



## **GADAA SYSTEM: A MODEL FORM OF DEMOCRACY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Most citizens, including Oromo scholars, know Gadaa just by its name and fame not in life and practice. The primary purpose of this paper is to take an action in order to give basic understanding for citizens and researchers and facilitate the ground for further researches, documentations, and curriculum development on the system. Extensive assessment and wide range of literature reviews has been made in relation to the subject matter. The research has proved that the genesis of Gadaa System was not a spontaneous incident but through processes and experiences. Mythologies trace back the genesis of formal administration to a matrilineal society before which there was unorganized life of human kind as a social animal where only the fittest can survive. The research found out that, among the Oromo nation, Guji tribe has been ruled by 74 Abbaa Gadaas from 5 *luba* (party). It is about 665 years since Guji alone started ruling under the Gadaa System as people of separate territory. This refers us back to mid of 14<sup>th</sup> century, and also proves that Gadaa System of administration must have been initiated far before Oromo expansion movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In relative view against modern multi-party systems, there are similarities and differences; however, there are unprecedented and unparalleled lessons that can be drawn from Gadaa System. Strategic attentions are recommended to maintain the original taste of Gadaa System. These include system must be protected from abuses; further research need to be conducted to dig out and preserve the prominent values of Gadaa System; curriculum must be developed on Gadaa System as a subject of ‘Common Course’ from Elementary all through University levels of schooling; and strategic development in the national plans of our country to maximize tourist attractions on values, practices, rituals and historical sites of Gadaa System.

**KEYWORDS:** Gadaa, Democracy, Oromo, Guji, Abba Gadaa

### **INTRODUCTION**

History has shown that Westminster or American democratic models are not divine edicts but very few of the many possible successful models. Mclean (1986:140) wrote that “democracy disappeared with Greek and Roman civilization, when it appeared, it was in representative form”.

But had something been well conceived about a representative democracy in the medieval age Africa, 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which still parallels that of the modern era, more could have been said to the Gadaa democracy.

According to American anthropologist Holcombe (1991:4), “Gada democracy organized the Oromo people in all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only late built a democracy”.

According to history, the foundation of democracy in the United States of America was in the year 1789. In fact, the foundation of Swiss Constitution (which was called Basic Laws) was significantly aged before this and dated back to 1489 after which it was revised in 1874 (Jemjem 2011:83). History also gives a picture for foundation of democracy in West Germany in 1948; and Watson (1974:63) wrote that “in many European countries before 1918, the system had no roots and the people had a little experience of such a system”.

Democracy has been conceived within the Oromo indigenous institutions where people have centuries-old experience of working together within a sophisticated form of government far before the Westerns started exercising multi-party politics. Among the earlier democratic systems of administration, we found the Gadaa multi-*luba* (multi-party) politics vis-à-vis the Western multi-party.

Unique characteristics of Gadaa in comparative view of other multi-party politics have been portrayed, and it has been proved that Gadaa is not only millennia-old system but also unprecedented and unparalleled democracy making Africa to be the home of prototype democratic system, so as it has seen to be the cradle of mankind.

The primary purpose of this research is to take an ‘icebreaker’ action in order to give basic understanding for researchers and facilitate the grounds for further researches, documentations, and curriculum development on the subject matter.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used different methods to collect information such as interviews and group discussion as well as observation. Direct interviews were used through cross-checking and discussions at field work with the Gadaa and other *luba* (Gadaa parties) authorities who have active role in the Gadaa system by right and also those elders who are knowledgeable as members of the society. I also actively attended four General Assembly/Congress at Bokkoo (*Gumii Bokkoo*) of April 1988, April 1998, April 2007, and February 2016, which aimed not only at *baallii* (political power) transfer but also by large destined for making laws and undertaking of consequent politico-

legal system and ritual practices periodically conducted by the *luba* authorities.

There was extensive assessment and observation with wide-ranging interview guide, random as well as purposeful selection of interviewee, and focus group discussions were conducted with different age groups to gather information.

The study was conducted to assess the dynamics over the past two decades on the genesis, changes and development of Gadaa System of the Oromo nation. Extensive literature reviews have been made to gather information and sufficient data and evidences. Geographically, the study area covers the south-central part of Ethiopia, which comprises Gujilands and the surrounding administrative constituencies. The research intensively conducted in districts of Guji, West Guji, Borena, and West Arsi zones of Oromia Regional State. It is estimated that the study area is situated approximately between 36°43" to 41°40" East longitude and 4°30" to 6°38" North latitude (Figure 1).

Several resource persons have shared their knowledge, their skills and experiences with the researcher by giving information, and without them the research could not have come true. In addition to these, personal experiences and observations of the researcher during two decade time have also been used (Table 1).

The research was undertaken for nearly two decades based on the dreams of the researcher to unveil the unrecognized and rather misunderstood perfections in Gadaa System to the world. It has also used the extensive data and literature reviews conducted by the late Dhadacha Gololcha<sup>1</sup>. Along with unwritten sources, I made extensive references on written sources browsing many literatures and documents available on the core themes of the research. Several books and literature were used as sources of information.

More importantly, close observation and my affiliation as member of the society under the study have come to play a vital part in meticulously scrutinizing and digging out information from the functioning system and multiple of rituals.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Gadaa is not a kind of democracy, which is advocated only by those who are out of power, but once happen to power, rush for suppressing the rights of others. Rather, it is the government of people by the people and sets a single standard for all who hold the power. In Gadaa, we see a multi-party system which endures loyal opposition and critics, and maintaining power through consent not coercion, and placing the interest of people at first in the political process above party

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<sup>1</sup> Died in exile in the year 2000

interests.

There are characteristic features of Gadaa that are similar to that of modern democratic systems; however, there are also apparent peculiarities that make Gadaa System to be not only different but also much advanced above and beyond the up-to-date democratic administration systems of the world.

### 3.1. GADAA: A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

Like the parliament of Western World, the *gumii* (equivalent to congress) is the junction which is shared by the three arms of government. And also members of councilors are tied to the structure of their constituencies, but in terms of their activities, they must be universal and ready to consider any area of social life. The case of England is where diluting the doctrine of separation of power among the three arms of government in that the executive is not only present and active in parliament, but the House of Lords, a judiciary organ, is also part of parliament (Jemjem 2011:128).

Similarly, Gadaa constitution has a parliamentary form of government where a fused political structure empowers the executive, legislature and judiciary. In their relationships, the Executive and Legislature have their roles, operations and functions intertwined. This intertwined relationship is assumed by the fact of creation, in that they share a constituency. Invariably, the executive is part of the legislature and may not survive independently.

