereby incorporated them and their descendants into the family, and hence into the lineage, clan . . . These practices, though almost certainly widespread and frequent, took place despite the firm ideological contention that descent and inheritance were both rigidly patrilineal. Oromo social theory, like most others, was often very flexible in practice."[64]

Through the process of group or individual adoption known as *moggaasa* or *gudifacha*, nonOromos were adopted to Oromo *gossa*, and were structurally and culturally Oromoized; these assimilated Oromos trace their descent to Oromo moieties and to the original Oromo.[65] Non-Oromo neighbors who were defeated in war or who wanted to share resources with Oromo groups would be adopted to the Oromo *gossa*: "The adopted groups now become collectively the `sons' of *gossa* . . . this arrangement

was inspired by political, military and economic considerations, though clearly it is couched in the symbolism of kinship and affiliation."[66] The original two moieties, Borana and Barentu, had one overarching political structure called the *gada* system that helped fashion Oromo relations within themselves and with outsiders, but evolved the mechanisms for incorporating new members. According to Hector Blackhurst, "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 *chaffe* where legal matters were discussed and the law laid down or reiterated."[67]

Although Oromos had a biologically- and socially-constructed complex kinship system, as we will see below, the formation and expression of Oromo peoplehood are culturally shaped.[68] A better understanding of Oromo peoplehood and cultural identity requires the identification and exploration of the main characteristics and essence of Oromo social organizations and politico-religious institutions. Let us have some understanding of the Oromo kinship system on macro and micro-levels since it has been the basic social structure for defining common interests in resource management and utilization and in the process of establishing political and religious leadership and in forming leagues or confederations among Oromo society. Oromo political and social institutions have been built on the kinship system;[69] Oromos call the largest kinship system *gossa* which is subdivided into moiety, sub-moiety and *qomo* (clan). These subdivisions have lower-order branches of kinship known as *mana* (lineage), *balbala* (minor lineages), and *warra* (minimal lineage or extended family).[70]

Wherever Oromos were divided into sub-moieties and clans, there is "clear distinction between clans and lineages. The clan (*qomo)* is first of all a social group, consisting of several descent groups who need not all be Oromo. The heart of every clan is compounded of a cluster of lineages tracing their descent to the ancestor who gave his name to the clan."[71] There were five sets of sub-moieties that extended from the Borana and Barentu moieties: the Sabbo and the Gona, the Macha and Tulama, and the Raya and Assabo, the Siko and the Mando, and the Itu and Humbana.[72] The first three sets belong to Borana, and the second two sets are branches of Barentu. The descendants of these moieties occupy specific areas in Oromia today: The Raya and Assabo branches occupy northern Oromia (i.e., include some part of Tigray, the whole of Wallo and some part of northern Shawa). The regions of Macha and Tulama include most of the present regions of Shawa, Wallaga, Ilubabor, and some part of present Kaffa. The branches of Sabbo and Gona occupy some part of the present Sidamo, part of Gammu-Gofa, and Borana, Gabra, and Guji lands, and some part of Kenya. The descendants of Siko and Mando occupy the Arssi and Bale lands, and some part of the Rift Valley. Finally, the branches of Itu and Humbana live in most of Haraghe and some part of Wallo in the north. Nevertheless, there have not been demarcated boundaries among these parts of Oromia.

Whenever members of these moieties are asked to identify their descent, they always provide the name of their moieties, rather than their lineages. 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.[73] Because of these complexities and the paucity of data, it is impossible at this time to fully reconstruct the Oromo kinship system. Linguistic, anthropological

and historical data have linked the Oromo to the eastern Cushitic-speaking peoples who have been in the Horn of Africa as far as their history is known.[74] These eastern Cushitic speakers were historically, geographically, culturally and linguistically connected peoples. The Oromo have lived for their known history in the Horn of Africa as these related peoples.[75]

Before the Arab elements immigrated to the Horn of Africa and mixed with some indigenous peoples and developed into the Abyssinians or Habashas, the Horn of Africa was the home of the so-called Cushitic and other peoples. The Cushitic-speaking people settled on the central "Abyssinia/Ethiopian" Plateau, and were differentiated into subgroups. The Oromo were one of these groups that moved southward.[76]

