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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION SYSTEM: - SOME NOTES ON THE GUJI
OROMO AGE OLD TRADITIONAL EDUCATION PRACTICES,
SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The main theme of this manuscript is to highlight the Guji Oromo indigenous education system; which needs the detail revision on historical, cultural, political, philosophical, religion, and geographical foundation of the society. It also indicates that the Guji Oromo have developed indigenous education system through which they transferred indigenous knowledge to the next generation. The study also shows that the education process is guided by well-structured traditional curriculum, which designed on the basis of indigenous calendar system; that is the source of age-set or grade process. And it also prescribes the timing of change every eight years by means of ritual performance, thereby simultaneously setting the individual sets or cohorts into clearly identifiable academic objects, contents instructional methods, evaluation and measurement techniques, which ended with the organization of, pass-and fall ceremonies. At each stage, Gadaa members are educated in Oromo history, military strategy, law, and governance. The study was conducted through qualitative research method. It is useful technique to interpret and probe qualitative data that

gathered from secondary and primary sources. The collected data categorized and interpreted thematically, to keep coherence of historical facts.

1. Introduction

Historically, the Oromo have developed all rounded indigenous knowledge on medical, agriculture land ecological through generations of intimate contact with their natural environment. It is clear that the Oromo indigenous knowledge was developed as time-tested adaptations to their unique environments, which conditioned by their specific cultural contexts. Therefore, the Oromo have retained cumulative body of indigenous knowledge, know-how, practices and representations maintained and developed through extended histories of interaction with the natural environment. These sophisticated sets of understandings, interpretations and meanings are part and parcel of a cultural complex that encompasses language, naming and classification systems, resource use practices, ritual, spirituality and worldview of the society. Thus, such indigenous cumulative knowledge has to be transferred from generation to generation through the practice of indigenous education, which is original in its characteristics, and evolved through time to use as a channel to transmit values, customs, traditions, norms, experience, and values to the next generation.

The knowledge is, therefore, very important that enables Oromo's to improve, change, as well as develop and conserve his environment for the purpose of all-round developments of the society. The Oromo have developed indigenous education system, which was useful to educate the child for adult life where he will be in a position to fulfill his responsibilities of the adult life. Therefore, the education provision is a lifelong experience, which consists of the passage of human beings from childhood, to maturity, the process by which individual adopts himself gradually in various ways to his physical and spiritual environment as well. Hence, it requires an appropriate direction to set a new process in motion and change the alarming situation

However, the introduction of traditional (Church and Mosque) and modern education systems into the Guji Oromo territory had brought impact on indigenous education system, which was a vital means to tackle the yoke of poverty, and provided people with opportunity to promote sustainable development. This was continued until the incorporation of the Oromo into the Ethiopian central gov't in the late early 19th century. After the conquest, most of the Oromo groups have been forced to abandon the *Gadaa* system of rule, and obligated to adopt the state political culture. This followed by super imposition of Western scientific education culture at the expense of the Oromo indigenous education. However, in Ethiopia, most scholars have given emphasis to the study of the contributions of the traditional education systems, but the significance of the Oromo indigenous education has never been given due attention by the scholars.

2. Historical Background

The Oromo of Ethiopia, where the Guji are part, are the largest Cushitic stock, and inhabit in the area that extends from northern Ethiopia to northern Kenya, and they also live in between the Sudan and the Somali lands for about thousands of years with the practice of complex worldview, philosophy, and linguistic, astronomical, political, religious, architectural and cultural achievements. They are speakers of *Afaan* Oromo, which is the branch of the eastern Cushitic language family, and a sub-branch of the Afro-Asiatic super language family that spoken throughout the Horn of Africa. Currently, regionally, *Afaan* Oromo becomes official language and uses as medium of school instruction, court language, the language of religion, mass media, films, drama, literature, and etc. In the later course of history, in the 18th century, the Guji-Oromo, due to demographic and ecological dynamics, have divided into different autonomous confederacies, and led by separate *Gadaa* administration units though the central principles of the system remained intact. While establishing these autonomous local governments, the Guji formed alliances, federations, and confederations to maintain their cultural and political solidarity.

