

## **An Africological Analysis of the Oromoo Theology**

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### **Abstract**

*Oromoo theology is one of the endogenous African belief systems but has been less studied from philosophical and Afrocentric perspectives. Adopting Africology as a guiding metatheory, this study aimed at analyzing the Oromoo Theology in its historical-comparative context to explain the fundamental questions of the philosophy of religion. Data were collected from elderly experts of the theology, ritual speech acts, praise songs, and linguistic and symbolic expressions of the theology; and subjected to in-depth philosophical and comparative analyses. The results indicated that the Oromoo theology is deeply intertwined with Oromoo cosmology and mythology. This theology encompasses the doctrines of Natural theology, African ancestral spirituality and moral realism. The cultural-historical analysis further shows that Oromoo theology bears the ingredients of Ancient Nile Valley sacred epistemology. The analysis further indicates that this theology corresponds—not contradicts—with the contemporary realist philosophy particularly a realist eco-philosophy. As such, Oromoo theology spotlights new insights into the origin, meaning, and function of religion in human history. Beyond theology, Oromoo theological belief system offers wholistic perspective to our understanding of peace and environment during this time of global climatic and security crises. The findings further confirm the African origin of theology and the critical role of Africology metatheory in African and Oromoo historical-cultural studies.*

**Keywords:** Africology, African Spirituality, African philosophy, theology

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Oromos, the second most populous single nation in Africa and most populous from the Kushite family, are indigenous African people occupying the East-North Africa and the Horn since the dawn of history. Despite the Oromoo country Oromia, is currently delimited to only inside the present Ethiopian political geography, the settlement of Oromoo in precolonial Africa was much wider. For instance, early travelers have recorded that, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Afaan Oromoo*, the Oromoo<sup>2</sup> language, was the *lingua franca* of the Horn of Africa, Central Africa, and extended as far as the North East Africa and Chad (Krapf and Isenberg, 1843; Krapf, 1842; Tutschek, 1843 and 1844; Foot, 1913 Preface parts; Birbirso, 2019a; Birbirso, 2025). Likewise, early Egyptologists and Assyriologists used *Afaan Oromoo* and Oromoo culture to decipher hieroglyphic and cuneiform writings (Rawlinson, 1862, pp. 25, 314-315; See also Clyde Winters<sup>3</sup>). Crabtree stresses that Oromoo language is “possibly the language of the Anti [‘ancient Egyptian’] or... possibly even Hittite” (ibid, 255). Crabtree emphasizes that, *Afaan*<sup>4</sup> Oromoo most probably derives from an “isolated and unique vocabulary--possibly the language of the Anti or Hill-folk, possibly even Hittite” (Crabtree 1924, p. 255). This critical scholar goes on to problematize that “the Egyptian form Wawat”, which appears in record since the time of “Pepy I... 2650 B.C.” is “often asserted by Italians that [they] were ancestors of the Oromoo”. He further reminds us that, the Oromos are whose great leader expelled “the Hyksos, circ. 1600 B.C.” and were known in the hitherto documents as “Hormeni” (ibid). Likewise, Robinson (1934, pp. 313-314)

<sup>2</sup> All colonial era writers use the exo-term *Galla* instead of Oromoo. This name is a foreign language speaker mispronunciation of *Qaalluu*, the Institution of Oromoo Religion, but it has also pejorative connotation to indicate as the Oromoo are neither Christian nor Muslim but practiced a non-dominant religion. Therefore, this exo-term is deleted and replaced by the name by which the people name themselves, that is, Oromoo.

<sup>3</sup> Clyde Winters. ‘Genesis and the Children of Kush’ (Available at: <http://egyptsearch.com/forums/ultimatebb.cgi> ).

<sup>4</sup> In this paper, instead of the IPA transcription system, *Qubee*, the standard Oromoo writing system, is preferably used not only because it is simpler for any reader but also captures what the IPA cannot do for the idiosyncratic features of *Afaan Oromoo*, for instance, longer vowel sound and gemination of the consonantal sounds, both of which make big semantic difference, otherwise. *Qubee* doubles the vowel sound in focus to indicate length while it doubles the consonantal sound to indicate gemination.

quotes Flinders Petrie, the leading early Egyptologist, who stated that “the Oromoo, people now in southeast Africa, came down the Nile and established themselves at Qau where they founded the Tenth Dynasty of Egypt.” Robinson adds that “this event took place after two dynasties of Sudanese origin, viz. the Third and Fourth” (ibid, p. 314).

Thus, it is no surprise that the Oromos have their endogenous theology which is mainly put into practice during *Irreecha* Holiday (also called *Dhibaaayyuu*, *Abdaarrii* or *Adibaara*, *Daraaraa* in some parts of the Oromoo Nation), a pan-Oromoo Bi-Annual Holiday Carnival conducted to welcome New Cosmic Year around the two equinoxes. Nonetheless, a barrage of questions is frequently forwarded to the believers: Is it ‘a culture’ or ‘a religion’? If it were a religion, ‘where, then, is your Bible’? ‘Do you believe in Jesus’? Is it a ‘newcomer from abroad’ or endogenous? Yet, some followers of ‘the modern (sic.) religions’ go to the extent of describing it negatively as “worshiping of trees and rivers” while others label it as “atheism”. For this reason, despite Oromoo theology has made a considerable revival since the second half of 1990s, still most Oromos currently prefer this theology to be interpreted as “culture, not religion” because to consider it as “religion” is considered as a threat to or contradicts with their firmly-held Islamic or Christianity religion. Experience has shown that practicing or ‘preaching’ this ‘pagan religion’ arises some social alienation if not malicious physical attacks.

Furthermore, as Christopher Grant has stated in his study (Grant, 2006), the limited studies in Oromoo theology have been conducted in hegemonic and Eurocentric paradigms and, hence, offer us little or no vital philosophical and contextual insights from the believers perspective which would have spotlighted different insights (from the dominant Abrahamic religions) for our quest for the meaning, function and origin of the religion and our relations with the Devine, the natural world and the social world. Some colonial historians and Oromoo historians trained by the latter, hence, are so unacquainted with the Oromoo paradigm that they hold the misbelief that this Oromoo theology’s monotheism is either a coincidence with or borrowed from ‘monotheistic’ conception of Islam and Abrahamic religions. Yet, some historians acquainted with Egyptology and Africology prove that Oromoo theology is remnant of the monotheistic Black-Sky God worshipped by Black Africans of ancient Nile Valley (Ben-Jochannan, et.al., 1991, p. 100). For this reason, a study of Oromoo theology requires an “indigenist” research paradigm that “respects and honors the religious form. Endogenous ways of

knowing, being, and doing through using methods that are informed by, resonate with, and are driven and supported by endogenous peoples” (Rix, et.al., 2019, p. 254). In other words, an indigenist analysis of Oromoo theology in historical-cultural and comparative context helps us in gaining insights into cultural memory and the dynamic adaptive systems of humanity over past centuries and millennia.

Thus, the intent of this study is to carry out an indigenist and philosophical analysis of the Oromoo theology in its historical and sociocultural context. The following theological philosophy questions are formulated to guide the analysis:

1. What are the fundamental doctrines underlying the Oromoo theology?
2. What are the features of religious expressions in Oromoo theology?
3. What makes this theology so important to the Oromoo Nation?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Africology metatheory is adopted as the guiding indigenist methodological perspective for this study. Africology foregrounds that Africa’s Nile Valley is not only the origin of humanity but also of human civilization including religion, philosophy, science, writing system, etc. As a guiding metatheory--principled methods of inquiry and philosophical argument--Africology focuses on uncovering and disseminating knowledge about ancient Africa and endogenous African world (Uzong, 1969). An Africology study “seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data” (Asante, 1990, p. 6). Following Cheikh Anta Diop’s legacies, Africology scholars recommend onomastics, semantic anthropology, *analyses acculturaliste* or typological analysis, Afrocentric comparative and historical linguistic methods among others (Diagne, 1981; Winters, 1994). Africologists use African elderly oral historians, communities’ oral stories, paradigms, codes, symbols, motifs, myths, performativity, among others, to study African culture.

Accordingly, in this study, key informants’ interpretive frames and mythologies, formulaic doxologies, blessing speech acts, praise songs on rituals as well as non-linguistic expressions (codes, symbols, motifs, performativity) of the Oromoo theology are collected and subjected to critical

and philosophical analysis to understand the meanings that underlie beneath Oromoo mythology. The key informants—who are also officiants of the rituals of the theology—were interviewed during the researchers’ observation of the various rituals of the theology in the years 2022-2024 in the specific ritual centers of *Odaa Bultum* in *Hararghe*, *Hora Harsade* in *Bishooftuu*, *Hora Finfinnee* and *Gumii Gaayoo of Boorana*.

It should be underscored, here, that our analysis excludes the Eurocentric or Abrahamic religious interpretations of Oromoo theology which often permeates everyday misreading and misrepresentation of Oromoo theology especially through foreign language (e.g., Latin, English) translation or second language (e.g. Amharic and the dead Geez) calque—we rather focus on ‘ideal’ Oromoo theology practitioner or observer and user of the ‘ideal’ *Afaan Oromoo* expressions of this theology which are formulaic and, hence, resistant to change.

