



The Practice of ‘Qumbii Nyaachisuu’ Ceremony in the Gujii Gadaa System

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Abstract

This article deals with the practice of qumbii nyaachisuu ceremony in the Gujii Gadaa system. The main objective was to investigate the practice of qumbii nyaachisuu and the linkage of the Gadaa system and Qaalluu Institution in Guji Oromo. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Purposive sampling techniques were used to gather genuine information and used interview, focus group discussion data gathering tools. To attain the study objective, a qualitative method of data analysis was employed because it enables a detailed study of the social phenomenon based on feelings, experiences, motives, and behaviors of targeted groups and the reasons that govern such behaviors of people. This article elucidates the definition and the concepts of qumbii and its symbol in the Guji Gadaa system. In addition, it addressed the procedure, significance, participants, and ceremony of the practice of qumbii nyaachuu in the Gujii Gadaa system. The finding of this study showed that qumbii is a secret in general, and is linked with supernatural power. The representation of symbolism of qumbii in the Gadaa system; the implication of qumbii fudhachuu in the Gadaa system and the linkage of the Gadaa system and Qaalluu institution are addressed in the study. Moreover, this study addressed the ceremony of the practice of qumbii nyaachuu. This ceremony shows the value of qumbii in the Gadaa system; and also it helps to transfer the culture of practice of qumbii nyaachuu and others from generation to generation. Generally, it was addressed that nobody could be Abbaa Gadaa without taking qumbii and recommended encouraging and conserving the practice of qumbii nyaachuu be expected from all people.

Keywords: *Qaalluu Institution, Gadaa System, Guji Oromo, Qumbii, Qumbii Nyaachuu, Practice*

1. Introduction

In the Oromo the Gadaa system, the Oromo indigenous religion and the Oromo calendar are indivisible and complementa. All Oromo issues were incorporated and included in these three Oromo civilizations (Asmarom, 1973; Gemechu, 1993; Dirribi, 2012). Dirribi (2012:347) stated that, “*Ummanni Oromo qarooma dbuunfaasaa ta’e kan akka sirna Gadaa, amantii Waaqeffannaafi dhabaa seenaafi duudhaa isaarratti bundaaye qaba.*” This means the Oromo people have their own civilization like Gadaa system, religion and calendar which depends on their history and customs. It implies that this civilization's interaction interprets the Oromo knowledge, philosophy, identity and wisdom; i.e. Gadaa system, the Oromo religion and the Oromo calendar. Therefore, the Oromo are an independent and civilized ethnic group.

Gadaa system is an egalitarian and democratic socio-political and cultural system of governance, which has also been practiced among all Oromo branches and other Cushitic peoples, like Sidama, Konso and Gedeo (Haberland, 1963; Lewis, 1966; Bulcha, 2011). The Oromo Gadaa system is a complex system, that-governs almost every aspect of all Oromo life, wisdom and philosophy in general and that of the Gujii in particular. According to Asmarom(1973:8) the Oromo Gadaa “...is a system of Gadaa classes (Luba) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities. Each Gadaa class remains in power during a specific term (Gadaa) which begins and ends with a formal power transfer ceremony”. It implies that all activities and life of every member of the Oromo were guided by an egalitarian socio-economic and political structure of the society called the *Gadaa* system. The Gada system is a class system that succeeds each other every eight years in assuming politico-military administration, economic management and other social activities. The central institution of the Oromo people majorcontains complex and extraordinary features.

The Oromo have their calendar based on the lunar system. The lunar calendar is a system of measuring time for the needs of civil life by dividing time into days, weeks, months, and years. Calendar divisions are based on the movements of the earth and the regular appearances of the Sun and the Moon. The Oromo calendar was developed based on *Ayyaana* and each day in a month has its own *Ayyaana*. For instance, cultural ceremonies like name-giving rituals are celebrated based on the *Ayyaana* of that particular day. The fortune of each *Ayyaana* is essential and relevant to the activities to be performed.

In Oromo, a person who counts dates is called *Ayyaantu* (Asmarom, 1973; Gemechu, 1993). Based on this, in Guji Oromo the date of *qumbii nyaachisuu* is decided by *Ayyaantu/Wayyuu*.

In other hand, the Oromo have had an institution called *Qaalluu* to interpret the law of *Waaqa* and *Ayyaana*. *Qaalluu* institution is a religious institution. The Oromo respect the *Qaalluu* which is very much attached to the spiritual world. Hassen (1990:6) defines a *Qaalluu* as a "high priest who was a spiritual leader of Oromo traditional religion". The same is true for Knutsson (1967), Lewis (1990) and Asmarom (1973). The Gadaa system has worked hand in hand with the *Qaalluu* institution since immemorial. In the past, the Oromo made their pilgrimage to the famous *Abbaa Muudaa* in the Borana land from all over Oromo land. The pilgrims are called *jila*, the representatives of the Gadaa set of their respective clans or moieties. The *jilas* received blessings and instructions on the laws of the creator (*Waaqa*) and ritual functions (Hassen, 1990). This implies that, all the Oromo people has received the same blessing, ordering, and instructions on the law of the *Waaqa* and ritual functions. Also, Dejene (2002) states that the *Warra Laduu* and the *Warra Bokkuu* are the two important institutions of the Oromo. So, the *Qaalluu* institution and the Gadaa system are the most important for Oromo.