Modes of Livelihood

The Oromo were mixed agriculturalists (farmers and cattle-herders) before they began their sixteenth century expanded settlement in the Horn of Africa. They primarily reared cattle and sheep and grew barleys.[77] The Oromo have used these animals and this cereal crop for economic and ritual purposes.[78] After they expanded and settled, most Oromos continued their practices of cultivating barely and other crops on the highlands and cattle-herding on the lowlands.[79] Until Ethiopian colonialism forced them to stop, most Oromos practiced both farming and herding. They grew crops on the highland around their homes and took cattle down to the lowland plain for pasture.[80] Later colonization and confiscation of land forced most Oromos to remain either in the lowlands or in the highlands.

Cattle and cereal crops have been parts of the Oromo livelihood. They have used cattle for food, ritual, status, wealth accumulation, and sacrifice in initiation ceremonies. They also used cattle products for fertilization, fuel, clothing, etc. Cattle-rearing has long been part of their lives. Thus, many scholars have tended to ignore the Oromos' participation in farming and have characterized them as totally pastoralist. They have also reared horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, dogs, cats, fowls, civet cats and, in lowland areas, camels, etc.[81] The Oromo have cultivated grain crops, such as *xxaffi* (*poa abyssinica*), sorghum, maize, barley and wheat, using the hoe and plough. Coffee has been an important cash crop. It had long grown wild in Oromia and other neighboring regions.

Certain caste groups specialized in iron- and wood-working, and made iron and wood instruments needed for farming.[82] Iron instruments, such as swords, spears, hoes, axes, sickles, knives, etc., have been very important. Some of these instruments were also essential for fighting and hunting. Woodworking has been known for a long time. Carpenters have made wooden objects, such as platters, stools, spades, tables, ploughs, bows, wooden forks, honey barrels, etc. Goldsmithing (*warqqee ungulalu*) has been practiced in western Oromia. Pottery making, weaving, and tanning have been practiced by specialized caste groups.

The Oromo people have lived in scattered homesteads or huts. The basic unit has been the patrilineal extended family.[83] A man, as *Abba Worra* (literally head of the family), has authority over his wife or wives, unmarried sons and daughters. Next to the family, *oola* (neighbor) and *ganda* (community) have been very important social networks. Before the disintegration of the *gada* system, land was controlled by the

qomoo (clan), whereas cattle belonged to an individual family.[84] Alluding to the social equality practiced in the precolonial Oromo society, Virginia Luling argues that the Oromo had "reconciled a certain degree of political specialization with emphasis on strict equality by means of a system of sets [*gada*] succeeding one another over time."[85]

Oromo World View, Philosophy, and Religion

Oromo society like any society has been conscious of its cultural identity, its relation to nature, and the existence of a powerful force that regulates the connection between nature and society. The Oromo knowledge of society and the world can be classified into two: a) cultural and customary knowledge, known as b*ekumssa aada*, and b) knowledge of laws, known as *bekumssa seera.*[86] The 'knowledge of laws' is further subdivided into *seera Waaqa* (the laws of God), and *seera nama* (the laws of human beings). The laws of God are immutable, and the laws of human beings can be changed thorough consensus and democratic means. Oromo customary knowledge is a public and common knowledge that guides and regulates the activities of members of society; some elements of this customary knowledge can develop into rules or laws depending on the interest of society.[87] Every person is expected to learn and recognize *seera* Waaqa and seera *aada*; however, should someone does not know the laws of society or the laws of God, there are Oromo experts who can be referred to. These experts study and know the organizing principles of the Oromo world view that reflect Oromo cultural memory and identity both temporally and religiously.[88]