We strictly adhered to the ethical standards of Haramaya University. Primarily, the elder participants were informed about the study’s purpose. Then their consent to participate was obtained. They were also informed that they would withdraw any time should they sought necessary. For they wanted their identities to be not disclosed, it is kept confidential. In compliance with their interest, their actual names are anonymized.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Some Etymological Considerations

The Oromoo word for God or Supreme Creator or Divine is *Waaqaa*. Though hard to clearly understand, the etymology of *Waaqaa* might be from the roots *waa*, something undefined, and *qaa*, black, dark, hole or black-hole. The latter might be related to the particle *kaa* which is used as an existential copula or expresses a state of affairs or condition as it just or obviously is. All these roots have one common semantic with the essence of *Waaqa Gurraacha*, literally means *Waaqaa* is Black/Dark, but the deeper meaning is *Waaqaa* is mystical, unfathomable but real by effects. According to Oromoo cosmogony, “it was this darkness...that characterized the original state of things in the cosmos” (Megerssa & Kassam, 2019, p. 110). The believers of Oromoo theology say *Waaqaa* is the Supreme Creator of the Cosmos and everything in it.

The name of Oromoo religion is *Qaallooma* or *Qaallummaa* prior to the advent of Christian and Islamic religions (Metaferia, 1978, p. 476). Etymologically, it comes from the gerundive base *qaalluu*, being valuable and calibred. It is a sound change by rhotacization/ lambdization from *qarooma* civilization, becoming sharp, from *qara* to sharpen, read, scribe. Hence, with the suffix *-ooma/-mmaa*, literally, the term means becoming and being a person of practicing serenity and wisdom or knowledge about *Waaqa*. For the same etymological reason, it is related to *Qaalluu* which designates Oromoo institution and doctrine of worshiping and practicing *Waaqa*. The same word *Qaalluu* refers to the hereditarily first-born high priest who is the ritual officiant and head of Oromoo religion. *Qaalluu* also called *Abbaa Muudaa*, Father of Unction or Anointment. Quite related (etymologically) to this is *galma*, the sacred circle for *Qaalluu* to reside in or around which theological ceremonies are conducted, equivalent to Jewish synagogue. However, since recent time the popular term for Oromoo theology is the benefactive *Waaqeefannaa*, literally, owning or worshiping *Waaqa* for oneself. The believer is referred to as *Waaqefataa* or *Waaqefattuu*, both refer to male or female believers alternatingly. The plural form is *Waaqefattoota*, the believers or worshipers of *Waaqa*. It is also worthwhile to address here that the same word *waaqa* with initial lower case designates ‘the sky, the cosmos, the heavens.’

### 3.2. The Features of *Waaqaa*

Oromoo theology is monotheistic. This essence of *Waaqaa* is expressed as *Waaqa Takkicha*<sup>5</sup>, a concept that means the first and the only-ness, concreteness, singularity and universality in simultaneity of *Waaqaa*. Moreover, *takkicha* denotes another essence of *Waaqaa*: non-identity, or non-representation by or non-likeness with anything in the universe. We shall see ahead that *Waaqaa* is ‘above’ grammar, that is, *Waaqaa* is neither referred to by traditional grammatical categories of personal pronoun<sup>6</sup>, gender, number,

<sup>5</sup> *Takkicha* means ‘that which is (the number) one, singular, sole’, comes from *takka*, ‘one, single’.

<sup>6</sup> *Waaqa* neither takes the pronoun ‘it’ nor ‘he’ nor ‘she’ for *Waaqa* is not ‘personal’ (anthropomorphic) and is genderless or gender-neutral. *Waaqa* is often referred to as *Ka* ‘the One/Owner of’ or *Kan* (nominative) ‘the One Who’ or might take the relative-genitive pronoun ‘*ka*’. Influenced by grammar of Abrahamic religions such Christianity, some mistakenly argue that such expressions as ‘*Waaqni hin arga* (he), *Waaqatu beeka* (he), *lafti hindhageeti* (she), *Waaqni hinrafu* (he), *Waaqa ta (to)kkicha* (he, one-number) are indicative

and so forth nor by semiotic signs or images. This is possibly because and the reason for the fact that in Oromoo theology, the believer normally does not ‘pray’ to God hence does not commune or converse directly with God, who in fact is black, in the sense ‘not directly accessible’ to human observation in human cognition or communication in human language. Rather, what a person does is the benefactive *eebbifadha*, to bless for common benefit or being blessed for common good.

In other words, an Oromoo does not actually pray to or ‘beg’ from (*kadha*) *Waaqaa* to ‘do this (not) or ‘do that’, rather he/she bestows or receives blessings (*eebba*) by/from *Qaalluu*, who blesses not only humans but also cattle, farms, farmlands, cradle lands, the earth, fertility, rain, peace, life praxis and so forth. As seen in Text 1, which is prototype of Oromoo ‘prays’, *Waaqa* is invoked only at initial opening.

(1)

Qaalluu	Chorus	Qaalluu	Chorus
<i>Hayyee yaa Waaq</i>	<i>Hayyee!</i>	Yes, oh God	Oh, yea!
<i>Bakkeen nagaa haa ta'u</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the environment be peaceful	Oh, yea!
<i>Bakkalchi bakkee haa ba'u</i>	<i>Haa ba'u!</i>	May the stars flush	Oh, yea!
<i>Kan faca'e quufa haa ta'u</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the sown/crops be bountiful!	Oh, yea!
<i>Hallayyaan dirree haa ta'u</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the escarpment turn verdant field!	Oh, yea!
<i>Horiin haa horan</i>	<i>Haa horan!</i>	May the animals breed abundantly!	Oh, yea!
<i>Dheedee haa barbadeessu</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the cattle graze extensively!	Oh, yea!
<i>Barbadaan suga haa ta'u</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the herdsman herd innumerably!	Oh, yea!
<i>Dhugee haa booressu</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the cattle drink river until they mud it!	Oh, yea!
<i>Booruun gabbina haa ta'u</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May the muddy river omen copiousness	Oh, yea!
<i>Adamoon deettii haa ta'u</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May hunt become fortune!	Oh, yea!
<i>Duulli dannaba haa</i>	<i>Haa ta'u!</i>	May military operation be	Oh, yea!

of the presence of personal pronoun, number and gender in the concept of *Waaqa*'. Our analysis excludes these because they are calques or translations from foreign language and paradigm.



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ta'uvictory-dance!

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*Waaqaa* always consistently collocates with *Gurraacha*, hence *Waaqa Gurraacha*, literally, God the Black or Dark, but philosophically, means God the Mystical One as Always Was, Is and will be (eternal). In what way does *Waaqaa* exist? We asked our informants as well as many believers, Oromoo wise man or woman: 'Does *Waaqaa* exist'? or 'In what way does *Waaqa* exist'? The response was consistent and unambiguous: *Waaqa gurraacha*, lit., Waaqa is Black or Dark, whose deeper meaning is, 'no one has direct access but only observes *Waaqaa's* causal efficacy'. What's more, according to Oromoo cosmogony, "it was this darkness...that characterized the original state of things in the cosmos.... before these not-yet-formed, preexistent things came into being, they floated in a 'sea of darkness'" (Megerssa & Kassam, 2019, p. 110). Likewise, according to Oromoo theology, there is no way for God to hand down Scriptures to humans, seen or unseen. What we, as humans, can know about *Waaqaa* is only what *Waaqaa* immanently causes and we observe, subsequently, in nature with the cognitive possibilities only we humans possess.

The Supreme Being whom they call 'Waq' (sky/God), is the creator of all things and the source of all life. Starting with water and rocks, going on through the vegetable and animal world to man, Waqa has appointed to every being its own place in a cosmic order of which he is also the guardian...Waq's creative and ordering activity manifests itself in all things. It manifests itself in the specific characteristics of man in general, of every species of plants and every species of animals. It is manifested also in the individual characteristics of every man, of each plant and each animal taken singly (Bartels, 1983, p. 14).

For this reason, despite Eurocentric writers (e.g. Bartels, 1983; Gidada, 1984) and translations by converters from Christianity and Islamic religions, as was touched above, according to elderlies who adhere to Oromoo religion and recite the old formulaic expressions, *Waaqaa* is non-identifiable, non-representational by gendered or personified entity and non-expressive by the basic grammatical categories as we see ahead in detail. To represent *Waaqaa* with the pronoun 'He' or to commune' with *Waaqaa* ('You *Waaqaa* do this for us, don't do that against us') is, for the believers, like to portray *Waaqa* as an old male-human quality, having a beard and living in the sky, the usual



external paradigm. Regarding this, an Oromoo Catholic priest interestingly explained to the Catholic Father and researcher Lambert Bartels: “I do not care for the God of the Europeans. He is too much of a good-natured father, a daddy. My God is still the God of my grandfather, the God of the sky and the stars and the clouds, the God of thunder and lightning” (Bartels, 1983, p. 102).