According to Hassen (1990), by the beginning of the twentieth century following the incorporation of Oromo land into the Ethiopian Empire, Menelik II banned the pilgrimage to Borana land. In response to the ban and other external and internal factors, a different form of the *Qaalluu* institution has emerged. Depending on this, all Oromo moieties (branches) have their own Gadaa system, *Qaalluu* institutions, and ritual site places. According to Hinnat (1977:18), the Guji *Abbaa Qaalluu* is a single supreme religious leader above all the clans. The *Abbaa Qaalluu* anointed Gadaa leaders as one of the requirements to hold power. In return for the anointment, the *Qaalluu* provide 'qumbii', meaning incense as a symbol of blessing. Hinnant (1977) explains that the *Qaalluu* provide a blessing to each *Gujii Abbaa Gadaa* of the separate *gosa* (clan or moiety) as a way of legitimizing the authority of each. This practice is known as '*Qumbii Nyaachisuu*' in the Guji Gadaa system. Therefore, the practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* is conducted between the compatibility of the Gadaa system, Oromo calendar and Oromo indigenous religion or *Qaalluu* institution.

Gadaa embodied core values and principles performed regularly or periodically. For instance, *buttaa qaluu*, *gurra urachuu* (holing ear), *jala murachuu* or *dhaqna qabachuu* (circumcision), *qumbii nyaachisuu* and rite of passages in different stages are common in the Gadaa system; especially, a person who is

prepared to take power should full fill all these criteria. Gadaa values and norms are interconnected with Oromo religion and philosophy. To show this truth, different scholars and writers (Asmarom 1973; Hinnant 1977; Hassen 1990; Tadesse, 1995; Jemjem and Dhadacha, 2011) focused on Gadaa system its transferring power, its Gadaa grades and Gadaa classes and its democratic and different things of the system.

The present study deals with issues related to the practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* and links this to the relationship between the *Qaalluu* institution and the Gadaa system. The practice of *qumbii nyaachuu* is performed between the *Gadaa* system and the *Qaalluu* institution. An attempt is made to understand the relationship between the Gadaa system and the *Qaalluu* institution and to investigate how and why *Abbaa Qaalluu* is necessary to provide *qumbii* to *Abbaa Gadaa*? What secret is there behind *qumbii nyaachuu*? What is *qumbii* itself or what it means? What is the symbolism of *qumbii nyaachuu* and what are its themes and messages in the Guji Gadaa system? In addition, it is to document the performances, rituals, practices how *qumbii nyaachisuu* is conducted and where it is conducted. Furthermore, it is to explore the participants’ feelings, cultural materials and their symbolic interprets and oral traditions like a blessing, singing songs (*qeexala*), chants, proverbs and sayings. Moreover, still, the practice of *qumbii nyaachuu* is transferred from generation to generation by oral tradition. This made it forgotten by a new generation. Therefore, this study has solved such like a problem and put it in written format and transfers it from generation to generation. On the other hand, this study has not been focused on many researchers’ works. Many researchers about roughly highlighted *qumbii nyaachuu* and the links of the relationship between the *Gadaa* system and *Qaalluu* institution. In many works of literature, the role of the *Qaalluu* institution is to legitimize *Abbaa Gadaa* by providing *Qumbii*. However, it is beyond this. Therefore, a study depended on the scientific research method to fill this gap.

Depending on this, scholars from various disciplines researched the Gadaa system and its relationship with the *Qaalluu* institution. Most of them studied from the perspective of their fields of studies. Some social sciences researches have been conducted on the Guji Oromo Gadaa system and *Qaalluu* institution separately under different titles and objectives, but only a few discussed their interconnections. For instance, (Hinnant, 1977) studied the Gadaa system of Guji of Southern Ethiopia, in which he elaborated on the social structure, traditional political system, and some of the roles of *Qaalluu* in the Guji Gadaa system in religious events during ritual practices. However, his

work did not focus and involve the practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* rather he focused on exploring the general Guji Gadaa system. Therefore, this study has filled such a gap.

In Gadaa system during power transfer, exercising the Gadaa rule and criteria is mandatory in the *Oromo Gadaa* system generally and the *Gujii Gadaa* system in particular. By this means, *qumbii nyaachisuu* is one of the criteria and is practiced by a person who will take Gadaa power. Therefore, this article focused on the practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* ceremony in the *Gujii Oromoo Gadaa* system. In this study, I have shown the process and practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* and its significance and symbolical interpretations in the *Gujii Gadaa* system.