Oromo institutions can be better understood by studying the Oromo concept of social development (*finna).* As in any society, social changes occur in Oromo society by combining the cumulative historical experiences with the contemporary condition. Hence *finna* "represents the legacy of the past which each generation inherits from its forefathers and which it transforms; it is the fertile patrimony held in trust by the present generation which it will enrich and bequeath to future generations . . . [it describes] a developing of the inner potential of society based on the cultural roots it has already laid down."[89] The Oromo concept of social development is constructed in seven interconnected phases: *Guudina, gabbina, ballina, badhaadha, hoormata, dagaaga*, and *dagaa-hoora*. When *guudina* indicates an improvement in cultural life due to the introduction of new experiences to Oromo society, *gabbina* involves the process of integrating cumulative cultural experiences with contemporary social conditions through broadening and deepening the system of knowledge and world view. According to Aneesa Kassam, "This can only be achieved through the full knowledge, consent and active participation of all members of the community. This implies the existence of a political organization, the forum for debate and the democratic means of reaching a consensus on all decisions affecting the common good. This should be obtained without force or coercion, without excluding the interests of any group, within the Oromo society and outside it, in the broader context of the national or international arena. To this end, the Oromo evolved a political process of power sharing reputed for its highly egalitarian nature: *Gada."*[90]

Without *gada* or Oromo democracy there cannot be *finna* (development), peace, social justice, *kao (*freedom, peace, prosperity, success, and happiness), and *saffu*. *Gabbina* emerges through democracy, peace, cooperation and consensus of all members of Oromo society of different levels to improve economic, cultural, and political conditions. Next to *gabbina*, there is a *ballina* phase. *Ballina* involves the expansion of

enriched cultural and political experiences from Oromo society to another society through reciprocity of cultural borrowing and resources sharing and interdependence, based on the principles of democracy. This is the phase that focuses on foreign relations. It allows Oromo society to involve in cultural exchange and cooperation with neighboring peoples. The cumulative experiences of *guudina, gabbina,* and *ballina* lead to the phase of *badhaadha* (richness). Theoretically *badhaadha* is a phase at which Oromos and their neighbors who accept their philosophy of social development obtain peace, prosperity, and wholeness since there are no incidences of conflict, poverty, disease, and natural calamities.

This phase of development can only be achieved when there is peace between *Waaqa* (God), *uuma* (nature), and society. According to Baxter, human beings "must keep right with each other in order to keep right with God, and they must keep right with God to keep right with each other. Good social relationships and proper ritual relationships are reflexes of each other. Violence between men is both a cause and effect of God's displeasure."[91] The development of this stage facilitates the emergence of the *hoormaata* phase. During this phase, animals and people reproduce and multiply because of availability of abundant resources and peace. Following this phase there is a development phase known as *dagaaga*; this is the stage at which development cycles are assessed and integrated to maintain even and sustainable development. At the final stage of development called *daga-hoora*, Oromo society expands its cumulative cultural experiences of development to neighboring peoples through different mechanisms depending on a given condition. Sometimes, at this stage Oromos had conflict with their neighbors because of the competition over resources, such as land and water. Until the last decades of the nineteenth century, when European imperialist intervention changed the balance of power in favor of the Abyssinians, the Oromo easily defeated their competitors due to their *gada* organizational capacity and military capability.

Waaqa. Oromo religious and philosophical world views consider the organization of spiritual, physical and human worlds as interconnected phenomena, and *Waaqa*, the creator, regulates their existence and functions in balanced ways. Explaining how Oromos believe that *Waaqa* directs the world from above and controls everything from within, Kassam expounds that the "image of creation has important consequences for the Oromo vision of the universe as a whole. It has influenced among other aspects of its traditional culture, its political and economic thought, and determined its traditional system of government and modes of production."[92]

Ayaana, Uuma and Saffu. Oromos use three concepts to explain the organization and interconnection of human, spiritual and physical worlds. These three concepts are *ayaana* (spirit), *uuma* (nature), and *saffu* (moral and ethical order). Oromos believe that through *ayaana. Waaqa* (God) creates and regulates human and physical worlds in balanced ways.