#### 3.1.1. THE LEGISLATIVE ROLES OF POWERS

Gadaa power structure is a confederal decentralized and its “traditional democratic theory argues that the form of political activity within a polity would be reflected in the ways in which decisions are made. The extent to which a political system is either liberal democratic or totalitarian will affect the ways in which policies are made in the system”<sup>2</sup>.

The *gumii* authority is sovereign and independent within and without the confederacy and thus free from foreign overbearing, decision-making of the entity concerned on a wide range to matters of high policy doing to systematically and on a permanent basis.

The *gumii* alone may assign limits and place to all other exercises of public power, and all forms of association of public nature are sanctioned by it. The division into tribes of self-ruling entities and their participation in the country’s legislative process are permanent and immovable features of the constitution.

According to Jemjem (2011:127), after Oromo dispersion in sixteenth century, the role of central

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Seymour Smith, Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1986) p. 192

legislature signified independent regional law-making bodies whose composition exhibited two distinctive forms: legislation of a single tribal group and confederal legislature of group of tribes, which represent a vertical separation of powers with one legislature by whose laws their Gadaa governments are bound.

*Gumii Bokkoo* is a grand convention of the Guji Oromo confederacy where Gadaa and local *luba* authorities, called *haaganaa-sagal*, meaning the nine senates (Gadaa, *Doorii* and *Raaba* from *Uraagaa*, *Maattii* and *Hookkuu* tribes) converge each eight years at a place called Bokkoo in East Guji Zone, some 40kms north of Adola town. to make and rehearse laws, while all others comply to the *Gumii Bokkoo*'s Law. Besides, the *yuuba-sagal*, meaning, the recognized nine counselors (who are *baatuu*, *yuuba* and *yuuba-guddaa* from the three tribes) again are required to be present to play the essential roles of advisorship in law-making and declaration activities both deliberative and the main session of the legislature. Representatives of authorities in different regions and tribes brought into a central congregation causing the functioning of multi-*luba* parliament. Please, refer to the legislative members in the structure provided in chart-1 in the references.

Jemjem (2011: 129) clearly narrates that the head of the executive, the *Abbaa Gadaa*, and his council members are members of the *Gumii Bokkoo* as opposed to the Presidential system. The executive also has the capacity to determine the creation of judiciary. Although the *Abbaa Gadaa* is an executive head of government, his office is shared by rank of *hayyuus* whose responsibilities constitute the functions of these organs both at the *Gadaa* authority and the Bokkoo Assembly levels.

Therefore, *Gumii Bokkoo* is a supreme organ of the Guji legal institution which is bounded up with legislature, executive and courts of effective powers to ensure compulsory compliance, and hence, its members have dual functions: their government and the *gumii*.

Like the multi-party parliament, in the multi-*luba* system too, the *Abbaa Murtii* - corresponds to opposition party leader, and his councilors occupy all the corresponding back-up positions in the *gumii* sitting assuming shared responsibility for the conduct of common life. For example, the *hayyicha-fooqaa*, the *faga*, the *waamura*, etc. of the *Doorii* always act with similar matters and functions with which those of the Gadaa are entrusted to. Those of the Gadaa (government) and of the *wolaannaa* (opposition) come into contact with each other regularly to sort out matters of common interests with a view to achieving mutual accommodation.

Through all haphazard and well-beings, and for all necessities of their societal existence, *Gumii Bokkoo* is an important unifying element which survived the Guji confederacy and basically a system of values that have been handed down, preserved and developed from the Oromo

democratic cultural heritage.

### 3.1.2. THE EXECUTIVE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The success of Gadaa age-grouping democracy is that it organized the society not according to the political needs but according to military, economic and religious roles which applied to all sections of the society. It sets the Gadaa office at the height of the societal leadership providing both collective and individual responsibilities. During its turn of office, Gadaa as a variety of parliamentary government, unlike the bureaucratic one used to resolve major problem areas between and within sections of people. In course of ritual crises, Gadaa may resolve any type of conflict be it ritual, political, moral, legal or economic in character.

In its definitive terms, however, Gadaa wields the functions such as:

- 1) Passing and execution of politico-legal decisions within its territory;
- 2) Maintaining the form of rational order and the duty of defending territories and to protect the population;
- 3) Controlling and effecting the timing and proper running of the entire Gadaa cycle (*baallii* transfer);
- 4) Imposing collection of *woreega/gumaata* – taxation, on the members of *yaa'a* in live cattle, the amount required for rank change ceremonies meant for public purposes; contribution of animals due on each party member as charged by each *yaa'a* within each tribe to be utilized for slaughters at each ceremonial ground, sacred places, at deliberative assemblies, at *abbaa-yaa'a* tours and for contribution to *qaalluu*; and
- 5) Maintaining domestic peace and order, as a government, because Gadaa is an organized system of power which monopolizes the use of legitimate force by way of conducting public affairs within a specific territory or in a society<sup>3</sup>.

As ultimate right of the government, the Gadaa uses physical coercion upon members to control the fundamental order of the society; to regulate the interrelations of inhabitants of the territory of which maintenance of public interests and individual rights are central areas of law to justify the existence of stable political community. As the means to exercising power, Gadaa uses a system called *libooma bobba'iisa* – outreach program of *jadhaaba* (police) to commandeer the members for *yaa'a*, collect *woreega*, force the troublemaker to appear before a concerned body, etc. The *luba* local

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Anyang Nyong'o, "Accountability and Civil Society", *Beyond Conflict in the Horn: Prospects for Peace, Recovery and Development in Ethiopia, Somali and Sudan* (eds) Martin Doorbos, Lionel Cliffe, Abdel Gaffar M. Ahmed and John Markakis (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1992) p. 217

authorities also bear the extension of the same power of *libooma bobba'iisa* in correspondence with their capacities to which their respective members are duty bound.

Of course, *hayyuu* should be sent as group leader in any *libooma bobba'iisa* to decide the duties, administer actions, and to counsel reason and prudence evidence. However, whatever the case may be, the *hayyuu* and members of the *qaalluu tribe* (including anyone taking shelter at *qaalluu's* house) are exonerated from any attempt or duty of corporal punishment.

The executive office of the Gadaa System conducts all public services under the authority of seven executive functions of government. These comprise: Abbaa Gadaa, *Jalkeya*, *Faga*, *Hayyuu*, *Jaldhaaba*, *Waamura*, and *Torbii*. .

### 1) Abbaa Gadaa

Abbaa Gadaa (named, *abbaa yaa'aa* at party level) is the **consensus leader** who is responsible to lead the scepter to discharge official duties together with his councilors. Briefly he devotes himself to settle cases, law enforcement and maintain order. He devotes most of his time to ritual attendances moving to ceremonial grounds (*ardaa jilaa*) and making sacrifices so that men and stocks will proliferate. Together with the executive council, the Abbaa Gadaa bears the authority to declare war when necessary but not on his own competence.