Overall the research investigated:

- What is the conceptual definition of *qumbii*?
- What is the process of *qumbii nyaachisuu* in the Gadaa system?
- What are the significances of *qumbii nyaachisuu* in the Gadaa system?
- Who are involved in the practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* and what are their roles?
- What are the symbolic material cultures in the ceremony of *qumbii nyaachisuu*?

2. Methodology

The present paper has been developed based on qualitative data. Primary data have been collected by employing an interview and focus group discussion with key informants in the Gujii area of the Oromia region in Southern Ethiopia and some relevant secondary sources of the data were gathered from published and unpublished sources like books, videos, journals, articles & bulletins that related to the research topic were used. Accordingly, interviews were used as primary data collection in this study. In this case, both structured and semi-structured interviews were used. Focus group discussion was used to clearly understand the issue under study while participants debated on a given question. I have purposively selected informants who know about *qumbii nyaachisuu* practice as well as active participants of the practice.

3. The Definition and Concept of Qumbii

The word '*Qumbii*' has a different meaning in various concepts and places. For instance, in the Western part of *Oromia*, it is considered a perfume thing like incense (*bixxanaa*/sandalwood) that is used for smelling at different places like *Galma Qaalluu*, churches, mosques, and also at individual homes. Additionally, it is considered a tree which its root and leaf are used as folk medicine and spice of

cooking. The other is the several varieties and secreted called ‘Qumbii’ which are given by *Qaalluu* to *Abbaa Gadaa* in the Guji Gadaa system. It is very complex and difficult to speak about and connected with spirituality. According to my informants, it is difficult to try *Qumbii*. They were very reserved about explaining secrets of *Qumbii*. They rather preferred to tell me the oath repeated during *Qumbii Nyaachisuu* ceremony. Despite that, my informants are not sure about *qumbii* which was given by *Aabba Qaalluu* whether it connected with the other *qumbii* or not. Therefore, this study deals with *qumbii* which is given by *Aabba Qaalluu* and its ritual practices.

In the *Guji Qaalluu* institution, *Qumbii* is a secret thing. According to my informants, except *Aabbaa Qaalluu* nobody knows about *qumbii* including what it is preparation. Therefore, it is a secret thing. However, they confirmed that *qumbii* is very bitter and burner.

The recipients may keep the bitter and mouth burning in their mouth all night as an expression of endurance and carriage to overcome hardships in their governance, keeping the bitter *qumbii* in the mouth for long symbolizes the ability to keep the secret. The symbolism is that a man has fully grown up physically, socially as well as mentally after taking the *qumbii*. In addition, it is to tolerate to swallowing or accepting any truth even if it hurts them. Therefore, *qumbii* makes people knowledgeable and intellectual (*haxxuyyoomu/haayyoomu*) and to have wisdom. Accordingly, symbolic anthropologist Geertz (1973) divided symbolically into two levels. He distinguished two types of symbolic descriptions known as ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ descriptions. The former is concerned with the deep and hidden meaning of symbols while the latter deals with the upper and observable symbolic meaning. Therefore, I was concerned about the symbolism of *qumbii* with its thick symbolism that has a deep and hidden meaning.

Moreover, it is a secret that *Abbaa Qaalluu* provides oaths, and anointments and legitimizes the generations starting from the end of *Kuusaa* stage after taking *Hayyooma* training (that means at the rite passage of *Kuusaa* Stage to *Raabaa* stage) to the *Gadaa* stage.

According to the *Guji Gadaa* system, the oath ceremony is called *qumbii nyaachisa*. Unless taking *qumbii* nobody can be a leader and cannot get recognition and trust from a nation in the *Gadaa* system. *Qumbii* is given (*kennama*) by *Qaalluu*, but it is provided (*nyaachisuu*) by *Faga* to *Gadaa*’s councils (*Yaa’a Gadaa*). I thought of this idea under the functionalism theory framework. According to functionalist Radcliffe-Brown, a society has several institutions like economic, social, political and religious. These institutions ensure solidarity and work to integrate society as a whole (Scupin and De Corse, 2012). Radcliffe-

Brown concentrated on the social structure and suggested that a society is a system of relationships maintaining itself through cybernetic feedback, while institutions are orderly sets of relationships whose function is to maintain the society as a system (Mahmud, 2008; 81). He was highly interested in kinship and commented on how kinship can promote order and solidarity. Radcliffe-Brown suggested that all norms for specific behaviors and obligations among different people in kinship relationships promote order and stability. Thus, to Radcliffe-Brown, these social institutions serve society's needs.