This *ayaana* also maintains the connection between the creator and the created. Oromo society has organizing principles for its known and unknown universe like any society; and *ayaana* is a major organizing principle of Oromo cosmology through which the concepts of time and creation are ordered.[93] *Ayaana* as a system of classification and an organizing principle of Oromo cosmology establishes the connection between *Waaqa* (the Creator/God) and the created (nature and society) by differentiating and at the same time uniting the created things and the Creator.[94] Oromos believe that *Waaqa,* the

Supreme Being, created *ayaana* and uses it to organize scattered things into order. Megerssa explains that "*ayaana* is the mechanism by which the creator propels itself into becoming its own opposite, and dwells in that which it creates. This is then transposed to explain the basic principles that embed themselves in the diverse Oromo institutions, since there is no distinction between the laws of thought, the laws of nature, history and society."[95]

The concept known as *uuma* includes everything created by *Waaqa* including *ayaana.* Saffu is an ethical and moral "code that Oromos use to differentiate bad from good and wrong from right . . . [S]affu `constitutes the ethical basis upon which all human action should be founded; it is that which directs one on the right path; it shows the way in which life can be best lived.'"[96] Oromos claim that the understanding of laws of *Waaqa,* nature, and society both morally and ethically and living accordingly is necessary. Oromos believe in God's law and the law of society that they establish through the *gada* system of democracy to maintain *nagaa* (peace) and *saffu* among Waaqa, society, and nature to achieve their full human destiny known as *kao* or *kayyo.*[97] Respect for the laws of *Waaqa* and *gada* have been essential to maintain *naga Oromo* (Oromo peace) and *saffu* (moral balance) in society.[98] Most Oromos believe that they had full *kao* before their colonization since they had freedom to develop their independent political, economic, and cultural institutions.

The *Qaallu*. Original Oromo religious leaders, *qaallus,* have had a moral authority and social obligation to oppose tyrants and support popular Oromo democracy and *gada* leaders, and to encourage harmonious and democratic relations based on the principles of *saffu, kao, Waaqa,* and *uuma.* The *qaallu* "is thought to possess sacred characteristics that enable him to act as intermediary between the people and . . . [God]," and "he had no administrative power, but could bless or withhold blessings from *gada* leadership, and had an extraordinary power to curse anyone who threatened the well-being of the entire community by deviating from . . . [God's] order."[99] The *qaallu* and his institution were committed to social justice, the laws of God and the rule of law, and fair deliberation; "his residence was considered politically neutral ground, suitable for debating controversial issues and for adjudicating highly charged disputes, although he himself might not take a prominent role in proceedings."[100] The *qaallu* institution has played an important role in protecting original Oromo culture, religion, world view, and identity. When those Oromos who were influenced by this institution kept their Oromo names, most Oromos who were converted to Islam or Christianity willingly or by force abandoned their Oromo names and adopted Muslim or Christian names depending on their borrowed religion.

The qaallu can be credited with having played an indirect role in the preservation of the Oromo identity and the Oromo political system. When those most Oromos who were converted to Islam or Christianity willingly or by force abandoned their Oromo names and adopted Muslim or Christian names depending on their borrowed religion, Oromos who were influenced by this institution kept their Oromo names. Hillarie Kelly notes that this leader "is thought to possess sacred characteristics that enable him to act as intermediary between the people and *Waq* [*Waaqa*]. The *qallu* had no administrative powers, but could bless or withhold blessings from *gada* leadership, and had an extraordinary power to curse anyone who threatened the well-being of the entire community by deviating from *Waq*'s order."[101] The criteria to be a *qallu* included seniority in lineages, respectability in the community, expertise in ritual practices, moral

qualification, respect for cultural taboos, sound social status, and other leadership qualities.[102] The leader of all *qallus* was known as *Abba Muuda* (father of the anointment) who was considered to be the prophet and spiritual leader of Oromo society. Oromo pilgrims traveled to the residence of *Abba Muuda* to receive his blessing and anointment to be ritual experts in their respective regions.[103]

Abba Muuda served as the spiritual center and symbol of Oromo unity and assisted all Oromo branches to keep in touch for several centuries; "as the Jews believe in Moses and the Muslims in Muhammad, the Oromo believe in their *Abba Muda [sic]."*[104] *Abba Muuda* like other *qaallu* leaders encouraged harmonious and democratic relations in Oromo society. According to the *qaallu* mythology, *Abba Muuda,* the original Oromo religious leader was descended from heaven.[105] Oromo representatives traveled to the highlands of the mid-south Oromia to honor *Abba Muuda* and to receive his blessing and anointment that qualified them as pilgrims known as *jilas* to be ritual experts in their respective areas.[106] When Oromo representatives went to him from far and near to receive his blessings, *Abba Muuda* commanded them "not to cut their hair and to be righteous, not to recognize any leader who tries to get absolute power, and not to fight among themselves."[107]