So as his duties and responsibilities as a *luba* leader, Abbaa Gadaa also has to observe various types of restrictions during the period of his office and his failure to observe them amounts to misconduct and legally consequential particularly from the *wolaannaa* – opposition parties. These constraints include conducting physical work, committing sexual intercourse with women other than official wife, drinking strange alcohols other than *booka*, participation in war or direct fighting with enemies, assaulting a person in whatever manner, passing nights in others' houses than those of his own *miseensa*, and roaming outside his *gabalaa* without assistant councilors and *jadhaaba* being accompanied.

### 2) Jalkeya

Jalkeya, who is also called *irkisa-abbaa-gadaa*, particularly in Hookkuu, is a **protocol officer** of the Abbaa Gadaa.

### 3) Faga

The *faga* are two in number, one as a senior (*angafa*) and the other as collaborator, and it is one of the important *luba* officials next to the head and remains in office throughout the active phase of that party. Like the *luba* head (Abbaa Gadaa or *Abbaa Murtii*), the *faga* should not be involved in day-to-day deliberations concerning law, politics and warfare. The right remaining available to his

direct responsibility is that of ritual practices and advisorship. The *faga* plays important roles and responsibilities which include:

- i) **Ritual Leader:** *faga* is primarily the ritual father of the scepter and keeper of the *qumbii* that received from *qaalluu* at the time of *qaalluu muudisaa* ceremony; secondly, he performs ceremonial acts while moving the *qachaa* performing the rite of *bulluuqaa*; besides, he signs the place to build the house of *luba* leader at the new *qachaa*; he leads the oaths and announcements on appointing new officers symbolized by feeding *qumbii*; and he must cross first at the instance of crossing *malkaa* (river cross points).
- ii) **The Guide of *Yaa'a*:** acts as a ceremonial guide on the day of *baallii* transfer, that he is the one who takes off the *baarguda* (ostrich feather) from his leader (outgoing Abbaa Gadaa) and hands it over to the *faga* of the incoming leader. As one of the primary tasks, a *faga* has to take care of the *yaa'a* security, and has to determine the assemblage to move to the *yaa'a* ground and decides the settlement place, and leads the journey, and unless he permits neither settlement nor movement be possible so that the *yaa'a* trip remains as it is unless he allows, the violation of which consequences punishment.
- iii) **Advisor for Ritual Practices of *Luba* Leaders:** *faga* is ritual advisor and assistant in connection with ritual subject matters other than political affairs. Generally speaking, the functions of *faga* boil down to ritual responsibilities and he has minimum roles to determine social and political affairs.

#### 4) Hayyuu

In particular reference to Guji Oromo, the law spreads power to individuals who should have the ability not only to influence the policy but also to oust those leadership positions who do not serve their cause. Accordingly, the *hayyuu* position is the most accountable rank of political representation of the society to play the key roles and responsibilities. These include:

- i) *Hayyuu* are **policy-makers** at each *gumii* summit: they are longtime serving body in public administration, policy interpretation, implementation, recruitment and appointment of staff without favour, so that must comprise a body of highly trained and experienced experts.
- ii) The rank of *hayyuu* is the most politically powerful position in the *luba* authority: all kinds of **motions and decisions** are passed by *hayyuu*; the Abbaa Gadaa or *Abbaa Murtii* discusses equally but finally declare the decision in the name of the council. Without the knowledge or participation of *hayyuu* neither the *yaa'a* nor leaders have any



say to undertake any official duty.

iii) *Hayyuu* are concerned as political elites of *luba*: As Tony (1978:194) wrote, "The duties of *hayyuu* are essentially **politico-jural** and concern members of their own phratries. Very complicated breaches of law or cases... that cannot be effectively handled in lower level assemblies are brought to the attention of *hayyuu*".

iv) *Hayyuu* are **legal experts, lawyers and judges**: all forms of arguments upon any kind of dispute, be it of criminal, administrative or civil, fall under the *hayyuu* competence within the *luba* authority. As Hinnant (1977:191) clearly stated, "legal disputes which are difficult to solve are heard before local *hayyuu* who attempt to give a clear state of the laws which apply and to carryout *araarsa* (conciliations) between involved parties...; *hayyuus* are greater authority whose decisions are far effective than *jaarsa biyyaa* – local elders; all functions of judiciary tune in the hands of *hayyuu*."

v) *Hayyuu* stand at the **highest rungs of social ladder**: they play decisive roles in social spectrum. *Hayyuu's* represent the embodiment of elder powers in the political manifestation of a phratry. Therefore, they are given the respect names of honors as X's father upon their promotion to the *hayyuum*anship which is not pseudonymous but serve the *luba* context; their name of honor taken after the name of ceremonial ground at which a person was given a *hayyuum*an title.

## 5) Jadhaaba

*Jadhaaba* are responsible for effective running of law and order under the direction of *hayyuu*. But at times when the *luba* is not in motion, *jadhaaba* are duty-bound to effect the orders of the local *hayyuu*. Different *hayyuu* always have certain number of *jadhaaba* to command the law to enter into force, and to exercise the delegated power to them by the council.

Briefly, *jadhaaba* do have the role of police officers more than other activities. These include the role of maintaining order and contain miscreants where force is required. Therefore, *jadhaaba* is one of the ranks in *luba* authority where those who act in that capacity should take training of law and law enforcement.

*Jadhaaba* is the **section to maintain discipline during *gumii* summit or *yaa'a* sessions; the security of sessions is tenable by *jadhaaba*, and they are responsible for security of *luba* figures and councilors**. Besides, they serve some labors or physical works concerning the *luba* figures and the councilors during *yaa'a* action. *Jadhaaba's* also serve as legal messengers who receive and transmit official messages under the powers of Abbaa Gadaa or *luba* leaders, and also entitled

to collect *gumaataa* for ceremonial requirements.

#### 6) Waamura

There is one *waamura* elected as a member of the *fooqa* council whose term lasts throughout the active phase of that party and considered as **facilitator and leader of yaa'a sessions**. He should be present on all formal occasions and deliberations of the *yaa'a*.

#### 7) Torbii

Elected at each electoral occasion as private members and promoted to *bayyuuman* position upon completing their service and meeting necessary requirements. *Torbii* is **observer of any distortion of law**, thereby, have the right to make decisions not to enter into force so that would be seen by the higher body.

### 3.1.3. THE JUDICIARY ROLE AND POWERS

In the exercise of one's rights and freedoms, everyone is subjected to limitations as determined by law, or justified by communal conduct, solely for the purpose of security due to recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others, meeting the just requirement of morality, public order and general welfare. In any type of framework, one cannot talk about any sort of right without corresponding duty to the society in which one claims to exercise rights, and indeed, exercise of rights without such duties is unthinkable; and true of the equal value that, it is impossible without organizational mechanism into whose hands individual and group interests tune proper with that of the public.