4. The Procedure of the Practice of *Qumbii Nyaachisuu* in *Guji Gadaa* System

In the principle of the Gadaa system, the ceremony of oath to take *baallii* and responsibility is known as *qumbii nyaachuu*. This ceremony takes place during *Gadaa* council (*Yaa'a Gadaa*) candidate for the executive office of the *Gadaa* System conducts all public services under the authority of seven (7) executive functions of government while *jila Odaa bulinsa* or *yaa'ii odaa bulinsa* by *hayyuu ya'aa* (council leader). This procedure is known as *hayyoomsuu/luboomsuu* and *jaldhaabsuu*. These executive functions comprise *Abbaa Yaa'aa* (candidate of *Abbaa Gadaa*)- sit in front, *Abbaa murtii*- sitting next to *Faga*, *Faga*, *Jalkaayaa- irkisaa Abbaa Murtii*-assistance of the party, *Hayyuu*, *Jaldhaaba*, *Waamura* and *Torbii*. The members of *Yaa'aa* council are elected from their *fincaan/baallii* (generation) by their stage at the end of a period of *Kunsaa* grade by their skill, ability, physical, mentality, history; especially, history of their family, and their wisdom and knowledge of culture and disciplines of *Gadaa* system. It is connected with structuralism theory. Barry (1995; 39) mentions that: "...its essence is the belief that things cannot be understood in isolation – they have to be seen in the larger context of the larger structures they are part of structuralism".

All of them (*namni hayyooma cufii*) can take or eat *qumbii* except *Faga*, because *Faga* are come from *Wayyuu* or *Ayyaantuu* clan called *Alaadduu*. This council leader can take at *Kunsaa* stage or *Raabaa* stage or *Doorii* stage or *Gadaa* stage. To take or eat *qumbii* they have to fulfill the criteria such as *bunnaaqa naquu* or *gumaata Qaalluu*. This gift includes ninety-nine calves (*gorbaas*) and one hoolaa battalaa (sheep which has white color on its head).

In the engagement of taking *qumbii* the *Guji* Oromo people move barefoot from the senior *Ardaa Jilaa* of *Uraagaa* to others. *Hayyuus/Lubas* who are already candidates to be *Gadoomuu* conduct the practice of *qumbii fudbachuu* once every eight years. They should practice within a given time. The practice of *qumbii fudbachuu* is conducted at different sacred sites (*ardaalee jilaa*) like, *Gannaalee Malkaa*, *Cirrattee*, *Sammarroo*, *Boorama Barkoo*, *Diida Guddaa*...etc. The practice of *qumbii fudbachuu* is staying for twenty-

eight (28) days. Then they take different training by *Yuuba* like *Gadaa* rule, their duties and responsibilities, how they perform with their *qadadduu* (alliance part) and *malaannaa* (opposite part) and generally, this training includes all about human life-related.

During that, they live in a small house called *gosee* that its roof has no holes and the floor was carpeted by grass *Buuyyoo/citaa*) known as *Caffee* and they enter it barefoot (*miila qullaa*) because it is a sacred place and holy land. This house everybody cannot enter except people selected to take *qumbii*. In addition, in this house there are no clothes and chairs; they sit on the floor. These situations help them to acquire the ability of patience and hardworking. When they want to get to this house, they enter together in a direction of sunrise and then shut down it. When somebody wants to be outside for any purpose he should ask permission; then also, he can go out within a sunrise direction. In this situation, sunrise is considered as good fortune. During their stay at this place of *qumbii fudbachuu* they slaughter fat oxen implies that to their food and they can eat any food, which they bring from their houses. Women cannot participate in this practice place. They are never found at this place because their focus is only on training, so they do not want any disturbance. After that, they can take or eat *qumbii* and blessing them accordingly:

Dhugaa afaan sikaaye..... I put truth into your mouth

Dhara afaanii si fuudhe I took out false from your mouth

Daba hin qorin do not investigate in the wrong way

Qorii mooqaan hin qorin do not investigate qorii by mooqaa

Buna bulluqaan hin qorin..... do not investigate coffee by heat water

Haga hiriyyaan hin qorin do not investigate with friends

*Fira worraani binqorin*do not investigate by your siblings

Dhugaa waaqaa lafaa qori... only investigate by the truth of Waaqa and Lafaa

Yoo daba qorte afaan dabi... your mouth will be bend if you investigate wrongly

This blessing implies that *qumbii* is a symbol of truth. The line which says ‘...*dhugaa afaan si kaaye; dbara afaanii si fuudhe...*’ shows that a person who takes *qumbii* always speaks the truth and does not ever lie. Therefore, he investigates the truth and stands for truth. Again, ‘... *qorii mooqaan; buna bulluqaan hin qorin...*’ implies that do not investigate incompatible things and is logically incorrect. In addition, the phrase says that ‘... *haga hiriyyaan; fira warraan bin qorin...*’ implies that treat all people equally without

looking at your siblings and friends. Generally, only investigate the truth depending on the truth of God and Earth. Yet, if you do not investigate the truth, it results in negative results. Traditionally, this is a serious curse because you will have no acceptance in the community if your say is wrong. It is strongly believed that blessings and curses work in life very soon and people are careful of such things. As a result, the Guji Oromo take care of it and try their best to increase elders' blessings and minimize curses. This idea is linked with symbolic anthropology theory that Geertz (1973) elaborated symbols as “tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, belongings, or beliefs”.