In its modified form, the *qaallu* institution exists in some parts of Oromia, such as in the Guji and Borana areas; it still protects an Oromo way of life, such as dispensing of local justice based on Oromo customs and providing solutions to problems created by a changing social condition.[108] The *qallus* of Guji and Borana are ritual leaders, advisors, and ritual experts in the *gada* system. The *qallus* "possess the exclusive prerogative of legitimizing the different *gada* officials, when a new *gada* group is initiated into the politically active class."[109] Oromos still practice some elements of Oromo democratic values in the areas where the *gada* system was suppressed a century ago. The *gada* system is still practiced in the Borana and Guji regions under the control of the Ethiopian colonial system in its modified form; it helps maintain peace, exchange knowledge and practice rituals between some clans and regional groups.[110] The current *gada* of Borana and Guji cannot fully reflect its original political culture under Ethiopian colonialism; probably that is why scholars such as Hinnant, Baxter, Bassi and others emphasize the ritual function of the system and ignore its political culture.[111]

Class Differentiation and the Emergence of Oromo Kingdoms

Both internal and external factors for the destruction brought about the disintegration of the *gada* social organization and the emergence of the Oromo kingdoms in northern and western Oromia. The social transformation and the disintegration of the *gada* system did not occur throughout Oromia during the same historical era. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the development of agriculture and trade, class and state formations undermined the foundation of the *gada* system in northern and western Oromia. The egalitarian and democratic *gada* system became incompatible with the new *moti* system (kingdom and tributary mode of production) due to the fundamental changes in the landholding system. In other words, the emergence of class differentiation and the rise of the Oromo kingdoms destroyed the *gada* system in these parts of Oromia. In the regions presently called Sidamo, Arssi, Bale, Illubabo, Gamu Gofa and in some parts of Shawa, the *gada* system did not disintegrate until the late nineteenth century. In these regions, it was undermined mainly by external factors. The Ethiopian colonial administration destroyed *gada* in these areas by creating the new Oromo chiefs, who emerged as an

intermediate ruling class and obtained hereditary power.[112] Similarly, Turko-Egyptian colonialism destroyed the *gada* system in Hararghe between 1875 and 1885.

The *moti* system emerged through war, confiscation of land, collection of booty, tribute and market dues, and through the establishment of hereditary rights to ownership of property and political office in northern and western Oromia.[113] The emergence of autocratic powerful leaders and their private armies led to the control of marketplaces, trade routes and land, and the development of agricultural economy that led to class differentiation and state formation.[114] In the Gibe region, the differentiation of wealth went beyond the wealth of cattle in the seventeenth century when the *sorressa* (the wealthy merchant and landlord class) emerged.[115] With the emergence of this wealthy class, the principle of adopting the conquered populations as `equal' through the *mogassa* process ended. The institutions of slavery and *qubisisa* (tenancy) emerged.[116] The foundations of the five Oromo Gibe states - Limmu-Ennarya, Guma, Jimma, Gera and Goma were laid by the development of agriculture, local industry and the expansion of local and long distance trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.[117]

In the first half of the 19th century, the emergence of the *Abba lafa* (a hereditary landlord), the *moti* (king), *Abba qorro* (governor), trade chiefs, and market administrators reduced the egalitarian aspects of the *gada* to religious rituals. The *moti* continuously accumulated wealth in his treasuries with incomes he extracted from tribute on the land and its products, his estates and commerce.[118] This produce extraction enabled the *moti* to create and maintain regulatory institutions like military, bodyguards, and courts.[119] Generally speaking, in the Gibe region, through the process of social class differentiation, the egalitarian and democratic *gada* office was replaced by the autocratic and hereditary office of the *moti*. The hierarchy of the social pyramid can be depicted as follows:[120] The *moti* was at the top, followed by his council. Next to the council of the state, there were *Abba qorros*, followed by *Abba gandas* (district administrators). *Abba Gandas* were district officials who collected tribute, recruited soldiers, guarded the borders of the kingdom, and administered justice. Below *Abba gandas* there were *Abba fuunyos* who imposed tribute on the population, arrested offenders, directed corvee labor, collected taxes, and served as messengers between higher officials and the *moti.*