*Waaqaa* does not exist in anthropomorphic or human-like form; *Waaqaa* exists as *Gurraacha Garaa Garbaa*, a black one whose belly is like black-sea, alluding to the sky with black, heavy cloud, yet with a deeper complex semantic, which means *Waaqaa* is the mystical one whose causal efficacy is observed. For the believers, *Waaqaa* has no expression of physical form and believe the whole nature of physical form is the expression of *Waaqaa*’s Deed and Power. The followers of Oromoo theology do talk *Waaqa humna malee bifa hin qabne* which literally means *Waaqaa* is the One that has no physical form but Power; is the One that has no exemplary figure (*Kan fakkii hin qabne*); the One that is neither begotten nor delivers nor begets (*Kan hin dhalanne; Kan hin dhalle; Kan hin dhalchine*); the One that would neither get aged nor die (*Kan hin dulloomne; Kan hin duune*), but the One that creates all. Nanno, one of the highly seasoned informants, pronounced:

No one saw and can see *Waaqaa*; no eyes can see *Waaqaa*, and no hands can touch *Waaqaa*, but observe only *Waaqaa*’s works. The work and mystery of *Waaqaa* are visible, seeable; but how *Waaqa* has done the work and mystery is unknowable, and man cannot be able to know the secret of *Waaqaa*’s creation miracles; *Waaqaa* is *gurraacha* with snow belly and has clear but wide abdomen as well. So, the descendants of Horro have to make *Waaqaa* their life, their way, their venue, and make *Waaqaa* their leader. They hope all good things from *Waaqaa*. They are guided by *Waaqaa* and live by *Waaqaa*. They make these their day-to-day chores.

Oromoo theology teaches that only *Waaqaa* is not prone to change for *Waaqaa* is perfect, absolute, but all the creatures created by *Waaqaa* are changing with time. That is why *Waaqaa*’s creative action is perpetuating and that humans also need to be in a position to find new solutions for the changed situations.

Do miracles exist? According to Oromoo theology, there is no miracle, an extraordinary and astonishing happening, or event or sign that is believed to be attributed to the presence and action of God or divine power. The Oromoo word equivalent to ‘miracle’ or ‘miraculous’ is *safuu*, which refers to natural order which defines negative (abnormal) or positive (normal) relationship among and between entities in the universe including humans (shall be discussed ahead in detail). They say: *Safuu Waaqaa!*—*Safuu* is the power of *Waaqaa*! In other words, if at all there are miracles, these are nothing but the mystical nature or its order and beauty itself. For Ormo theology and believers, miracle is nothing but the huge presence around of the mystical laws or essence of nature.

### 3.3. Synchronization of Natural Theology and African Ancestral Spirituality

A deeper analysis of Oromoo theology shows synchronization between African ancestral spirituality and natural theology. Ancestral spirituality is a theological system rooted in the belief that early ancestors and deceased relatives maintain a presence and influence over the lives of their contemporary descendants and, hence, their spirits are worth canonized, revered and thanked by the latter. Early ancestors’ spirits are associated to the ancient cradle-lands of ‘fertility’ or genesis. Oromoo theology is Natural theology, a belief that is founded on the explanation of the existence of God through human reason and evidence from the world, the natural governments or the natural laws. *Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion* defines it: “Reflection and argument on the natural world to learn about God’s nature and will. Natural theology differs from revealed theology, which reflects on God and the world on the grounds of what is believed to be divine revelation, for instance, the Bible or the Qur’an” (Taliaferro & Marty, 2010, p. 158). Natural theology avoids appeals to special non-natural faculties (ESP, telepathy, mystical experience) or supernatural sources of information (sacred texts, revealed theology, creedal authorities, direct supernatural communication), and typically contrasted with “revealed theology”, where the latter explicitly appeals to special revelations such as miracles, scriptures, and divinely-superintended commentaries and creedal formulations (Chignell & Pereboom, 2020).

According to Oromoo experts such as Dabbassa Guyyo, “the laws of man [*Seera*] are derived from the laws of God [*Heera*]. The laws of God are the eternal and immutable laws of Nature: The dry season has its time and length; the rainy season has its time and length; the cool season has its time to come. The day has its time and the night its time. Evenings and mornings have their time. These are all laws of Waaqa” (Megerssa, 1993, p. 215). Similarly, as the believers say, Oromoo religion is a theology of *argaa dhageettii*, that is, a faith based on *argaa* ‘what is seen, observed, reasoned out’ and *dhageettii* ‘what is heard, up-taken, obeyed’. Put differently, *argaa dhageettii* is Oromoo ontology. This means that the world of natural processes and laws provide the *Waaqa*-given cognitive possibility for humans to read it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> c., Bulatovich lived with Oromoos and wrote “the Oromoo is a poet.<sup>7</sup> He worships [sic] nature, loves his mountains and rivers, considering them animated beings” (1897/2000, p. 65). Two scholars put this differently and more clearly:

The Booran-Oromoo view of cosmology, ecology and ontology is one of a flow of life emanating from [*Waaqaa*]. For them, the benignancy of divinity is expressed in rain and other conditions necessary for pastoralism. The stream of life flows through the sprouting grass and the mineral waters of the wells, into the fecund wombs and generous udders of the cows. The milk from the latter then promotes human satisfaction and fertility. When people are satisfied by the yield of their herds, they live happily and peacefully together...thereby creating a balance between people and Divinity, and reproducing favourable conditions (Dahl & Megerssa 1990, p. 26).

Accordingly, Oromoo theology and Oromoo cosmology are intertwined (Legesse, 2019; Megersa & Kassam, 2019). By the same token, Oromoo theology is ancestral spirituality, defined by the believers as, a belief that upholds the idea that human being is nature and ancestry/genealogy is natural

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<sup>7</sup> It seems that Bulatovich, despite his Eurocentric paradigm, understands that the Oromoos use of figurative such as allusions contradicts with the monotheistic view of Waaqaa; Oromoos make clear distinction between the Supreme Creator Waaqaa whom they worship and the created (*uume*); they consider *uume* (nature and natural laws including *Ayyaana*, the Spirits of Ancestors) as the power of *Waaqaa* unfolding via or through these. DeSalviac clearly wrote “As Martial DeSalviac accurately put his exegesis: “The Oromo are not fetishists. They believe in *Waaqa tokko*, a unique universal creator and master. They see His manifestations in great forces of nature, without mistaking for Him” (DeSalviac 1901, p. 285)

process and ancestors handed down to us not only their blood (gene) but also our knowledge about the natural laws as well as about ourselves. For this reason, in Oromoo theology, the symbolic bull (representing the virility/fecundity of the person) and the symbolic act of anointing the forehead (representing the fore-parents) with sacrificial bull's blood, is crucial. The spirits of ancestors (*ayyaana*) are part of *Waaqaa's* Creature 'that which exists' (*uume*), hence, is the *Irreecha* Holiday is a day of venerating or thanks giving to ancestors, renovating cosmic season and, above all, exulting *Waaqaa*.

(2)

<i>Ee...Waaqa ardaa</i>	Yes... <i>Waaqaa</i> , the owner of sacred/ritual/ancestral lands
<i>Waaqa abbaa</i>	Owner of everything
<i>Ka Me'ee Bokkoo</i>	Owner <i>Me'ee Bokkoo</i> sacred/ancestral land
<i>Ka Dibbee Dhugoo</i>	Owner of <i>Dibbee Dhugoo</i> sacred/ritual/ancestral land
<i>Ka Garba Aannoo</i>	Owner of <i>Garba Aannoo</i> ritual/ancestral land
<i>Waaqi Gujii gurraachaa, nu dhageyi</i>	Owner of Black Gujii may respond to us
<i>Dhageettu nuu owwaadhu</i>	In case hearing, answer/respond, please
<i>Ta olii oliitti nu hanqisi</i>	The thing above us (sky/cosmos), may God keep it there
<i>Ta gadii gaditti nu hanqisi</i>	The things below (underground), may God keep it there
<i>Ta dallaa lamaanii achumatti nu hanqisi</i>	The things in-between Sky-Earth, may God keep it there
<i>Barri nageya</i>	May the era/epoch /time be of peace
<i>Bariin nageya</i>	May the dawning/morning be of peace
<i>Jaarsi nageya</i>	May the husbands be peaceful
<i>Jaartiin negeya</i>	May the wives be peaceful
<i>Ilmi nageya</i>	May the sons be peaceful
<i>Intalti nageya</i>	May the daughters be peaceful
<i>Ka fuudhu nageya</i>	May the bridegrooms be peaceful
<i>Ta heerumtu nageya</i>	May the brides be peaceful

<i>Uchumti nageya</i>	May the firesticks be peaceful/fertile
<i>Bobbaan nageya</i>	May the fieldwork be peaceful
<i>Tissaa uleen nageyaa</i>	May both the herder and his/her stick/staff be peaceful
<i>Elemaa gaadin nageya</i>	May the milking pot and the fetters of the cows be peaceful
<i>Ardaan yaa'aa nageya</i>	May the ritual centers be peaceful

In this blessing speech act, the names *Me'ee Bokkoo*, *Dibbee Dhugoo* and *Garba Aannoo* are eponymy of ancient ancestors, hence are also sacred lands of rituals because Oromoo honors ancestral spirits of paterfamilias or caretaking or witness spirits of the ancestors.

In the same framework, as often discoursed in formulaic speech acts (e.g., Texts 2 & 3) the Oromoo concept of 'peace' is deeper and ontological.