According to my informant Damboobii Malkaa (Abbaa Lookoo), “*Gaafa qumbii nyaatan bin mugan; bin rafan. Yoo balkan sana kan mugu ta’e carraa badaadha.*” This implies that on the date of Qumbii Nyaachuu they do not get sleep because of that, night getting sleep is considered as bad luck in the future of their duties. Therefore, the Yuubaa advise and bless all night accordingly:

Imaa intalaa qortaa beekkadhu—you treat male and female be carefully

Ka biyyaafi keetillee qixxa dubbattaa beekkadhu—You should speak equally for yours and others be careful

Hayyuu bilbilaa ta’i— be a clever Hayyuu

Hayyuu baxxiyyaa ta’i—be an intellectual Hayyuu

Erga qumbii fudhattee booda namatti hindubbattuu beekkadhu—after taking *qumbii* you should not speak to people be careful

Waa bin hojjettuu beekkadhu—you do not work be careful

Bisbaan/ nyaata ofiin hindbugdu/ binyaattuu beekkadhu—you do not drink/eat by yourself be careful

Namatu barkaan si obaasaa/ nyaachisaa beekkadhu—you should feed by others hand be careful

Daba bin qoriin beekkadhu—you should not investigate wrongly

Qorii dabaa bin nyaatiin—you should not have a corruption

Nama bin loliin—you should not fight people

.Nama hin dbeekkamii—you should not insult people

Yoo namni humnaan si loluu dhufe ofirraa qabii iyyi—if somebody tries to beat you forcibly do not react against it but hold and shout

Si’a sadii iyyi—shout three times

Yeroo namni dhufu jalatti jigi—when people reach you fail below

Loon lama fudhattu malee achii bin ka'iin—you should not stand until you get two cows

Addee jigdee loon lama fudhattee kaata – seera—you stand after you get two cows - that's the rule

Bineensa bin nyaatiin—you do not eat animals

Tarrii bin lagatiin—but you do not leave tarrii

Muki ati nyaattu agamsa—the plant you eat is agamsa

Kana sitti hinneerra kan hafe nama si duraa irraa baradbu—I have told these all, but the left please learn from your seniors (Informant: Damboobii Malkaa)

The concept indicates that after taking *qumbii* they should restrict themselves from speaking to people because it will lose its power. In addition, they do not do anything; even they eat and drink from others' hands. Again, they never fight with the person; and they never speak rudely or forbid things. In this case, we understand that there are many practices before and after *Qumbii Nyaachisuu*. Therefore, these practices make *qumbii* very seriously and powerfully.

However, the practice of *Qumbii nyaachisuu* was stopped for a long time. According to my informants, it was stopped around fifty-six (7*8=56) years. However, in Gadaa Harmuufa of 74th of Abbaa Gadaa Jiloo Maandhoo it restarted. The reasons for stopping *qumbii nyaachisuu* were economic crisis and shift, war, drought, disease, the introduction of modern religions, the pressure of Ethiopian emperors...etc.

5. The Ceremony of the Practice of *Qumbii Nyaachisuu* and Its Symbol of Materials Culture

In addition, the ceremony of *qumbii fudhachuu* can be conducted at *Galma Qaalluu*. For any reason, if it has not been conducted at fooqaa or agaallaa during Kuusaa stage, it can be conducted during *Gadooma* (*Gadaa* stage). The difference is that when it is conducted at fooqaa, *qumbii* is given by *Faga* to *Yaa'a Gadaa* (*Gadaa* councils) while at *Gabalaa/Galma Qaalluu* it is directly given by *Abbaa Qaalluu* to the *Abbaa Gadaa* (before *Abbaa Yaa'a*). Regarding this, while it was conducted at *Galma Qaalluu* there are different ritual events and practices. From the side of *Warra Qaalluu* addition to *qumbii* they prepared different *mijuus/dbangaas* (Oromo special cultural foods) through *Haadba Ambaa* – wife of *Aabba Qaalluu*. This mijuu is prepared from *garbuu* (barley) like *cuukekoo*, honey like *bookaa*, milk like *itittuu*, and *buna qalee* (coffee) because these foods are Oromo cultural food or Oromo indigenous food. These foods have their own symbolization in the Oromo worldview. For example, *garbuu* (barley) is symbolized as satisfaction while honey symbolizes a sweet and good smell; and milk (*itittuu*/yogurt)

symbolizes stability. Depending on this, when they provide these foods they bless saying like *uddaayi/urgaayi!* – be a smell, *ititi!* – be stable! *mi'aayi!* – be sweet