As the legal authority to regulate the statuesque of social system – the power to adjudicate and enforce jural rights and liabilities, execute resolutions and legal decisions, there found the structure of judiciary in the socio-political structure of natural Guji. There is always difference between socio-political structure of single tribe and confederacy of tribes that there is moiety system in the former while the latter takes a confederacy structure.

Legesse (1987: 18-19) noticed the moiety of Borana that “The moiety leaders also have the responsibility of adjudicating any and all conflicts within the moiety that can be resolved by the constituent clans, descent groups or local groups. If the local councils are unable to adjudicate their internal problems, they can appeal to higher authorities, until finally, it reaches the *qaalluu* councils...” The *qaalluu* may give amnesty but may not decide on wide-range of secular matters in court structure.

In the contrary, the traditional setup of Guji judiciary is constituted of double systems: that of the Gadaa and of the Clans, what Guji calls *balbala-torba*, *baallii-shanan* within the combination and/or

at variance of which all legal matters are ruled depending on the nature of the case. Each tribe of Guji is vested with its own jurisdiction through the Gadaa System (*Raaba*, *Doorii* and Gadaa authorities) at the higher judicial body of the society, while the *fira/gosa* system is the lower organ of the judiciary.

### **3.2. THE GADAA DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM**

Among other Oromo nations, Guji tribe in the central-south Ethiopia has been ruled by 74 Abbaa Gadaas from 5 *luba* (cyclical governance system of five parties). It has been about 665 years since Guji alone started ruling under the Gadaa System as people of separate territory. This refers us back to the year 1355 (GC), mid of 14<sup>th</sup> century, and also proofs the history that Gadaa System of administration must have been initiated before Oromo expansion movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. That is why Gadaa is equally conceived by all Oromos even today long after the era of Oromo movement from their cradle and all over the Horn of Africa. As far as democracy is concerned, this study has proofed that Gadaa System is unprecedented and unparalleled multi-party politics that has been practiced by the Oromo nation for centuries.

#### **3.2.1. THE GADAA: A REAL MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION**

The genesis of Gadaa System was not spontaneous but has its own well established processes and experiences. The mythology of Guji traces back the commencement of formal administration system to a matrilineal society before which there was unorganized life of human kind as a social animal where only the fittest can survive. The community gradually started to lead themselves under one man leadership (the most powerful among themselves) who is called *mootii*. That was the era of men's dominance in the society.

According to the informants, the last five *mooties* in those eras were: Duri Dulo, Buraqo Doyo, Bule Adala, Babalo Bade, and Babo Basu. Then the matriclan society came after with tyranny of women called *Bara Akkoos* (era of Queens). There were five *akkoos*, namely, Hoyoyo Hoyo, Hoya Garo, Lali Laso, Qadho Qaso, Ako Mano. The tyranny of women was too harsh, and punishments were so impractical and unaffordable.

Then people arranged ways for overthrow of the women's era and return to men (*mootii*). The name *mootii* came from verb *mooyee* – the winner, meaning there must be a struggle for a power where the winner comes to the leadership as it is like currently *mootummaa* for modern government.

A proverb says “*mi'eessaan jimaa fakkaata; mi'eessanii qorarii dubbiin worra dbiiraa dharuma'dbugaa fakkaata*”; it is to say, ‘a plant called *mi'essaa* looks like *jimaa* plant; a dispute with the powerful always ends

*up in his favour because even his false evidences presumed true'.*

Therefore, the *maltuus* – subtle consultants, created decentralized administration system of power sharing among cluster of societies which was first exercised by joint administration of Annaa Sorraa and Girjaa Biilaa according to the Guji tradition. Next, concomitant with the formation of power sharing among tribes, also came into scene the *qaalluu* institution created as a fair guidance for political powers and constitution that provides people with guarantees against the disorder of anarchism, oppression and any trend of dictatorship.

### 1) Inception of Loyal Opposition & Fixed Rotative Office

In the first instance for establishment of *luba* (party) system, three parties (Muudana, Dhallana and Roobalee) were created. The operation of three parties was finally happen difficult to establish power balance, therefore, later on, Halchiisa and Harmuufa were established.

The former three tried to limit the power base and the right to control it among themselves only, while on the other hand, the latter two also went on gathering momentum in power wrangle and became irreversible challenging force to be included (illustration-III).

### 2) Inception of *Wolaannaa-Qadadduu*

As traditionally handed down to us, we are getting at a conception that the former three were formed under one roof and the latter two at another. But since they were seen supporting each other, the latter two inclusions were put in between others, which finally created a real power balance among parties (illustration-IV).

## 3.2.2. THE GADAA: A GOVERNANCE WITH REAL POWER BALANCES

The final form of *luba* relationship created the *wolaannaa-qadadduu* procession, which is the major stabilizing factor in Guji Gadaa System. Among the *baallii-shanan*, Muudana is *wolaannaa* to Halchiisa and Roobalee; Halchiisa to Dhallana and Muudana; Dhallana to Harmuufa and Halchiisa; Harmuufa to Roobalee and Dhallana; and Roobalee to Muudana and Harmuufa. On the other hand, Dhallana and Harmuufa are *qadadduu* to Muudana; Harmuufa and Roobalee to Halchiisa; Roobalee and Muudana to Dhallana; Muudana and Halchiisa to Harmuufa.

Specifically, this opposing and allying party relationships create the following four scenarios:

- 1) The two *wolaannaas* have one *qadadduu* in common;
- 2) The two *wolaannaa* of a *luba* are *qadadduu* to one another;
- 3) The two *qadadduu* of a *luba* are *wolaannaa* to one another;
- 4) One *luba* always stands against two *wolaannaas* and with two *qadadduus*,

therefore, there is a real power balance in a real opposition.

### 3.2.3. THE GADAA: A REAL FEDERAL SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION

In socio-political perspectives, wrote Haberland (1963:781), “to the north of the Borana, we find the great confederation of the Guji who are called by their neighbours Jamjam”, divided into “the northern Guji...” constitutes: Haloo, Oottu, Shello, Wessitu; “and the southern Guji constituting Uraga, Maatti and Hookkuu”. Each tribe is divided into different *gosa/fira* (clans) the social formation and functioning of clan system. The *gosa/fira* itself is again divided into lineages (*miiloo*) each of which comprises several family (*worra*).

All tribes of Guji have their own territory not only as a cradle of life, work, pains, passions, dreams...; but a territorial area of power, administration, norms and order. Guji is a federation of tribes or phratries which have center of influence with politico-jural structures in administration. In other words, the socio-tribal formation of Guji people, does not exhibit only the structural form but it further stands as one of the major parts of the Guji political entity. Each phratry has its own territory of political leadership in the form of Gadaa system.