(3)

<i>Nagee yaa Waaq</i>	Peace Oh God
<i>Nageenyi Waaqaa ganamaaf galgalaa</i>	God's peace from morning to night
<i>Nagee yaa Waaq</i>	Peace, Oh God
<i>Nageenyi Waaqaa hinboorawuu hin moofawuu</i>	God's peace never gets muddled
<i>Nageenyi Waaqaa guutumaa tuujumaa</i>	God's peace is full and adequate
<i>Nageenyi Waaqaa hin dirbabaahuu hin hir'atuu</i>	God's peace never gets diminished
<i>Nagee yaa Waaq!</i>	Peace Oh God!

The ontological nature of peace is that it fundamentally lies not in Man's wishes, or otherwise, but in natural fecundity in its broader sense, i.e., fecundity of the cosmos, the cloud, the rain, the cattle, the human and the cross-generation perpetuity. Man lives in peace and prosperity when the cosmos is fecund, the environment is fertile, life perpetuate in harmony with—in contrast to violation of--nature and natural laws.

### 3.4. Cosmogony and the Essence of Nature

Cosmogony is the fundamental assumption or science that deals with the origin of the universe, especially the solar system. According to Oromoo cosmogony, *Waaqa Uumaa* is used to refer to the creating power of *Waaqa* sui generis.<sup>8</sup> One can only speak of *Waaqaa* creating or create *uumee* which designates ‘reality’ or ‘that which exists’ in general, including non-living and living biotope or biosphere. *Yaayyaa* or *yayyaaba*, the fundamentals of nature or the building blocks of nature existing independently of the timespace of and with human being, are in constant flux (*yaa*) or cycle (*mara*). Parts of *yaayyaa* are: *qoollo*, the primordial pristine material of upper sphere’ which gave rise to the inanimate world; *raa/raaya*, the fundament of beaming stars, lights or rays; *ayyaana*, the primordial essence or spirit in timespace of the animate world<sup>9</sup>; *hora*, the primordial hot waters which is the source of (early) life and human being; and, *heera*, the binding natural laws or natural governments. Yet, according to Oromoo theology, a person worships only *Waaqaa* and worships neither *uumee* nor *yaayyaa* nor *qoollo* nor *ayyaana* nor *heera*. Men or society, for their own advantage, abstract from these essences the *theology* (*amantii*) and the social knowledge structure accumulated, elevated and canonized to guide the individual’s and society’s collective goals to exalt *Waaqaa* and live in peace (*nagaa*) and harmony with nature and nations (*araara*) in order to perpetuate the self, the society, the social and the natural worlds.

Oromoo theology is put into practice mainly in *Irreecha*, a Bi-Annual Holiday celebrated to welcome New Cosmic Year around the two equinoxes and involves procession to hot spring lakes (*hora*) holding green grasses and singing formulaic *jeekkarsa* praise songs whose themes are glorifying *Waaqaa*, immortalizing spirits of ancestors, praising nature and the renovation of the cosmic lights, and so forth. Etymologically, *Irreecha* comes from the root *Raa*<sup>10</sup>, the starry universe in constant, cyclical motion. *Irreecha Malkaa*, the *Irreecha* of the Full River Bed or of the Spring Season, is conducted during the Equinox of September (*Birraa*), while *Irreecha Tulluu*, the *Irreecha*

<sup>8</sup> The verb *uuma* is used to speak only of the action (as verb) of *Waaqaa*, the Supreme Creator’s Action of Creation.

<sup>9</sup> *Ayyaana* is one of the most abstract, complex, multi-semantic ontologies of the Oromo; See Megerssa & Kassam (2019, pp. 119-130) for detail.

<sup>10</sup> *-cha* is a suffix marking ‘that which, the one who’.

of the Mountain (of the Moon or Sun) is conducted during the Equinox of the March (*Abraasa/Afraasaa/Arfaasaa*) when the sunny months is near to pass and be ready for the mild rainy months to come. Like *Irreecha Birraa*, the *Irreecha Abraasa* are conducted to thank *Waaqaa* for the safe transition. The latter, however, is for transition from *Bona*, the sunny and dry season, to Ganna, the rainy season, with expectation of optimal rainfall for living things, of prevention of *barraara*, torrential thunderstorm, that can hamstring germination of plants and recuperation of animals from the harsh *Bona*.

The auto-benefactive *Irreefannaa* or *irreefacha* is the act of putting the wet green-grass in the spring lake or stream, splashing it on one's forehead and crossing the water and putting the grass on the bank of the water. *Jeekkarsaa*, the sacred formulaic song, sung (Text 4) during *Irreecha* sermon of offering thanks and greeneries to *Waaqaa*, reveals how Oromoo theology coincides with the relatively recent concept in philosophy, i.e., ecophilosophy. Ecophilosophy is emerging as a new philosophical perspective on ecological issues, especially inquiring as what humanity's relationship with the natural world ought to be.

(4)

<i>Hawoo yaa maree hoo</i> <sup>11</sup>	Bliss! Oh, the bright era/time come again!
<i>Hawoo yaa maree hoo!</i>	Bliss! Oh, the bright era/time come again!
<i>Yaa Waaqa malkaa uumte, yaa maree hoo!</i>	Oh, Creator of the riverine hills, come again!
<i>Hawoo yaa maree hoo!</i>	Bliss! Oh, the bright era/time come back again!
<i>Irreecha harkaa qabna yaa maree hoo!</i>	Bliss! We've <i>Irreecha</i> on hand, has come again!
<i>Yaa Waaqa nutti araarami yaa maree hoo!</i>	Bliss! Oh <i>Waaqaa</i> , that keeps harmony, come again!
<i>Irreecha duraa obaa yaa maree hoo!</i>	Bliss! The 1 <sup>st</sup> <i>Irreecha</i> of Spring has come again!
<i>Waaqaafan badii oole yaa maree hoo!</i>	Thanks to <i>Waaqaa</i> , I prevailed, come again!

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<sup>11</sup> Difficult to translate, the recurrently uttered *Maree hoo*, refers to the fact of the recycling, regenerating or the recurrent coming-and-passing of time, epoch, life, spirits in the fecund cosmos.



<i>Yaa Waaqa tulluu uumte yaa maree hoo!</i>	Oh <i>Waaqaa</i> , the creator of the plateaus, come again!
<i>Yaa Waaqa dachee uumte yaa maree hoo!</i>	Oh <i>Waaqaa</i> , the creator of Earth, come again!
<i>Yaa Waaqa birraa uumte yaa maree hoo!.</i>	Oh <i>Waaqaa</i> , the creator of Autumn, come again!
<i>Maree fardi hin dalagu yaa maree hoo!</i>	Mare, steed doesn't function, come again!
<i>Hawoo yaa mare hoo!</i>	Oh, the bright era/time has come back again

What this excerpt from otherwise longer *Jeekkarsa* mean is that humanity not only unilaterally depends for His survival on nature but also that it prevails over the dialectic of timespace (one cosmic light or era or season giving turn to another in constant and reciprocal cycle) as a transitive, transformative agent embracing and harmonizing Himself with the intransitive but mighty, mystical natural laws which pre-live and out-live Him for these immutable laws were and are set by the Almighty, Unmoved-Mover *Waaqaa* to be *akka* (= a brute reality as such). See also Text 5.

### 3.5 Anthropogenesis

Anthropogeny is the fundamental assumption or belief or study of human origins. It is related in meaning and essence with anthropogenesis, the process or point of becoming human, also called hominization. On this, Oromoo theology is different from other religions. For instance, *Waaqaa* neither created man 'in his image' nor 'from clay', nor is *Waaqaa* anthropomorphic but *Waaqaa* is *gurraacha*, black or dark labyrinth that has no mental or material image or representation. Nor did *Waaqaa* create the cosmos in seven days. Rather, according to Oromoo theology, it took *Waaqaa* 27 *ayyaana*, calendrical dates —that is, Oromoo calendar—after which human being emerged (*baa*), the next 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> day—the halves days of coming forth and recusing back to the 1<sup>st</sup> *ayyaanaa* (Megerssa & Kassam, 2019, pp. 116-143 for detail). According to the mythology, man emerged from the primordial hot, salty spring-water (*hora*). This happened at a cradle-land of genesis called *Hora Walaabuu*, an implicit *genius loci* related to *Horroo*, the primogenitor of the Oromoo Nation. Here, *emerged* shows human as *subject* having *qualia*

(thinking mind) springing from mystic emergentism, unlike the *objects* created by *Waaqa* during the preceding consecutive 27 days.

The mystic analogy of *hora*, the hot primordial spring water, is blood, milk, amnion and semen. *Hora* and *ayyaanaa* comprise and are comprised by/in human beings, including the living ones or the deceased ancestors or the primogenitors as well as passed onto the future generations. It is not at random that the same semantic complex *hora* means fecundity and (to make) progenies across generations. Hence, in Oromoo anthropogenesis, man is, in actuality, created creature or creature creating (for) him-/herself. However, *Waaqa*, the unmoved mover whose action is never caused to operate by any cosmic power or any human being (*Waaqa giddii hin qabne*), is, hence, whose action does not operate in finite verb, a concept whose implication is tremendous on grammar of Oromoo *Jeekkarsa* doxology in praise of *Waaqa* (Text 8) as will be presented ahead.<sup>12</sup>

(5)

<i>Urjii samiirra kumsee hee</i>	Having spread stars in billions, oh yea
<i>Kan dhugaa qabuuf tumsee hee</i>	Having offered patronage for truth, oh yea
<i>Ajjeesu gumaa hin baasuu hoo</i>	Having killed, <i>Waaqa</i> pays no blood money,
<i>Cabsus ogeessa hin yaamuu hoo</i>	Having broken, <i>Waaqa</i> pleads to no bone expert, oh yea
<i>Hangaasuu balaq godhee hee</i>	Having flashed out the lightening, oh yea
<i>Roobee cabalaq godhee hee</i>	Having splashed the rain, oh yea
<i>Irraa gadeet dhim'isee hee</i>	Spattering down the rains, oh yea
<i>Roobee rooban kittisee hee</i>	Inundates the earth with the flood oh yea
<i>Yaa dhihaa bari'aa koo hoo</i>	Oh! Definer of my Day- Night life oh yea...