Fig 1: *Mijuu*—Cultural Foods

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

The *Yaa'a Gadaas* (*Gadaa* Councils) on their side bring to *Qaalluu* ninety-nine (99) calves (*Gorbas*) and *Hoolee Battalaa Tokko* (a sheep of whitehead). This sheep is jewelry or decorated by the *Callee* (bead ornaments). The symbol of sheep implies that *Qaalluu* is an honorable institution and giving calves is showing that *gumaataa Qaalluu*; because *Qaalluu* has not done labor work (*Qaalluun hin bocatu; hin gotatu*). *Qaalluu* should not live as ordinary or other people. He protects himself from many things/taboo. For example, he does not eat all meals; he eats only what is allowed for him. In addition, he does not drop blood. For this reason, he does not work labor jobs because it is believed that he may have blood during he works a labor job.



Fig 2: *Gumaataa Qaalluu* (calves/ *gorbas* and a sheep)

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

The theory of symbolic anthropologists like Eller (2007:58) states that man lives in a symbolic universe. Language, myth, art, and religion are parts of this universe. Accordingly, on their journey, they singsong called *qeexala* like:

Ee muudee Qaalluun muudee.....yaa boo..... ee anointed; Qaalluu anointed
Saaqoo muudee iltisaa saddeeqaa..... yaa boo..... Saaqoo anointed whose eyes are brilliant
Qaalluu misaa qoonnisaa saddeetaa..... Yaa boo..... the great Qaalluu role is octal
Qaalluu rafee hin kaanee yaa boo.... Qaalluu who does not to wake up
Jabbileen qoodaa kaachee yaa boo..... gifts of calves wake up him
Qaalluu ona hin bullee..... yaa boo Qaalluu who never evening in ruin
Ardaa bal'aa hin jinnee..... Yaa boo.... who does not participate in wide people
Qaalluu lafa hin qonnee yaa boo Qaalluu who does not till land
Waan daraare hin didnee..... yaa boo..... who does not refuse a ripe

This song tells about *Qaalluu* is a father of anointment and how he received his gift from *Warra Gadaa*.



Fig 3: When *Yaa'a Gadaa* (*Gadaa* councils) moving to *Galma Qaalluu* and Performing *Qeexala*

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

By this situation when *Yaa'a Gadaa* (*Gadaa* councils) reached *Gabalaa Qaalluu*, they stopped by *Kalloota* (the assistants of *Abbaa Qaalluu* or *Qaalluu* councils) and providing questions like:

Warra Qaalluu

Yaa'a Gadaa

Kaayoo akkamiin dbufte?kaayoo dansaanin dbufe

How and by what kind of fortune you came?.....by good fortune

Kormi meeti (boolee battalaa)?.....kunooti

Where is a bull–whitehead sheep? here

Ayyaana kamiin dbufte?.....ayyaanuma ati naa binteenin dbufe

By which Ayyaanaa you came?..... by Ayyaana which you told me

Maqaa waami ayaana kami?..... Dureettii

Name which one of Ayyaanaa? Dureettii (affluent)

These crosscheck questions contents different issues like the fortune that faced on their journey; whether it was good or bad, the other is whether they fulfill the criteria (*boolee battalaa and jabbiloota*) to

take *qumbii* and whether they follow the calendar and looking its *Ayyaanaa*. After they (*Kaalloota*) confirm and get this information, they advise what the Gadaa councils to do and not to do in *Galma Qaalluu* like:

Badii harkaa qabda? – do you have guilty on your hand?

Ilma qaalluu dhooftee jirta? – have you beaten the son of *Qaalluu*?

Qaalluun sii araaramee jira? – has *Qaalluu* forgiven for you?

Amma waan guddaatu si dura jira – now, the difficult thing is exists in front of you

Bofaa buutiitu walakkaa kana jira – snake and python are found between us

Waan san sii mucneesse Qaalluun siif araarsee jira – but, *Qaalluu* smoothly reconciliations with you

These messages tell us about the relationship between *Warra Qaalluu* and *Warra Gadaa*; how they work together by keeping their duties and responsibilities now and in the future. Moreover, how they respect each other. Therefore, *Qaalluu* sends the message like the following. *Akka jedbee:* -- he said that:

Karra tiyya deebitee hin galiinnever again back get my compound

Ilma tiyya deebitee hin dhayiin never again, beat my son

Gabalaa tiyya kutaan hin seeniin do not get my compound with a stick

Waan qorte buufadhu bring a decision on what you investigate

Ilma tiyyallee qori also investigate my son

Dugda hin dhyiin but, do not beat his back

Waan itti murte muri..... Punish him for what you decide on

Akkasiin san beeki jedbee sitti himeera – you should know all these things he said.