All officials were directly or indirectly appointed by the *moti* from the landowning warriors. Finally, there were, at the bottom, free farmers, *qubsissa* (tenants), *ogeesa* (artisans), and slaves. In this region, there was also the newly emerging Oromo merchant class known as *Afkala*.[121] One member of the council of the state known as *Abba mizan* (the father of balance) was selected from this merchant class. Herbert Lewis specifically studied the Jimma *moti* system and explained how its powerful organization with its monopoly of power and economic forces destroyed the *gada* system.[122] The Jimma monarchy had direct power over the political economy of Jimma. The *moti* recruited his officers from among members of his family, the *sorressa* (wealthy men), those slaves who proved loyal, intelligent, and effective, and from foreign mercenaries. He directly controlled the armed forces and extracted produce. Jimma was the center of trade for extensive local and long distance trade. Merchants came to this region from Arabia, the Sudan, India, Europe and Ethiopia/Abyssinia.[123] Jimma and other Gibe regions evolved as one of the richest regions in Africa.[124]

There were also other parts of Oromia where social class differentiation and kingdoms developed. According to records, the Wallo Oromo exercised military power in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[125] In the eighteenth century, the Wallo Oromo had replaced the *gada* administration with that of dynasty.[126] In the first half of nineteenth century, the democratic *gada* system was also disintegrated in the *Afre* confederation of the Macha Oromo (Wallaga) because of social class differentiation. During the earliest expansion, particularly in Wallaga, all members of the lineage had equal usufructuary rights to the land and there was no scarcity; therefore, every male Oromo had his own *dhoqe* or *masii* (tract of land) on which he could raise animals and cultivate crops.[127] With the emergence of a relative scarcity of land in the community, pioneers' descendants began to monopolize land rights and impose a special settling permission called *qubisissa* (tenancy) on newcomers who were forcibly subordinated and who annually performed labor service for a specific number of days.[128]

The emergence of Leqa-Naqamte and Leqa-Qellem *moti* systems was actually based on the initiation of appropriation of rights to land and labor, warfare, control of trade and market places.[129] The rights to land, coupled with the development of agriculture and trade, facilitated the emergence and consolidation of the *moti* system in Wallaga. The most successful pioneers' descendants, such as the leaders of Leqa-Qellem and Leqa-Naqamte, gradually transformed the *gada* fighting forces, *qondala,* into their own personal army.[130] These leaders also created effective administration and better military organizations to control trade routes and marketplaces in order to collect tribute; they also accumulated wealth by collecting regular tributes in heads of cattle, ivory, gold, cotton and other commodities.[131]

The *gada* system was attacked in eastern Oromia by the Turko-Egyptian and Adare alliance. The interethnic alliance and interdependence between the Adare and the eastern Oromo were shattered when the faction of the former invited the Turko-Egyptian power to colonize the Hararghe region in 1875.[132] Under the Turko-Egyptian rule, between 1875 and 1885, the Adare consolidated their power and accumulated wealth and capital at the cost of the majority Oromo. However, the Adare *Amirs* (kings) had certain influence on a few Oromo groups before this period and bestowed the ranks of *malaq*, *garad*, and *damin*[133] on their elected officials. The *Amir* dealt with these officials through the Adare *dogign*.[134] The leaders of the Oromo who settled around the city of Harar were gradually forced to accept the administration of the *Amirs,* abandoned the Oromo political system, received these titles and became hereditary chiefs.[135] The remaining eastern Oromo had the *gada* government until it was destroyed by the alliance between the Turko-Egyptians and the Adares.