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<sup>12</sup> Here, it suffices to know that, for instance, *Waaqa's* action operates basically with permanent aspect or gerundive form or verbless syntax. This is discussed ahead.

If we add the fundamental question of human ontology to the field of anthropogeny, Oromoo philosophy has the answer: To be human is to cause (life, living, work, fertility, perpetuation, regeneration) and to be wise. According to the believers of Oromoo theology, man is not an intransitive animal or object but an agent possessing transformative power in and over his/her world of animals and objects. Human being is created creator of itself (reproduction) and what is needed for its survival (production). Man has abstracted from natural laws for him-/her-self the principles of *qaallummaa*, natural theology, part of which is veneration of *uumee*, nature, and *ayyaanefanna*, veneration of the spirits of ancestors or ancestral spirituality. In short, Oromoo theology is natural theology because it is based on theological truth or principles abstracted by the ancient Oromoo solely from natural laws, apart from a miraculous or supernatural revelation. As the believers say, *Waaqaa Daanya*, roughly translated, *Waaqaa* the unmoved mover, non-created creature, unmade maker, non-perceivable observer and non-passive actor. The pristine cosmos, a creation of *Waaqaa*, is ‘just as it is’, too, although it is in constant cyclical flux.

### 3.5 Axiology, Deontology and Praxiology

Axiology is branch of philosophy concerned with the study of the nature of value (worth) and what kinds of things have it, contrasts with deontology (the theory of moral duty) and/or praxeology (the theory of action) (Hartwig, 2007, p. 47). On these, Oromoo theology is ontocentric, that is, value, moral duty and action are objective (dependent on natural laws) rather than subjective (dependent on human interest). To explain this more, in Oromoo theology, these are guided by the concept of *Safuu*, the Oromoo paradigm of totality and patterned harmony of relations among the natural, spiritual, and social entities in the cosmos. The Catholic Father Lambert Bartels defines *safuu* as moral philosophical institution that guides “mutual relationship (rights and duties) between individual creatures or groups of creatures according to their place in the cosmic and social order based on their *ayyaana* [=essence, spirit]” (Bartels, 1983, p. 373; See also Megerssa, 1998, p. 42, and Van de Lo, 1991, pp. 145-155).

According to *safuu*, an element or entity (for instance, human being) is essential and intrinsic to another (for instance, to nature, including the earth) or permeates another (for instance, other human beings or ancestors contain or are contained in me) or is causally efficacious on another (for instance, spirits

of ancestors upon the contemporary generation). *Safuu* governs the deontological (desirable and undesirable) relations that individuals or communities should respect in their interactions among themselves and with nature, treatment, and use of natural resources (lands, sacred trees, depressions, water bodies, waterbeds, mountains, domestic and wild animals, forests, fords, cultural objects and so forth) and, above all, a balance between man, nature, and *Waaqaa*.

A pervasive violation of *safuu* is seen as a harbinger of social or environmental or cosmic doom or catastrophe, as *Waaqaa*'s negative reaction (*halooyyee*). This means that Oromoo theology entails *moral realism*, that is, morality as an objective, real, natural property proscribed by ancestors (*Safuu Lafaa*) based on laws set by *Waaqaa* (*Safuu Waaqaa*). Oromoo theology includes a duty to protect nature and the protections are part of human reason and nature, hence, in effect, it is also similar to Kantian ontotheology. Emmanuel Kant wrote: "Natural religion is thus the substratum of all religion, the firmest support of all moral principles, and insofar as it is the hypothesis of all religion, and gives weight to all our concepts of virtue and uprightness, to this extent natural theology contains a worth raising it above all speculations (Kant, 1996, p. 343)"

Likewise, Oromoo theology whose crux is humanity's eulogizing of *Waaqaa* and celebration of the natural laws or natural governments set by *Waaqaa* resembles Baruch Spinoza's conception of religion and God whose crux is "divine natural law whose highest precept we have said is to love God, I have called it a law in the sense in which philosophers apply the word law to the common rules of nature according to which all things happen" (Spinoza, 2007, p. 272).

A person who breached *safuu* is considered as transgressor of natural governments and must clean himself or herself. This process is called *falannaa*, the act or ritual of placating or overcoming distrust and animosity, or the act of atoning for sin or wrongdoing, especially appeasing *Waaqaa*. If he fails to do so, he is considered *gad darbii* worthless or one who committed *araamuu*, reducing oneself to worthlessness. In this context *falannaa* describes not how human beings reconcile with each other, but how to reconcile oneself to *Waaqaa*. It is individual's or group's reconciliation with the *Waaqaa* by means of repentance and confession of one's transgressions of natural laws. For this reason, a transgressor of *safuu* faces not court procedure (which is

rather *gola* (faculty) of man's social-political laws) but faces imprecation by *Qaalluu*, the Holy Fathers heading Oromoo theological institution and officiating rituals (discussed well in Bartels, 1983).

An animal can also be said to be 'breaking' *Safuu Waaqa* because says, informant Sabbo, "even animals have *ayyaana* and *safuu*" to respect and live by: "Once, *weennii*, Columbus monkey, which was supposed to feed only on leaves of trees, was observed eating meat (killing sheep); the community found him violating *safuu*. Another time a bull or oxen was found mating a donkey and he, too, was violating *safuu*". This resonates with what Father Lambert Bartels wrote based on his informants that all animals have *ayyaanaa*, special quality, and *safuu*, right/wrong relationship, both given by *Waaqaa* to them, and, hence, "*Waaqa* demands from them [all creatures who are under his [sic] dominion] that they uphold *safuu* in regard to each other" (Bartels, 1983, p. 229).

### 3.6. Eschatology

*Eschatology* is the part of theology concerned with death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind. In Oromoo theology, there is no indication of incarnation or resurrection but there is concept of *ekeraa* the ontology of the spirits of the deceased ancestors dead or the body without soul. The Oromoo speak *qaari'a*, transmigration of the soul, and of *kaayoo*, immortalization, providence. The Oromoo have *Ekerdubbistuu* 'the communicator with spirits of ancestors' spirits. The *ekerdubbistuu* interprets the tongues of the spirits, the top secret of the *ekeraa*. The act of communicating the *ekeraa* of an ancestor and interpreting the meaning for a living person is called *ekerdubbisuu*. In other words, the *ekerdubbisuu* is a sacred mystical medium of communicating with the ancestors, a potent ontological communication. This is so when the *ekerdubbistuu*, the mediator, is in tune with self. He, the *ekerdubbistuu*, is filled with the *Ayyaana*, the connective power or energy that which activates the awakening of the highest consciousness and contacts the ancestors. It is an expression of deep ontological consciousness, an act of speaking to the ancestors.

*Booranticha*, the spirits of ancestors incarnating in the contemporary 'children' or descendants (*Joollee*) from fore parents, is celebrated annually nowadays as the Holiday of the Children' of *Abbootii Oromooo* the Oromoo Primogenitors. Elderly believers of Oromoo theology say, *Booranticha* was an

ancient, ideal First-Born Cosmic son of Man and the custodian keeper of the sacred laws of Oromoo Nation.

Hence, *Galma Boorantichaa* is the sacred center of the Senatorial Class, where ancestral spirituality is observed by the entire *Balbala*, the sub-moieties or sub-tribes of Oromoo Nation. In essence, *Booranticha* is ancestral spirituality deity related to the *Booraa*, one of the primordial ancestors, whose spirits are believed to be a bearer of the dialectic of good or evil and of fortunes or misfortunes for the present generation. This is because the concept *Daaccii* guides Oromoo theology. It designates the mystical influence of ancestors' spirits or history on the present course of events as transmitted either from specific ancestors or from an entire ancestral *Gadaa* class to one of its successors. For this reason, *Daaccii* guides, too, the Oromoo funerary style. Huntingford (1955, p. 86) quotes previous authors as to how Oromoo bury the dead, a style which reminds Ancient Egyptian's same funerary style<sup>13</sup>:

The body is wrapped in a *wayyaa* (toga)... A grave is dug, with a lateral gallery or niche, and the body is carried to it on a litter of bamboo. According to Cecchi, the body is laid with the face to the east; according to Borelli, it is laid on the left side with the left arm turned up to the head, and the right arm outstretched; D'Salviac says it is put in a crouching position in the niche at the side of the pit, adding that this is closed with branches so that the body is not covered with earth when the grave is filled in. Honey, beer, bread, a milk basket (*weensoo*), cloth, and wax are put in the grave... When the grave is filled in, a mound of stones is raised over it. Posts are set up on which are hung the man's weapons and trophies, and sometimes the skull and horns of an ox as well.