Hagasi! – this all! Then the Gadaa councils received by saying ‘*Ee...*’ *Jedbi!* ... ‘*Ee...*’ *jedbi!*’ That means, I accept all order messages.

Then the *Kallootaa* open a gateway and the *Warra Gadaa* enter the *gabalaa* and walk to *Galma Qaalluu*. During their walk to *Abbaa Qaalluu*, they step only on what *warra Qaalluu* carpeting with grass (*buuyyoo/ citaa*) known as *Caffee*. By this situation, when they reach *Galma Qaalluu*, they bow down to the fronts and saying- *Yooyyaa Aabbo Qaalluu!*; *Yooyyaa!*.... three times (x3) to show respect. Then they give their *Bokkuu* to their *Jaldhaabaa* and enter to *Galma Qaalluu*. After they enter, they sit on their heel in front of *Abbaa Qaalluu*, not on a chair.



Fig 4: When *Gadaa* councils received by *Aabba Qaalluu* at *Galma Qaalluu*

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

Then *Abbaa Qaalluu* provides different questions like:

Abbaa Qaalluu

Abbaa Gadaa

Aadaa kamiin dhufte?..... aadaa abbaa kiyyaanin dhufe

By which culture you came?..... I came from my father's culture

Maan fudhatta asii? waan ati naaf kenniteen fudha; qumbii ta'uu dhagabera

What do you take here? What you give me; but I heard that that is *qumbii*

Yaa'i kee sifaana dhufeera..... Eeyyee

All of your yaa'aa came with you..... yes

Murtiin dhufeera..... Eeyyee

Is Murtii coming? yes

Yaa'i dhibiin sifaana yoo dhufan siif hinkennu.....lakki yaa'uma kiyya qofa

If others Yaa'aa came with you, I cannot give for you.... No, they are only my Yaa'aa.

Maarree aadaa abbaakeeti siin guuta..... hayyee

Well, I will fulfill your father’s culture okay

Hidbuu maal qabda? *hidbuu humaatu bin qabu.*

Is there any unfilled for you? all things are full

In these questions, Aabba *Qaalluu* confirms different issues like the background of *Aabbaa Gadaa*, his knowledge and wisdom and readiness, the ability of his management and his problem—if there. After that *Aabbaa Qaalluu* provides *qumbii* and blesses like:

Dhungaa dubbadhu speaking only truth

Ardaakee bulfadhu Administer your country

Gadaa bulfadhu Keep your *Gadaa*

Haxxiyyoomi be clever

Aadaan sii guutamtu May your culture be full

Kolbaa bulchi Manage your people

Bulii ooli! long live!

This blessing shows that *Aabba Qaalluu* gives full legitimize and anoints *Abbaa Gadaa*. On this *Jilaa* only *Abbaa Gadaa* takes *qumbii*, but the *Yaa’a* take it when they back to their center. This concept is associated with the theory of symbolic anthropology. Symbols are composed of different sources of information from which meanings are drawn by the practitioner of that culture. Symbols are then interpreted widely as they consist of “objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and special units” (Eller 2007:59).



Fig 5: When Aabba Qaalluu Feeds Qumbii to Abbaa Gadaa

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

In addition, according to Turner (1967), “Symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of a specific structure in a ritual context. ... The symbols I observed in the field were empirically objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and special units in the ritual situations”.

In the end, *Abbaa Qaalluu* blesses *Abbaa Gadaa* with a ritual leaf (symbol of anointment) and blessing like:

Aadaakeetin buli live by your culture

Dhugaa dubbadhu speak only truth

Haxxiyyoomi be clever

Bijfoomi be brave/hero

Kaayooteetin buli Live by your fortune

Gujii bulfadhu save Guji

Gujjif illee buli Guji save too you

Gosa bin goodiin do not separate clans/ moieties

Dubbii qorii buusi bring the solution for the disputes

In this blessing, *Aabba Qaalluu* hopefully believes in *Abbaa Gadaa* to lead the country, administer, manage disputes, and treat all people equally; generally, he blesses him as he lives for his country and vis-verse.



Fig 6: when Aabba Qaalluu blessing Abbaa Gadaa by Ritual Leaf

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

After that, they pray for the country and for different things and precaution laws that do not appropriately work first. Then *Gadaa* councils taken to the room which is prepared for them and given *mijuu*. Moreover, they drink *bookaa* to *Warra Gadaa* and provide as they drink it and blessing like:

Ee Waaqa Qaalluuee the *Qaalluu* God

Waaqa Gadaa the *Gadaa* God

Gadaa guutu dhaye *Gadaa* which fulfills all things

Gadaa bunnaaqa naqe ... *Gadaa* which bring the gift of *Aabba Qaalluu*

Itichi.....*itichi* be stable

Gadaa misaa ta'i Be honorable *Gadaa*

Nageessi! make peaceful!