Hinnant stated, “One of the vital roles of the Gadaa system in the past was to provide a legitimate political, legal and ritual leadership. The largest territorial units in southern Guji are the three tribes each of which contains the homeland of seven clans [with exception to Matti]. Over each tribe, there is an *abba gada* who has the number of advisers and assistants. The formal influence of each *abba gada* is limited to his people and territory. The tribes and their *abba gada* are ranked in terms of their fictive birth order. This order assumes a form of etiquette the triturate formal relationships as all equivalent leaders over their territory. Only the great *kallu* stands above these nearly equivalent leaders”.<sup>4</sup>

The Abbaa Gadaa of Uraga tribe is by default taken as the prime in the context of Guji Gadaa, however, cannot interfere in the regional issues of other tribes. Taking one’s pick within the horizon of their integration on fraternal and equal bases is the leading principle for Guji as a yardstick of the form of administration among themselves. The unique case is that of Alaadduu tribe of which territorial unit is appeared as cradle of life and not that of political authority as independent part, because, it falls under the great *qaalluu* who ratifies and endorses the transfer of powers (as a neutral and impartial organ) during seizure of *baallii*. Therefore, the southern Guji establishes a political confederacy of three self-governing regions (*baaganaa-sadiin*) while Alaadduu takes care of religious issues.

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<sup>4</sup> John Hinnant, “The Guji: Gada as Ritual System”, in *Age, Generation and Time* (London: C. Hurst and Co. 1978) p. 230

Each region signifies a complete circuit of *baallii-shanan* operation within Guji confederacy, which is a union under *Gumii Bokkoo* with one prime where the great *qaalluu* oversees appropriate flow of law and order. In this federative system of Gadaa administration, the center of political, legal, religious, cultural etc, is firmly upheld. As *luba* is obligatorily designed to prevent powers' clustering into asset through the *doromaa* mechanism, constant ritual activities are central to the performance of Gadaa, all as regulatory methods. In effecting succession of power, a mystical authority of hereditary office is placed at the apex for power counterpoise. This is headed by *qaalluu* to control over the law-making and orderly performances of rituals for rank change and *baallii* transfer through legitimizing<sup>5</sup> the *luba* authority.

In general context, the *qaalluu* is a hereditary but symbolic head of the state, while the Abbaa Gadaa's of tribes are the actual regional presidents, the of Uraagaa being the prime. The Uraagaa's triumvir followed by that of Maattii and Hookkuu controls the timing of the entire *luba* cycle, both in secular and ritual activities. The *qaalluu* has the power of legitimizing secular authorities and furnishing religious leadership.

Thus, procrastination of *baallii* transfer or in other terms, retaining the scepter of authority beyond the predetermined eight years is undesirable to upholding the Gadaa democracy. In effect, the *baallii* must be transferred at a given month and date appropriate to ceremonial rites for power transfer.

Guji social organization is also characterized not only by tribal, clan and their constituents but also by the moiety system: Kontoma-Darimu categories in southern Guji, and Jema-Awaye in Ottu and the rest of northern Guji. These categories assume the natural denomination of people and play some social and jural responsibilities along with the patrilineal social system. As in the clan system, the moieties are not co-residential in general terms and mode of life<sup>6</sup>.

Guji confederacy is heeded under the *qaalluu* and the *Gumii Bokkoo* legislative where all tribes are considered one people among whom interspersions in terms of life and intermarriage are common. "Each tribe has its own clearly defined territory but anyone who wishes may move and settle in the territory of his neighbour, provided that he does not trespass on the grazing or watering rights of others. Usually, such immigrants become absorbed after one or more generations into the clan among whom they have settled"<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> John Hinnant, *The Gada System of the Guji of Southern Ethiopia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1977) pp. 98, 127-135

<sup>6</sup> John Markakis, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 19

<sup>7</sup> Haberland Eike, *Galla Sud Ethiopias* (Frankfurt: Frankfurt University, 1963) p. 783

### 3.2.4. THE GADAA: ADMINISTRATION WITH FULL CHECK AND BALANCE SYSTEMS

#### 1) The *Doromaa*

*Doromaa* means the rivalry and fraternity inherent in the Gadaa system of administration. In another ways, it is the coexistence of opposing and supporting parties (*luba*) as the unity and conflict of the opposites without which the system would have been not functioning in its present form. *Doromaa* is thus a mechanism to counterbalance power among the *baallii-shanan* through guaranteeing successive rotation of turns to assume power (*baallii*). This is made possible through interaction of two faces of *doromaa* called *wolaannaa* and *qadadduu*.

#### 2) The *Walaannaa*

In Gadaa administration of Guji, the *baallii-shanan* seize leadership role in a device of successive rotation the lives of which plays on an endless circular but rival tradition. Any *luba* is rival of both *lubas* that come before and the one after it. In other words, each *luba* is the opponent of the *luba* from which it takes stage and to which it passes over its place. These two *lubas* are known as *wolaannaa* (opponents) of the middle *luba*. Among the *baallii-shanan* of Guji, two are *wolaannaa* to a party while that party in turn has two *qadadduu*.

#### 3) The *Qadadduu*

On the contrary to *wolaannaa*, the two remaining *luba* are fraternal ones which support each other. The *luba* which come second before and after one *luba* in the cycle of power seizure are *qadadduu* to it, i.e, the *luba* from which the preceding *wolaannaa* of a *luba* and also a *luba* to which its next *walaannaa* leaves its place is fraternal to it (refer to the illustration of Gadaa cycle).

### 3.2.5. THE GADAA: IN COMPARATIVE VIEW VERSUS MULTI-PARTY SYSTEMS

With particular reference to the Gadaa System of Guji Oromo, there are both similarities and differences clearly seen in comparative view with the multi-party system of administration.

#### 1) Similarities

- i) **Recognition is the basic ethics and code (*gadaan woyyuu*):** both systems give due recognition to the party on power as a government
- ii) **Forming the Government (Legislature, Judiciary & Executive):** *gumii* - the legislative, Gadaa - the judiciary and *gosa/firu* - the executive
- iii) **Taking Care of National Matters instead of Party Matters:** once on power, the *luba*

on power performs national duties; *luba* issues are not major focuses for the *luba* on power

- iv) **Securing Social Ethics and Law Enforcement:** the party on power is responsible to maintain social ethics and enforcement of the laws
- v) **Membership to Parties:** there is membership in both systems, however, the membership in *luba* system is not by recruitment, rather, it is the birth right of citizens
- vi) **Leadership Always Endures Critics (*Doromaa*):** the party on power must always entertain or maintain critics and criticism from oppositions (*wolaannad's*)
- vii) **Educating Public Opinion:** the party on power does not only holds *yaa'a* sessions but also facilitates *gumii* to gather and review public opinions and to rehears proclamations
- viii) **Ensuring Security and Support to Members:** the party on power is responsible to maintain peace and security of the nation in general and citizens in particular
- ix) **Facilitating Effective Means of Changing a Government:** the party on power is responsible to facilitate effective ground and means of power transition ceremonies