For this same eschatological concept of *Daaccii*, the sacred drinks, which represent the primordial water of life, included milk, *daadhii* or *booka* honey-beer, filled and covered inside *meeshaa qula*, sacred containers, were buried side by side with the body of the high priests and priestess upon their death. Hence is the dictum: *Boolla isee/isaa daadhiin haa guutu*, lit., Let the honey-beer fill her/his grave, i.e., dictum said after mentioning the name of a

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<sup>13</sup> Ancient Egyptian "pot burials" are not what they seem  
<https://arstechnica.com/science/2017/01/ancient-egyptian-pot-burials-are-not-what-they-seem/>

departed great person. However, whether similar concepts guided Ancient Egyptian burial pots or not has not yet been confirmed.

Lastly, if eschatology incorporates about ‘end of the world’; this part doesn’t stand for Oromoo belief because it is either that Oromoo doesn’t believe in an ending world or cosmos or there is no data on this in Oromoo theology or on the part of the author. What’s known is, Oromoo natural religion indicates, spirit/soul (*ayyaana*) ends or perishes or fails to regenerate under two conditions. The first is when the sibling fails to up-take or abandons *Gadaa* of his parents/ancestors. The other is when or if, by lengthy catastrophe, the cosmos fails the heaven to impregnate rain and/or the mother earth to impregnate the sea/river bed (for instance, apocalyptic drought).

### 3.7. Sacred Lands and Pilgrimage to the Lands of Ancient Ancestors

Oromoo religion is fundamentally a spirituality that is, ‘a love for being and for life’, the quality of being concerned with the spirits of ancestors or soul of humanity as opposed to material or physical things. Here, the semantic complex. *Odaa* is important in Oromoo theology. On one hand, as mentioned above, *Odaa* refers to the sacred *cosmic tree* of the Oromoo nation, the giant, multibranch, evergreen, majestic *Ficus sycomorus*, representing Oromoo genealogical tree. It is here relevant to quote Mircea Eliade, the philosopher of theology:

A tree becomes sacred, while continuing to be a tree, because of the power it expresses; and if it becomes a cosmic tree, it is because what it expresses is a perfect reproduction of what the cosmos expresses. The sacred tree need not lose its concrete natural qualities to become symbolic (the date palm is so to the Mesopotamians, the oak to the Scandinavians, the *asvattha* and the *nyagrodha* to the Hindus, and so forth). Quite a number of mental stages must be gone through before the symbol becomes detached from concrete forms, before it becomes an abstract essence (Eliade, 1958, p. 269).

On the other hand, in line with Eliade’s explication, *Odaa* refers, too, to the sacred centers at which the Oromoo Nation conducts the rituals of immortalizing ancestors, blessing the newborn, praying for fertility and rain, praising the gracious God, or conducting political speech acts. Hence, such a sacred land of theologico-politics must be ‘read’ as meaningful taxonomies,



both topographically (as a landscape) and typographically (as an ecological-linguistic text). D'Salviac (2005[1901], p. 272) saw that Oromoo theologico-political sacred center: “on a slope, which is on the right” (the head or Abbaa Bokkuu) and “on the left or lower slope” (his dignitaries) where there must be a water body with *caffee* ‘green hay grass’. These centers, called *Odaa*, serve as the sacred zonal “centre of Oromoo religion” (Hassen, 1994, p. 6) and headquarters of the Oromoo confederacies or sub-moieties (Nicolas, 2013).

D'Abbadie (1890) witnessed Oromoo pilgrimages to *Walaabuu* begin in June, and the pilgrims return the following year. Pilgrims are called *jila*. Once they have started, they never again cut their hair or nails, the hair of the head sometimes reaching to the seat on which they sit. While he is away on pilgrimage, the wife of the *jila* puts no butter on her head, and eats no bread but that which she has baked herself in the embers. On their return, pilgrims do no work but herd cattle; they receive small gifts from the people, and it is believed that their presence in the tribe has a mystical influence for good. For this reason:

The pilgrims must preserve chastity, not cut the nails or the hair: that was a sort of Nazarene. To show their peaceful intentions, they tied their dress in the fashion of women, laid down their spears. The skin stripped from the sacrificed animals, those talismans in hide, hung from the wrist and from the neck in the shapes that signify them as *nama Waaqaa* (the men of God) (D'Salviac, 2005, p. 180).

Legesse himself observed this: “...[they] went to the shrine every day and sang the standard songs of transition rites (*mokke*). Every day the three old men (*jarsi galma*) led them to the shrine and back” (Legesse, 1973, p. 17). Bompiani, an Italian traveler, also witnessed:

As a sign of peace, they [Oromoos] make a sheep go before them on entering the village... They are met on their arrival by *Abbaa Muudaa*, who conducts them to his grotto... He as well as his followers dress in skins, let the hair grow very long, and anoint it with butter, and instead of a lance carry a stick, upon the top of which is fixed the horn of an antelope (Bompiani, 1891, p. 78).

D'Salviac (cited in Huntingford, 1955, 83-84) gives the following specimen of river of blessings delivered by the *Abbaa Muudaa* to an individual pilgrim (Text 6).

(6)

Prosper! Oh! Son of Oromoo!  
Return home to your family and *Abbaa Bokkuu*<sup>14</sup>!  
May the milk of your herds flow in abundance!  
May the whole village drinks of your superfluity (of milk)!  
May you be loaded with goods!  
May your favorite cow's udder be full of milk!  
May *Waaqaa* be with you.

This politico-theological blessing speech act—which indeed is a salient fact of Oromoo blessings on various rituals—speaks directly to Oromoo paradigm of making inalienable nexus among politics or power-relationship, sacred lands, ancestors' spirits and inter-generational connectivity between the past, the present and the future generations.

### 3. 8 Sacred Objects: Semiotics of Material Life

Primely, sacred object, according this theology, is human body itself, especially during prayers the position for prayer is standing upright lifting both arms to *waaqa* 'heaven, sky'. As the Catholic Father and scholar Lambert Bartels accurately describes, "the perfect attitude at prayer in the [pre-Christian] in the Oromoo's eyes is to lift the hands towards heaven" (Bartels, 1983, p. 350). It is Oromoo worldview to stretch the arms up to Sky or Heavens while uttering *Óquba* 'Praise! Praise be upon *Waaqaa*!', thus submitting oneself to *Waaqa* (Gidada, 2001[1984], p. 163). This prototypical Oromoo theological symbolic- act is based on the fundament that "Heaven opens its hands" (Kassam, 2005, p. 111). Does this and similar symbolic acts contradict the monotheistic conception of *Waaqaa* or the concept of not directly communing with *Waaqaa* as touched above? Not necessarily. This symbolic and sacred act has nothing to do with either portrayal of *Waaqaa*'s

<sup>14</sup> *Abbaa Bokkuu*, the Father/Holder of the Scepter, is a reference to the in-power *Abbaa Gadaa*, the President, to make distinction between the other *Gadaa* Men, authorities or ministers, serving him as well as between him and the retired or former *Abbaa Gadaas*.

appearance (for *Waaqaa* is ‘black’ as said above) nor with conversing to/with *Waaqaa* in linguistic medium.

Likewise, in Oromoo theological doctrine, as soon as death occurred, “a man’s wooden stool and his staff were inherited by his eldest son, or were placed on his grave if he died without issue” (Jaenen, 1956, p. 172). That staff was/is the y-shaped *horooroo* stick which is designed from sacred trees like *waddeessa* and *harooressa*, variants of *Cordia africana*. Like *horooroo*, the (green) twigged stick called *dhanqee* is sacred, literally means corporeal body, symbols of material life and held on pilgrimages to the cradle lands to immortalize *Hooro*, the Primogenitor(s), an eponymous from the founder of the Oromoo nation, the first son of Oromoo (Megerssa & Megerssa, 1988; Braukämper, 2002).

The highly sacred *Odaa*, *Ficus sycomorus*, represents, among others, Oromoo genealogy or fertility. It is chosen for, among many reasons, its causal powers: has milky saps that symbolize *otta* ‘amniotic fluid; the primeval fluid, has multiple, large and evergreen branches which represents unity, multitudinality, confederacies, clans, families and perpetuity of the Oromoo Nation. For this reason, at the foot of sacred trees, at cross-roads, and on mountain passes travelers deposit twigs as an offering to the spirits of the place, and little mounds of twigs can be seen in many places beside the track. Stones may be laid down if no grass is available. In the same way, grass or twigs are laid on graves as offerings to the spirits of the dead. In each Oromoo hut there is a piece of wood, carefully concealed, the disturbance of which is believed to indicate misfortune (Huntingford, 1955).

Of all the Oromoo theology sacred, symbolic objects, the ‘most high’ is what the *Qaalluu*, hereditarily first-born man selected as head of Oromoo theology, wears on his forehead and called *qallachaa* (also spelled *Kallachaa*, *Khallachaa*) made originally, according to the belief, from a mysterious iron fallen from sky (Bartels, 1983, pp. 145-146). It is a “white metal horn...worn on the forehead” as “horn-symbolism” (Bartels 1983, 146). For others it is a symbol of fertility or a “phallic ornament” (Haberland, 1963, p. 51 quoted in Bartels, 1983, p. 146). Another scholar Knutsson, (1967, pp. 88- 90) quoted in Bartels (1983, p. 145) sees *qallachaa* as “a conically formed ‘lump’ of black iron...brought from the heavenby the lightening.” Called *Abba Oromootaa* ‘the Most-High Father of the Oromoo Nation’, *Qaalluu* lives unmarried, unspoiled and lonely in *Galmaa*, an isolated, sacred pavilion must be built on

green mountain foot hill with hot-spring-water (*hoora*), where pilgrims travel to.