In this blessing, after *Aabba Qaalluu* gave full legitimacy they pray *Waaqa Oromoo* (God) to help *Abbaa Gadaa* in his duties and responsibilities and wish for success.



Fig 7: When Kallootaa (Qaalluu councils) Providing Mijuu (cultural foods) to Gadaa Councils

Photo credit is from Abbayyaa District Culture and Tourism Bureau

Conclusion

In this research, I focused on the practice of *Qumbii Nyaachisuu* ceremony in the Guji Gadaa system. The study found that *qumbii* is a secret thing in general because only *Aabba Qaalluu* knows about it. It is connected with supernatural power. As a result, it challenging isn't easy to take *qumbii* without the cultural procedures and it is given to *Warra Gadaa* for oaths, legitimizes anointments and intellectualism. Therefore, *qumbii* is a symbol of oath and swearing to do justice. In the *Gadaa system*, the ceremony of oath to take *baallii* (power) is known as *qumbii nyaachisuu* ceremony. Moreover, this article found out that *qumbii* has a strong symbolic representation. This study concludes that the symbolism of *qumbii* is the commands of *Waaqa* (God) that reached to the people through *Qaalluu*. In addition, it is also a representation of egalitarianism to assure all people are treated equally. The other

representation of the symbolism of *qumbii* is acquiring special privileges or gracefulness (*Ayyaantummaa gonfachuu* or *Ayyaantuu/Wayyuu ta’uu*) to a person who has received it. Furthermore, it represents the rule of law (constitution/*seera dambii ittiin bulmaataati*) that orders their duties and rights. Again, *qumbii* is symbolized as a package of truth and justice, because it is considered that a person who takes *qumbii* should always speak the truth and does justice. I believe that the Oromo proverb that says “*Dhugaan ilmoo Waaqaati?*”, literary -- the truth is the son of Waaqa approves this reality or comes from *qumbii nyaachuu* practice. This is because, when they provide *qumbii* they say, “...*dhugaa afaan si kaaye; dhara afaanii si fuudhe...*” means – I have put truth into your mouth; I have taken out false from your mouth. Generally, in *Gadaa* system *qumbii* is a representation of acquiring power or force and getting oaths and swears to accomplish their duties.

The research also discloses the relationship between *Gadaa* system and *Qaalluu* institution. In the practice of *qumbii nyaachuu* there are two parties. One is *Warra Qaalluu* and the other is *Warra Gadaa*. From *Warra Qaalluu*, *Aabba Qaalluu* and *Kaalloota* (the *Qaalluu* councils) are present. From the side of *Warra Gadaa* there are *Abbaa Gadaa* and *Gadaa* councils. So that, this study addressed the relationship between of *Gadaa* system and *Qaalluu* institution. Hence, the *Gadaa* system is ordered by the *Qaalluu* institution while *Qaalluu* is ordered by *Waaqa* (God). Therefore, *Warra Gadaa* are fetching the rule of law, looking *kaayoo/faroo/milki* (fortune) and following or counting *Ayyaana* (calendar) from *Warra Qaalluu*. Another finding dealt with the implication of *qumbii nyaachuu* in *Gadaa* system. Therefore, it confirms the legitimacy of *Abbaa Gadaa*. This helps the credibility and acceptance of *Abbaa Gadaa* by the people. In another way, a person who takes *qumbii* is a blessed man and graceful man (*eebbifamaa* or *ayyaantomaa*). For this reason, he is believed to be always successful with his work. Depending on this, he can bless (*eebbisee magarsa*), curse (*abaaree balleessa*), and pray (*kadhatee dhageessisa*), and he can give decisions (*murteessuu danda’a*) and reconcile disputes (*araara buusuu danda’a*).

Furthermore, the ritual of the practice of *qumbii fudbachuu* and its symbolic cultural materials were addressed in this study. In the practice of *qumbii fudbachuu* there are different ceremonies like anointment, giving and taking *qumbii*, providing *mijuu* and salivation of *bookaa*. All these activities had ritual practice and blessing, songs and sayings. This practice is helpful at least for two things. One is the advantage of realizing the value of *qumbii* in *Gadaa* system. The other is transferring the Oromo culture, identity, behavior, philosophy, belief and custom from generation to generation. Finally, the procedure of transferring power in the *Gujii Oromo Gadaa* system has been discussed. After the practice

of *qumbii fudbachuu*, Abbaa Gadaa has got full legitimacy and can take *baallii* (power). Therefore, in the procedure of transferring power, the practice of *qumbii nyaachisuu* is an inevitable thing.

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