## 2) Differences

As far as Guji Gadaa System is concerned, there is a clear difference from the multi-party system that makes Gadaa a system that has not only gone several steps beyond but also more advanced as compared to the modern democratic systems. These differences among the other include:

- i) **Age-set functional tabulation:** power exercise is not something offered spontaneously but every member of the community has a specific duty and job description exercised throughout life time from birth to death. Therefore, it can be said that there is neither childhood nor retirement in Gadaa System. Table 2 depicts the duration of stages and phases of the *luba* cycle.
- ii) **Irreversible power cycle:** the *luba* system gives equal chance to all citizens to exercise leadership with stable and fixed rotative fashion
- iii) ***Wolaannaa qadadduu* procession:** there is no chance of unnecessary power influence in *luba* system because one *luba* always stand with two *qadadduu's* while at the same time facing two *wolaannaa's*
- iv) ***Balbala-torba baallii-shanan* operation:** there is high social bond because all seven clans (*gosa*) exist in one of the five *luba* & in vise-versa all five *luba* exist in one of the seven clans



v) **Regional Autonomy:** there are *baaganaa-sadiin* (three regional administrative regions), however, there is inbuilt alliance between the regions to avoid imbalances and maintain social bondages.

vi) **Interregional *kontomaa-daarimuu* categories and intra-regional *fira* alliances:** whenever there is a movement from one region to another, a clan is treated in the way its affiliate is treated in that region; for instance, the Oborraa of the Hookkuu tribe is an affiliate of the Golla of Uraagaa so that its issues to be dealt under Golla tribe in Uraagaa region (acting as delegation or embassy in the modern admin)

### 3.3. LESSONS FROM GADAA SYSTEM

In relative view against modern multi-party systems, there are unprecedented and unparalleled lessons that can be drawn from the Gadaa System. Certain key points can be mentioned as indicators in this regards:

- 1) **Fixed and rotating office term:** the *baallii-shanan* cycle creates equal chances for all parties and citizens to exercise political, social and military duties and responsibilities in their community
- 2) **Good governance with loyal opposition and check and balance power:** the *wolaannaa-qadadduu* procession creates good governance with loyal opposition with proper balance in power that there is no unnecessary power influence in Gadaa System
- 3) **Neither childhood nor retirement in Gadaa System:** from economic and military responsibilities at early ages up to legislative responsibilities of the outgoing executives (*baatuu*, *yuuba*, and *yuuba-guddaa*) who make and rehearse customs, rules and laws, all citizens at all age-sets have duties and responsibilities to perform in the community
- 4) **Federal as well as confederacy system of administration:** *Kontomaa-Daarimuu* confederacy as well as *gosa-torba* state operations
- 5) **Autonomous regional administration:** the prime Abbaa Gadaa (of the Uraagaa tribe) has no right to perform activities in the territory of other *baaganaa* without prior information
- 6) **The *jaarree-utaalchaa* session:** on the mid-term (just after four years of administration) the empowered Abbaa Gadaa undergoes a serious test by opposition parties to prove that he is a tolerant, sound and committed leader

- 7) **Depowering oneself to empower the other:** the outgoing leaders always perform a special rite of *haaganaa-galchiisa* just before *baallii* transfer - leaders willingly depower themselves in front of God
- 8) **A brief session of briefing before power handover :** ‘*hoo mi’ii, hoo itittuu, hoo daraaraa... gadaa tiyyaa...*’, the outgoing Abbaa Gadaa briefs the cabinet of the incoming party on the accomplished and outstanding jobs of the outgoing Gadaa reign just before *baallii* transfer
- 9) **Coaching-up from childhood – fooqa naqiisa:** fathers at *yumba* stage train their children at *qarree* stage intensively for 28 days and hand over them to their *qadadduu* on Gadaa power for continuous coaching before promotion to *raaba* following Gadaa power transfer
- 10) **Separate religious and political institutions:** the duties of religious institution (*qaalluu*) is separated from political institution (Gadaa), in order not to mess religious matters with political matters; however, *qaalluu* institution has a responsibility not only to ratify political power – *qumbii-nyaachisa*, but also to watch over the duties of Gadaa – in occurrence of the cases of *liboomisa* – correction measures against the ruling body
- 11) **Vocational laws:** strict laws about handicraftsmen and traditional healers
- 12) **Laws about natural resources:** strict laws about wildlife, forest and trees, watering points, livestock, etc...
- 13) **Laws for socialization of criminals:** there is a special rite of socialization for murders - *harka-micciirata* for high-degree murderers, and *araarsaa* for accidental murder
- 14) **Family laws:** strict laws about neighborhood, elderlies, child-naming...
- 15) **The law of childhood and/or parenthood:** there are six categories of children, namely, *ilma-gudeedaa* (child from loin), *ilma-dhiiraa* (‘a child borne by a man’ – captive of war), *ilma-dbaalaa – ka miiloo-galee dhalate* (borne after performing the inheritance of the widowed family); and three forms of adopted children (*sadiin ilmaan guddisaa*), include, *mixicha* (mother married being pregnant), *saaphanticha* (mother married while the child on breastfeeding – less than 2 years of age), and *anwaarticha* (mother married after the child weaned of breastfeeding)...
- 16) **The law of social assimilation:** two forms of assimilating citizens (*galtuu maxxassan*), namely, *ibidda-diimaa (nama cimeessa yennaa dhufu borjoo harkaa malee womaa ifi biraa bin*

*qabne*), and *maqi-dhawata* (*ka maayaa maatii isaa woliin gale*). All categories have different levels of assimilation and privileges in the society

- 17) **The law of *dhaalaa-miiloo***: in order protect the family and children of the deceased from any possible abuses of the probably incoming husband or inheritor of the widowed family....
- 18) **Strict gender laws**: laws regarding the rights of girls and women such as recognition to marriage by exclusive choice of girls - *addibaana*, physical and economic punishment – *kutaa firaa*, upon infringed rights of wives, etc...
- 19) **Depowering oneself to empower the other**: the outgoing leaders always perform a special rite of *baaganaa-galchiisa* just before *baallii* transfer - leaders willingly depower themselves in front of God.
- 20) ***Baarguda buqqisuu*** – The *faga* of outgoing Abbaa Gadaa picks the *baallii* from his own leader who doesn't resist his power being taken away, And handover that *baallii* to the *faga* of the incoming Abbaa Gadaa, who then puts it onto his just appointed incoming leader, the action that concludes power transfer. One *baarguda* is already reserved for the incoming Abbaa Gadaa (please, look at the procedure of this power transfer system as indicated in picture-1 below in the references.
- 21) ***Gadaan teetii, gaaroon tiyya***: the outgoing Abbaa Gadaa says to the incoming one 'yours is the government but I will be there to give you guidance and advises' because he is going to be *yubba* who is a member of the legislature.
- 22) **Goodwill in governance as well as in *baallii* transfer**: the *luba* on power willingly facilitate the *gumii* summit, *baallii* transfer, and dictating on unfinished duties to the empowered party.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preservation of the unparalleled features in Gadaa System of Guji is not without costing the practitioners of the system. Not denying the fact that Gadaa was once at a turning point to extinction from being a functional system because of continuous, relentless and shifting influences of domestic colonizers, only the determination of practitioners on one hand, and the soundness of the system on the other, have managed to uphold Gadaa System to be still an unprecedented legacy of world's democracy.