*Qaalluu* is *qulqullo* ‘the redeemers, the holiest, the fundament and blameless’ and that is why he wears *qallacha* (from *qaalluu* + *-acha*, a suffix marker of absolute/nominative-accusative case), an indicator of direction to holiness and spirituality traced back ancestors or fore parents. The semantic complex *qallacha* also means hereditarily received grace, sublimity, intellect or saintliness, all of which is also characteristics of the *Qaalluu*. Like the Ancient Egyptian and Oromoo funerary styles touched above, the forehead gear *qallacha* should also remind us Ancient Egyptian *Uraeus*, symbol of divinity and authority. The Ethiopian historian Bekerie (2004, p. 116), based on the works of W.E.B. DuBois, argues that Ancient Egyptian “*Uakha*” and Oromoo *Waaqa* are the same. Similarly, in their book entitled *African Origins of the Major World Religions*, scholars convincingly argue that the Ancient Egyptian resurrection and thanksgiving ritual of *Ereça* is the same as Oromoo spelled as *Irreecha* also spelled as *Erecha*” (Ben-Jochannan, et.al., 1991, p. 100). Evidence for the antiquity of Oromoo theology, founded on worshipping the Black-Sky God, is its spread from Africa to First Nations across the world with little or no lexico-semantic change<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.9. How Language of Praise to Waaqa Operates

According to Oromoo theology, *Waaqa* never used human language which has phonological, lexical, syntactic or poetic system. The only time an Oromoo *Qaalluu* claims he/she heard *Waaqa*’s ‘language’ is thunder of the heavy or impregnated heaven ready to rain. As summarized in Table 1 and evidenced

<sup>15</sup> See *Wicca*, the Great God of the Celts (Grimassi 2001, 25-26), The author by Understanding (2013) lists: the Japanese Black god *Xaca*; the Hindu god of battle *Mahākāla*, from *maha* ‘great’ and *kala* ‘black’ (NB: Oromo theology is called *Qaalluu* and the officiant is also *Qaalluu*, both substantive from *qaa* ‘black’; See Hassen1994; Megerssa and Kassam 2019; Legesse 2019; the Zulu God *Unkulunkulu* means ‘Old, Old, One’; the *Aku* ‘God’ of the Jukun people of Nigeria. Added to these are: Hawaiian *Akua* ‘God’ (Andrews 1922); Fijian *Waka* ‘the shrine of a god’ or *Kalou* ‘God’ or *Dakuwaka* ‘God’, *daku* means ‘black’ (Hazlewood 1872); Babylonian *Kalu* ‘Priest’ (Pritchard 1969 334-337). In Egyptian texts, Phoenicia/Kush is called ‘the country of *Khal* or *khalu*’ (Brugsch 1879, 412). See also the ancient Inca *Huaca* or *Wak’a* (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/huaca>) is very interesting.

further in Texts 7 and 8 below (besides the above), the language in praise of *Waaqa* (*Jeekkarsa*) doesn't operate in microscopic bits nor in a tiny, discrete, one-off event or act but praises the Cosmic Natural Laws which are universal and trans factual, non-time-bounded and fundamental for sustainability of man and ecosystem (See Text 7). Such linguistic constructions operate and describe cyclical flow of time space, which are about fertility and fecundity of the man, the animal, the plant, the soil, mother earth or are about the respect of ancestors and universal human values of being at/with/for each and one an/other, are about the flourishing of each is for flourishing of all of us. Boorana Oromoo blessing evinces the whole mark of the language of Oromoo theology.

(7)

***The Qaalluu***

*Ardaan nagaa*/May the land/country be peaceful!  
*Bobbaan nagaa*/May the journey be peaceful!  
*Barri nagaa*/May the era/regime be peaceful!  
*Waareen nagaa*/May the midday be peaceful!  
*Waariin nagaa*/May the midnight be peaceful!  
*Reerii nagaa*/May the environment/ecosystem  
be peaceful!  
*Dheedi nagaa*/May the ford be peaceful!  
*Yaa'iin naga*/May the river-course be peaceful!  
*Kuubiin nagaa*/May the mounds/graveyards  
be peaceful!  
*Raabi nagaa*/May the civil servants/Raaba Grade  
be peaceful!  
*Kuusaa Goseen nagaa*/May the Warrior Grade men be  
peaceful!  
*Ijoolleen Kuuchuu nagaa*/May the tenderly children  
be peaceful!  
*Dirreen nagaa*/May the plateaus be peaceful!

***The Chorus***

*Nagee* /Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!  
*Nagee* 'Yes! Peace!

For the same reason, that *Waaqaa* justifies natural laws and needs no interference in daily discrete acts and choices of human being; the formula 'Yaa Waaq', Oh, *Waaqa*!, only commonly appears often at initial and/or final stanza as in most of the texts displayed in this paper. Commonality Eliade has seen in African religions is very relevant to Oromoo theology and, hence, is worth quoting again:

The same is the case with most of the African peoples: the Great God of Heaven, the Supreme Being, Creator omnipotent, plays a quite insignificant part in the religious life of the tribe. He is too distant or too good to need worship properly so called, and they invoke him only in cases of extreme need (Eliade, 1958, p. 47).

As can be seen from Text 8, the doxology of Oromoo theology functions in a highly constative speech acts, that is, utterances which are descriptive of the true essence of *Waaqa*.

(8)

<i>Ya Waaq, Ya Waaq, Ya Waaqayyo</i>	Oh <i>Waaqa</i> , Oh <i>Waaqa</i> , Oh <i>Waaqa</i>
<i>Waaqaan nan bula, sin an oola</i>	I live the nights and days Laws of <i>Waaqa</i>
<i>Gurraacha leymo, garaa taliilaa</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , the black pristine, with pure belly
<i>Dhisaa malee, diriirtee</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , that spreads across horizons without a actor
<i>Utubaa malee, ijaajjitee</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , that stand firm without a pillar
<i>Alluu malee, doottattaa</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , that mesmerizes us without any color ploy
<i>Dumessa walitti ka guurtu</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , the one amasses the clouds (to form rain)
<i>Urjii ka facaastu</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , the one that scatters stars across the cosmos
<i>Tokkicha maqaan dhibbaa</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , the One/Single but of countless names
<i>Gurraacha garaa garbaa</i>	<i>Waaqa</i> , whose belly is as black as a black sea
<i>Yaa Waaqa Waaqa hin qabnee</i>	Oh <i>Waaqa</i> , that have had no another <i>Waaqa</i>
<i>Yaa gooftaa gooftaa hin qabnee</i>	Oh <i>Waaqa</i> , sovereign having no superior sovereign
<i>Mooticha giddii hinqabnee</i>	That King having no command (er)

This contrasts with regulative speech acts (for instance, beseeching, commanding, importuning, requesting, demanding, invoking) which are often used in other religions in prayers to God.

(9)

Grammatical Category	Feature
Number	Singular
Gender	Neuter (neither male nor female)
Person	None because there is no man-to-God or God-to-man communing
Pronoun	None but repetition of ' <i>Waaqa</i> '
Case	Often <i>Waaq/Waaqi</i> is used as nominative and <i>Waaqayyo</i> as hypocoristic
Aspect	The imperfective aorist aspect with timeless or with no limitations or
	boundaries relating to completion, or an aspect which denote action in progress or in constant repetition
Voice	Active or middle voice construction denoting a permanent property
Transitivity	Agent role only, not patientive role
Genitive	<i>Waaqa</i> the possessor, human or any is possessed by <i>Waaqa</i> , for instance, 'My <i>God</i> ' is impossible construction
Mood	No imperative mood, for instance, 'God, give us our daily bread' is impossible
Speech act function	Constative speech acts, utterances which are descriptive of the true essence of <i>Waaqa</i> , as opposed to regulative speech acts.

As touched above, Table 1 summarizes that *Waaqa* or action of *Waaqa* is expressed in such a way that the grammar imitates the Cosmic Natural Law which is as much universal, transfactual, non-time-bounded as it was, is and will continue to be fundamental for sustainability of man and ecosystem.



### 3.10. Is Oromoo Theology Compatible with Eco-philosophy?

The Oromoo theology corresponds with realist theory of science and truth. Truths are determined not by what we believe, but by the way the world is or how the phenomena operate. According to Roy Bhaskar, “the arduous task of science [is] the production of the knowledge of those enduring and continually active mechanisms of nature that produce the phenomena of our world” (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 47). Technically, Oromoo theology is sacred epistemology abstracted from how natural laws operate. The knowledge, approaches, adaptive systems, and paradigms that the Oromoo nation have accumulated, elevated, and canonized over millennia as sacred and influential to their survival and perpetuation as a nation, serve their cultural immortality and collective goals. This, for instance, exists in the belief system of Borana Oromoo. Nanno argues that five concepts make an indivisible unit: “*Dubbiin kan aadaa, aadaan kan Booranaa, Booranni kan dhugaa, dhugaan kan Waaqaa*”. Roughly translated they mean ‘Discursive practice is cultural, culture/the education/cultural curricula is of the Boorans; the Boorans are people of truth; truths are natural laws set by *Waaqaa* of peace’ (Disasa 2017, p. 98; translation added).