Conversion to Other Religions

The Adares obtained an intermediate status in the Turko- Egyptian colonial administration and benefitted from it. "Not only did they have strategic access to the new government, but, since they derived an income from their positions," Sidney Waldron writes, "they were in an optimal position to select and validate land claims."[136] When the Oromo masses were subjugated under the Ottoman-Egypt-Adare alliance, a few Oromo chiefs were co-opted and received lands and titles.[137] The lands of the eastern Oromos were expropriated. The Oromo in Hararghe were forced to accept Islam by the Turko-Egyptian colonial force between 1875 and 1885. According to J. S. Trimingham, "The Egyptians managed to decoy their chiefs into Harar and threw them into prison, then forced them to dissolve their parliament, deliver up their Abba Bokku, cut off their . . . long hair, and submit to circumcision. A great number preferred to be killed rather than

be thus humiliated, but after three or four years they were reduced to such misery that the majority submitted."[138]

The influence of Islam also expanded among Oromos in Hararghe through the Adares.[91] When the Ethiopians effectively occupied the city of Harar in 1887, the Adare alliance shifted from the Turko-Egyptians to the Ethiopians. Without fundamentally changing their traditional religious perceptions,[139] northern Oromos began to accept Islam during the eighteenth century, albeit mainly for political reasons. To protect themselves from incorporation into Christian Abyssinia and maintain their identity, a few Oromo groups - the Raya, Azabo, Yejju and Wallo - in addition to armed resistance, embraced Islam during the 18th century.[140] Through Muslim merchants Islam came to be accepted by the heads of the Gibe states in about the mid-19th century and only then was spread to the Oromo masses.[141] Later, in opposition to Ethiopian colonialism, the Oromo turned *en masse* to Islam.[142] In the Arssi and Bale regions, the Oromos accepted Islam over Ethiopian colonialism and Orthodox Christianity.[143] For the same reason, some Oromo in Wallaga, Illubabor and other regions preferred Islam to Orthodox Christianity.

However, there were Oromos who were forced to accept Orthodox Christianity after their colonization. The remaining Oromos have continued to practice their Oromo Religion. Generally speaking, both Islam and Christianity have been gradually grafted on Oromo religion in many Oromo regions. Although Christian and Islamic religious philosophies did not provide superior explanations to that of the Oromo for the functioning of the complex world, they were mainly imposed on Oromos by the gun and sword. Some Oromo nationalists are engaged in rediscovering the original Oromo cultural traditions and are trying to reconcile them with the borrowed cultural elements that penetrated Oromo minds and society through these religions.

Notes

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1. Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle,* translated by Michael Wolfers, (New York: Monthly Review, 1979), p. 115.
2. For example, see Lawrence Tutschek, (ed.), *A Grammar of the Galla Language*, (Munich, 1845); Martin Nordfelt, *The Galla Grammar,* (Lund, 1947).
3. For example, see Ernest W. Luther, *Ethiopia Today*, (London: Oxford University Press), p. 14.
4. For details, see Virginia Luling, "Government and Social Control among Some Peoples of the Horn of Africa," (M.A. Thesis: The University of London, 1965); Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1973); Abba Bahrey, "History of Galla," in C. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, (eds.), (London, 1954), pp. 111-139.
5. Virginia Luling, *ibid.*, p. 191.
6. See Wilfrid D. Hambly, *Ethnology of Africa*, (Westport: Negro University Press, 1930), p. 176.

7. See Asmarom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*, (New York: Free Press, 1973).

8. See Baissa Lemmu, *The Democratic Political System of the Galla [Oromo] of Ethiopia and the Possibility of its Use in Nation-Building*, (M.A. Thesis, George Washington University, 1971); B. Lemmu, "The Political Culture of *Gada*: Building Blocks of Oromo Power," paper Presented at the Oromo Studies Association Conference, University of Toronto, Canada, 31 July-1 August, 1993; Asmarom Legessee, *ibid*.

9. Bonnie K. Holcomb, "Akka Gadaatti: The Unfolding of Oromo Nationalism-Keynote Remarks," *Proceedings of the 1991 Conference on Oromia*, University of Toronto, Canada, 3-4 August, 1-10.