From my extensive assessments, I experienced several impressions about Gadaa System of the Oromo nation in general. However, I can see some exception in the Gadaa of Guji Oromo among other Oromo tribes, which to me indicates either of two scenarios.

- 1) One scenario may be a reflection of the fact that, as a people still living at the cradle land of the Oromo nation at least before the Oromo expansion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the perfections reflected in the Gadaa System of Guji must be an indication of the original form of Oromo Gadaa System.
- 2) Another scenario may be an indication of the fact that, as Guji Gadaa has been handled far and free from any religious and political touches during the previous monarchical and military rules of the country, it must have been advanced to the current representative form of Gadaa System after the 16<sup>th</sup> century dispersion of Oromo people to different direction of the country.

My recommendations, finally, to do with strategic attentions that Gadaa System must be given. Gadaa System may face manipulations and it may lose its original taste paradoxically because of the international recognition given to it. Now, people may want to use its recognition for the sake of their political will and/or social capital. Therefore:

- 1) The system must be protected from abuses, which may happen as a result of negative impact of recognition;
- 2) Researchers need to work hard to undertake extensive researches more than any time to dig out and preserve the prominent values of Gadaa System and teach to the world;
- 3) I would like to recommend that curriculum must be developed on Gadaa System as a subject of 'Common Course' from Elementary all through University levels of schooling in order the generation have sufficient knowledge to maintain Gadaa values and proper transfer of values down through generations; and
- 4) Lastly, but not the least, I would like to recommend strategic development in the national plans of our country to maximize tourist attractions on values, practices, rituals and historical sites of Gadaa System.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## 7. TABLES AND CHARTS

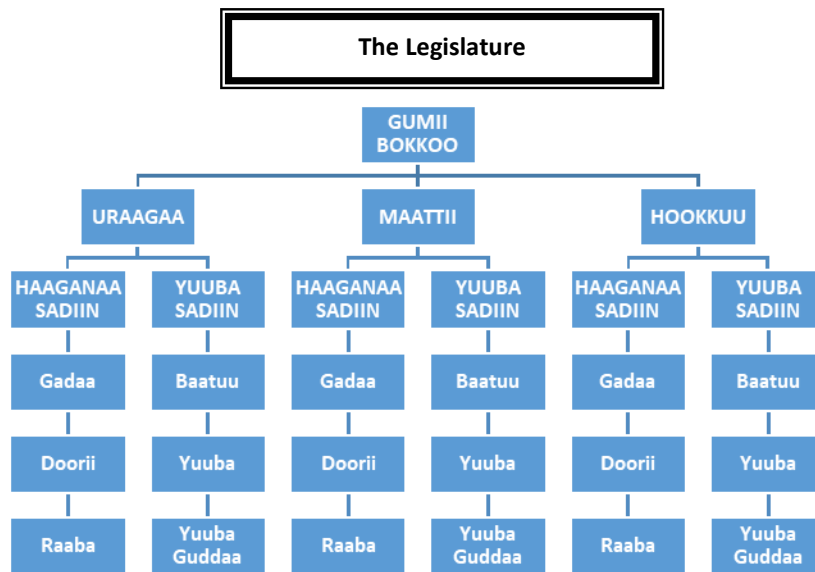
Table-1: Principal Informants of the Research

S/ #	Name of Informant	<i>Fira</i> (Clan)	<i>Luba</i> (Party)	<i>Baallii</i> (Power) in the <i>Luba</i>	Title in the <i>Baallii</i>	Abode	Year of Interview
1	Ababun'a Gambela	Oborra	Harmufa	Dabballe	-	Haraqallo	2007
2	Aga Xenxano	Golla	Halchisa	Gadaa	Aba Gada	Bule Hora	2007-9
3	Bariso Bilbilo	Agantu	Harmufa	Yuuba	Hayyuu	Bule Hora	2007-8
4	Gobana Borama	Balla	Dhallana	Dabballe	-	Haraqallo	2009-10
5	Gobana Dube	Galalcha	Mudana	Gubaa	-	Soyama	2010
6	Jarso Boneya	Balla	Robalee	Yuuba	Hayu	Haraqallo	2009-10
7	Jibicho Bule	Oborra	Harmufa	Doorii	Hayyuu	Saransar	2010
8	Jilo Mandho	Wajitu	Harmufa	Doorii	Abba Ya'a	Bule Hora	2007-9
9	Mi'essa Bulukisa	Oborra	Harmufa	Doorii	Hayyuu	Haraqallo	2009-10
10	Haj. Mohamad Quxa	Michile	Halchisa	-	UOPL Leader	Wadara	2010
11	Haj. Mona Godana	Oborra	Mudana	Yuba	Aba Gada	Jidola	2009-10

Table-2: Duration of Stages and Phases in the Luba Cycle

S/ #	Developmental Stages	Stage Duration		Government Phases	Phase Duration	
		n Year	n <i>Baallii</i>		n Year	n <i>Baallii</i>
1	Dabballee	1 - 8	1	Passive to Power	1 - 24	3
2	Qarree-duraa (I)	9 - 16	1			
3	Qarree-duubaa (II)	17 - 24	1			
4	Kuusa	25 - 28	½	Active in Power	25 - 48	3
5	Raaba	29 - 36	1			
6	Doorii	37 - 40	½			
7	Gadaa	41 - 48	1			
8	Baatuu	49 - 56	1	Retired from Power	49 - 72	3
9	Yuuba	57 - 64	1			
10	Yuuba-guddaa	65 - 72	1			
11	Jaarsa-guduruu	73 - 80	1	Extinct from Power	73 - 96	3
12	Jaarsa-qululluu	81 - 88	1			
13	Jaarsa-raqeya	89 - 96	1			
14	Ginya	97- Death	-	Extinct	97-Death	-