How can there be God if there is so much evil in the world? According to Oromoo theology, ‘evil’ is not natural-law category; hence it is not attributed to *Waaqaa* or Acts of *Waaqa*. It is destabilization or violation of *safuu*, a moral-axiological category. As the highly respected expert *Qaalluu* recites what his forefathers lectured him: “*Dhugaan ilmoo Waaqaati; Bakka dhugaan jiru, nagaan jira*”, roughly translated: ‘Truth is the offspring of *Waaqa*.’ Only where truth is there is peace’ (Nanno, Finfinnee, 1 October 2022). What he means is, absence of truth is the presence of the anti-thesis of peace, that is, evil. According to this wisdom, drought, for instance, is an evil caused as well as (can be) repaired by natural entities including human beings. Oromoo theology holds duality world-view which upholds that man constitutes as well as is constituted by nature, jettisoning the dualist philosophy that decouples the natural and the social/non-natural world. For this, according to the age-old *Gadaa* System political philosophy if a drought hits the nation in a certain *Gadaa* Regime (which lasts 8 administrative years), the elected *Abbaa Gadaa*, the President, and his entire cabinet are changed peacefully and willfully before the normal 8-year term because they failed *Dhugaa*, that is, *Waaqa’s* Natural Law and self-harmonization with it. It is believed that *Waaqa* withholds rain against human beings or it’s a regime that violates the words or

promises of ancestors iterated during *Baallii Fuudhaa*, the political power exchange ceremony. A prototypical praise song sung on *Irreecha* Holiday (Text 9) blames the human being's injustice for infertility.

(10)

<i>Maree hoo, Maree hoo, Maree hoo</i> cosmic year	Here again comes the new
<i>Alaa mana nuuf toli yaa Aayyoolee hoo</i> &outside, oh Ancestral Mothers	Be good to us inside
<i>Mee nutti araarami yaa Aayyoolee yoo</i>	Please reconcile to us oh fertile Mother Earth
<i>Dhagaa gurguddaa gamaa bishaantu</i> <i>walbaachisee</i>	Those megalithic fertility stones were piled one upon another by the power of the rivers
<i>Maseenni dhaluu hindidnee isintu</i> <i>walcaalchisee</i>	The infertile never failed to give birth, but it is you people who did injustice to her/it
<i>Maree yoo, Maree yoo, Maree yoo</i>	Here again comes the new cosmic year

What is more, Oromoo theology appears to be a 'scientific religion'. This is evinced by the informant Sabbo who lectured the author responding to the question: Why is *irreefanna*, the act of dipping the green grass in the *hora*, sacred spring-water, and is sprinkling one's forehead, important?

...trees are what our bones are for *Dachee*, Fertile Mother Earth; rivers and streams are what our blood is for; *Dachee*; *xaa'oo*, black cotton fertile soil, is what our flesh is for *Dachee*; and, rain is what *fincaan*, semen, is for *Dachee*. *Waaqa* blessed [powered us + entrusted to us] human beings to protect and perpetuate this *Heera*, Natural Law. We are violating this Law and, subsequently, we are losing our Fertile Mother Earth.

From this world view emanates the Oromoo women's ecological ethics observed in rituals: "all the women of a neighborhood bring their offerings together under a big tree. Such a tree should be leafy and undamaged. It is often a sycamore. Such a ritual tree is called *Dhibaayyu* tree. Such *Dhibaayyu* trees are found everywhere in the country. No one ever 'wounds' such a tree by cutting even a single leaf from it" (Bartels, 1983, p. 352).

### 3.11 The Importance of Oromoo Theology for the Oromoo Nation?

Oromoo theology explicates the purpose of social science philosophy. To more clearly understand the importance of Oromoo theology for Oromoo Nation, it is useful to explicate what Oromoo theology is *not* (about). Oromoo theology does not function cultural racist, ideological or gender divisions like the infidels versus believers, the sinned versus the righteous, and so forth. Neither is Oromoo theology concerned with ideology they vs. us nor managing the day-to-day activities or choices of a person, which are very private, for instance, how to wear or avoid, what to eat or drink or avoid, whom to choose as a friend or shun because, as discussed above under 3.6., these are not the 'faculty' (*gola*) of theology or natural laws (*heera*). That is why the *Irreecha Birraa* Holiday, which is the greatest of all rituals of Oromoo theology, brings together Oromoos in millions not only from Oromia and Ethiopia but also from the entire Horn of Africa and East Africa as well as Oromoo diaspora from across the globe from all walks of belief and life, with no discrimination in region, religion, sex, age or any form of personal or group orientation.

As a natural theology which comprises ancestral spirituality, the Oromoo theology, especially as it is being observed on *Irreecha* Holiday serves as an anchor of thanksgiving, a forum of gathering and reintroducing, and a platform for reasserting belongingness to one another /each other, origin from common *foreparents*, i.e., Oromoonesss identity. Moreover, as a rule, no participant attends *Irreecha* Festival with a mindset of spite, grudge, or any sort of conflict. That means it serves as a public sphere for making or praising peace and reconciliation with each other and with *Waaqaa* because doing or feeling evil things against another human being or society is considered a breach of the Natural Laws of *Waaqaa*. Moreover, non-dichotomous, non-ideological, and non-dualist, Oromoo theology also serves as a philosophical guide to live in harmony with the natural world and the social world without any discriminatory attitude toward other Ethiopian, African, or global nations.

What's more, participants in *Irreecha* Holiday are not only Oromoos but Kushitic, Omotic, Nilotic, and African nations attending it not as 'tourists' but as nostalgic redeemers of their 'past', 'oppressed' and 'original' theological ritual.

Roy Bhaskar recurrently theorizes in his several works that the purpose of science and philosophy ought to promote 'the free flourishing of each as a condition of the free flourishing of all, which is the good society for human being' (Bhaskar, 2008). This corresponds with *Waaqefanna* believers' concept of 'truth' and 'living and working by truth' especially when it comes to political philosophy. For instance, the following *Hirbuu*, Oath, is pronounced by *Qaalluu* and must be agreed by the nominee politicians for *Gadaa* Power as displayed in the text. Taken from Jaleta, 2017, pp. 48-49)

(11)

<i>Dhuga'aa afaan sika'e!</i>	I did put truth in your mouth!
<i>Dhara Afaanii sifuudhe!</i>	I picked out false from your mouth!
<i>Daba hinqorin!</i>	Don't treat wrong issues!
<i>Buna bulluqaan hin qorin!</i>	Don't treat issues with just boiled coffee!
<i>Haagaa hariyaan hin qorin!</i>	Don't treat issue on the basis of clan and friendship!
<i>Firaa worraan hinqorin!</i>	Don't treat on the basis of near and distance relatives!
<i>Dhugaa Waaqaa-Lafaan qori!</i>	Treat on the basis of Heavenly and Earthly truth!
<i>Yoo daba qorte afaan dabi!</i>	If you treat wrong, may your vocal cord be twisted!

The *Hirbuu* speech act above iterates the Oromoo world-view of development (*finna*), i.e., that development is so indivisible that it is as much individual and societal as it is inter/cross-generational (for details on *finna*, see Kassam, 2007; Jalata, 2012; Birbirso, 2019).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This small-scale study attempted to philosophically analyze Oromoo theology to find answers to some basic questions in terms of philosophy of religion and adopting an Africology perspective. The findings are interesting to theology

researchers who want to inquire about the origin, meaning, and function of religion to humanity. It has been understood according to the Oromoo natural theological doctrine that man is unilaterally dependent on *Waaqaa* and *Waaqaa's* Natural Law or Nature for existence and perpetuation; yet man can inquire it as well as protect it. The human act of destroying nature is tantamount to destroying oneself which itself (oneself) is nature. The Oromoo theology teaches abiding by *Waaqaa's* laws, being at one with each/one other/another, living in peace and harmony with each/one other/another as well as with nature and ancestors via their spirits. The purpose of life or living (*jiruu*) is perpetuating life (*jiruu*), working (*jiruu*) and continuing to improve the quality of life (*jijjiiruu*). This theology encompasses—not contradicts--the essentials of contemporary science and eco-philosophy.

In a nutshell, the findings of this study show that Oromoo theology bears the ingredient of Ancient Nile Valley sacred natural theology founded on worshipping the monotheistic Black-Sky God and evidences the African origin of civilization as was theorized by Diop (1974). Oromoo theology and Africology metatheory would help researchers from various disciplines to further understand the cultural evolution and socio-cultural adaptations of Ethiopian or African society and humanity, at large, over the past many centuries and millennia. Thus, Oromoo scholars and Africologists need to launch collaborative, multi-disciplinary research and advanced graduate programs devoted to studying this theology within Black African history. In this effort, the mainstream Orientalist and Eurocentric approach dominating the Ethiopian curricula, suppressing Ethiopian peoples' history, identity, and culture, would only continue to obfuscate the vital role of endogenous sacred epistemologies at this critical time of ecological (climate change and global warming) and social (sectarianism, extremism, racism) crises.

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