10. Asmarom Legesse, "Oromo Democracy," p. 2.

11. Baissa Lemmu, "The Political Culture of Gada," *ibid.*

12. Interview with Blatta Deressa Amante on December 15, 1962 at Bishoftu, Oromia, by Dr. Baissa Lemmu.

13. See Yilma Deressa, *Yee Ethiopia Tarik*, (Addis Ababa, 1959 E.C.); Baissa Lemmu, "The Democratic Political System ...", Dinsa Lepisa, "The Gada System of Government and Sera Cafee Oromo," (LLB. Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1975); Sisai Ibssa, "Implications of Party and Set for Oromo Political Survival," Paper Presented at the 35th Annual Meeting of African Studies Association, Seatle, Washington, Nov. 20-23, 1992.

14. Asmarom Legesse, *Gada*, P. 81.

15. Asmarom Legesse, "Oromo Democracy," Paper Presented to the Conference on the Oromo Revolution, Washington, D. C., August 16, 1987, p. 2.

16. Darrel Bates, *The Abyssinian Difficulty: The Emperor Theodorus and the Maqdala Campaign, 1867-1868*, (Oxford, 1979), p. 7.

17. For more detailed history of this period see: Asamarom Legesse, *Gada*, (73: 8, 10, 74)

18. See Tesema Ta'a, "The Political Economy of Western Central Ethiopia: From the Mid-16th to the Early-20th Centuries," (Ph. D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986), p. 17.

19. *Ibid*., pp. 21-28.

20. *Ibid.,* p. 10.

21. Abba Bahrey, "History of Galla."

22. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A Hstory 1570-1860,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 42.

23. *Ibid.,* pp. 1-82.

24. *Ibid.,* p. 48.

25. *Ibid.*

26. John Hinnant, "The Guji: *Gada* as a Ritual System," in *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organisations,* edited by P.T.W. Baxter and Uri Almagor, (London: c. Hurst & Company, 1978), pp. 213-214.

27. Asmarom Legesse, *Gada,* p. 8.

28. *Ibid*., p. 81.

29. Asmarom Legesse, *Gada, Ibid*., pp. 50-51.

30. See John Hinnant, "The Guji," pp. 207-243; P.T.W.Baxter, "Boran Age-sets and Generation-sets: *Gada*, a Puzzle or a Maze?," in *Age, Generation and Time*, *ibid*., pp. 151-182; Hector Blackhurst, "Continuity and Change in the Shoa *Gada* System," in *Age, Generation and Time*, *ibid*, pp. 245-267; W. Torry, "Gabra Age Organisation and Ecology," in *Age, Generation and Time, ibid*., pp. 183-206.

31. Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 9.

32. Lambert Bartles, *Oromo Religion,* P. 42.

33. P.T.W. Baxter, "Oromo Blessings and Greetings," p. 247.

34. *Ibid*., p. 15.

35. Asmarom Leggesse, *ibid*., p. 58.

36. Gemetchu Megerssa, *Knowledge, Identity, and the Colonizing Structure*, p. 57.

37. P.T.W. Baxter, "Boran Age-Sets and Warfare, in *Senri Ethnological Studies* 3, 1979, pp. 69-95.

38. P.T.W. Baxter, "Boran Age-sets and Generation-Sets," *ibid.,* p.177.

39. The 37th *Gumi* Gayo Assembly was held in the August of 1996 to make or amend or change three kinds of laws that the Borana Oromo classify as cardinal, customary and supplementary laws However, since the Borana Oromos are under Ethiopian colonialism

authority like other Oromos, most of these laws cannot be implemented See Gollo Huqqaa, *The 37th Gumii Gaayo Assembly, (*Addis Ababa: The Norwegian Church Aid, n.d.)

40. Asmarom Leggesse, *ibid.,* p. 93.

41. G. W. B. Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia, the Kingdoms of Kafa and Janjero*, London, 1955), p. 54.

42. Interview with Blatta Deressa Amante, *ibid.*

43. *Ibid.,* p. 220.

44. *Ibid.* pp. 224-225.

45. Baissa Lemmu, "The Political Culture of Gada: Building Blocks of Oromo Power," Paper presented at the Oromo Studies Association Conference," University of Toronto, Canada, 31 July - 1 August 1993, p. 11.

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72. For further discussion, see Gemetchu Megerssa, *Knowledge, Identity, and the Colonizing Structure*, pp. 24-37.

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74. See Herbert S. Lewis, "The Origins of the Galla and Somali," *Journal of African History,* vol. 7, no. 1 (1966).

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