*Chart-I: The Legislative Structure of Guji Oromo*





### 8. ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration-I: Executive Members of Gadaa Office

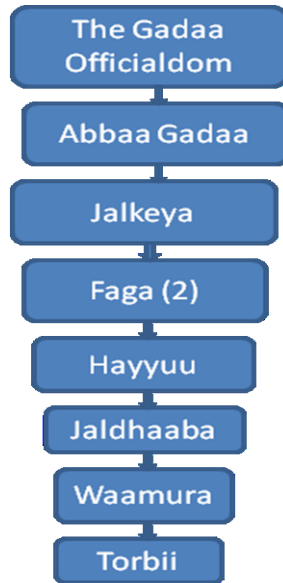


Illustration-II: The Judiciary Organs of Guji

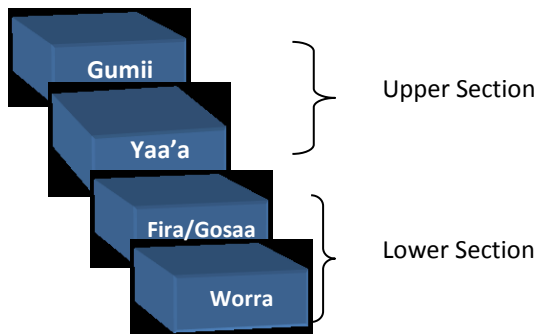


Illustration-III: Earlier form of the Five *Luba* Procession

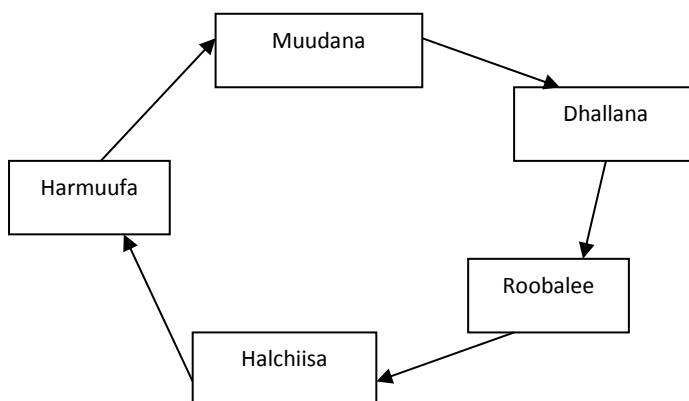
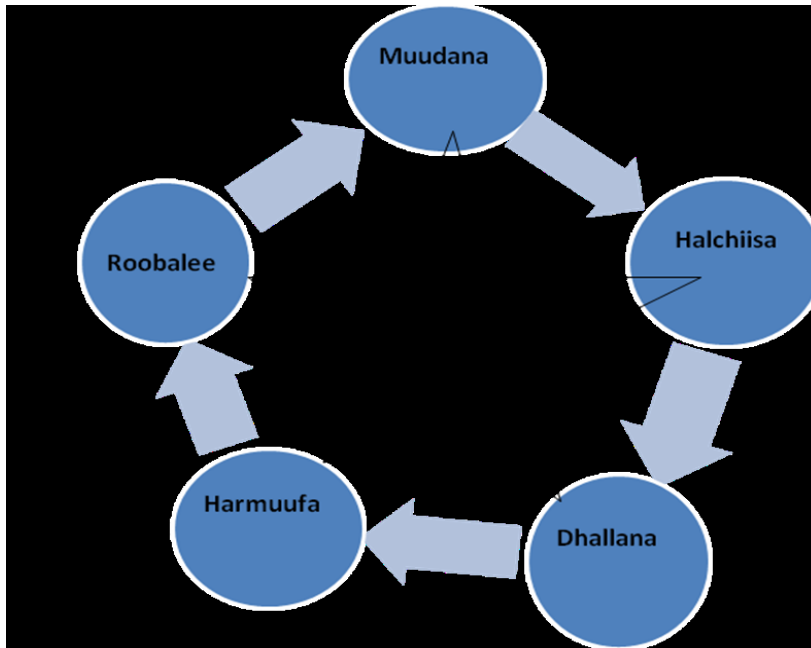
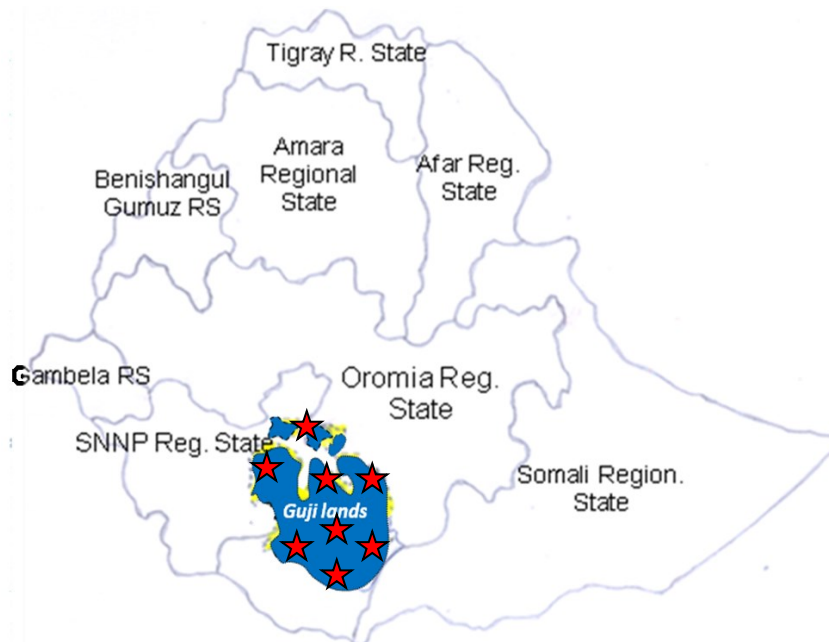


Illustration-IV: Later form of *Baallii-shanan* Procession



9. MAPS AND FIGURES

Map-1: Study Area



Map-1: The Study Area: Gujilands in Central-South of Ethiopia (approximately between 36°43"-41°40" east longitude and 4°30"-6°38" north of latitude)

Picture-1: Procedure of Power Transfer on *Baallii* Takeover

**An exemplary form of power transfer!**

The first photo shows the outgoing Abbaa Gadaa (left) selecting a *baallii* (right) from a group of candidates. The second photo shows the selected *baallii* being handed over to the incoming Abbaa Gadaa. The third photo shows the incoming Abbaa Gadaa placing the *baallii* on his head, signifying the completion of the transfer. The fourth photo shows the outgoing Abbaa Gadaa performing a ritual with a staff.

**The *faga* of outgoing Abbaa Gadaa picks the *baallii* from his own leader who doesn't resist his power being taken away**

**And handover that *baallii* to the *faga* of the incoming Abbaa Gadaa**

**Who then puts it onto his just appointed incoming leader, the action that concludes power transfer...**