Currently, the Guji live in south of Oromia Regional State. Since the 2016/17, due to demographic and the quest for good governance, the former Guji Zone has been divided in to two, namely, West Giji Zone with its capital Bule Hora town, and East Guji Zone with its capital Negele Borena, respectively. The Guji live in a large territory which is found at 450 K/M away from Addis Ababa. The area is bounded by Borana in the South, Walayta and GamoGofa in the West, Sidama and Gedeo in the North, and Bale and Arsi in the East, respectively.

Thus, the Guji territory is said to be one of the cradle lands of the Oromo cultural heritages, which justified by the function of the *Gadaa* system as a comprehensive social, political, religious, and economic indigenous institution that contributed by the ancient Oromo social science philosophers. However, ‘The lack of critical scholarship has inadvertently distorted the human achievements of peoples like the Oromo, including transformations of their social, cultural, and political institutions.’

3. Some Aspects of the Guji Indigenous Education System

It is essential to make things more clear to readers that the *Gadaa* indigenous education system encompasses some aspects such as philosophical, sociological, psychological, historical, religious, leadership and cultural, which used as important foundation for the beginning of modern education system as well. Thus, *Gadaa* system is said to be a comprehensive philosophical paradigm, which composed of a set of rules, moral, values, principles, regulations, orders, norms, and traditions that are expected to be learned by all individuals at different psycho-motor human development levels and institutional settings. Thus, the knowledge has been

taken as special means to mold one's social, political, religious, cultural, economic and environmental attitudes.

In every aspects of the *Gadaa* system, all male Oromo have brief duties, rights and responsibilities to practically implement as the social, religious, economic, political and cultural mandates. Therefore, the Oromo in general and the Guji in particular, educational philosophy, goals, aims, objectives, contents, procedures, principles, strategies, program, evaluation and measurement techniques, decision-making approaches and etc. emanated from the *Gadaa* government social laws. This is coined as, "*Gadaa* is an indigenous socio-political democratic system of the Oromo people that regulated political stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligations, moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the society." For example, political education system addresses the "three main values: terms of eight years, balanced opposition between parties, and power sharing between higher and lower levels." Therefore, the Oromo indigenous knowledge could not be treated without considering *Gadaa* system, which is a pillar institution and address all aspects of the Oromo people.

4. The Guji Indigenous Educational Curriculum

Here, the term curriculum may cause a sort of debate as most of the scholars tie it with the modern education, and they define it in terms of guidance that helps human beings in the process of knowing through schooling. Foundations are the forces that influence the minds of curriculum developers, which affect the content and structure of the curriculum. These forces are beliefs and orientations as well as conceptions of learners and the needs of society. Accordingly, the Oromo indigenous education system is guided by indigenous curriculum even though people did not know whether it is a curriculum or not. However, the curriculum designed on the basis of the Oromo time reckoning system or calendar or a lunar year system that had been developed by astronomical expert called *Ayyaantuu*. Such indigenous calendar is become the basis of which "[the Oromo] schedule their lives, their rituals, their ceremonies, their political and economic activities to a very high degree." It is said to be unique human achievement that found in East Africa, which used as important time framework to schedule social, political, religious, economic, and etc., activities. For example, they require to schedule the rank change to respective age stage and to perform ritual ceremonies, to estimate time, to schedule time for power handover ceremony, and etc. Furthermore, it is described as follows: "The [Oromo]...calendar is a great invention and it is the source of *Gadaa* process....They also schedule their lives, their rituals, their ceremonies, their political and economic activities to a very high degree." Unfortunately, after the conquest of the Oromo territory by Menelik II, in the last decades of the 19th century the Oromo native lunar system was replaced by the Christian Gregorian calendar system.

5. Educators

Under the *Gadaa* government rule, the Oromo indigenous education was conducted by individuals, who have the required intellectual competence to teach citizens at different academic levels. For example, at primary academic level, children have been taught by their fathers, mothers and elders. In a normal circumstance, the Guji higher education educators also recruited from the upper age-grade or *yubaa* group to give training for the *kussaa* age-grade members at *fooqa*, (a training center in the *Gadaa* system). These educators were supposed to have been well experienced about the contents of the instruction or the lesson that include traditions, customs, norms, history and others. Moreover, educators are also responsible to design the training on all aspects, and they also train civil servants such as judges, governors, treasures and general administrators. In the *Gadaa* system, there are individuals called *Abbaa Ragaa*, which means father of oral history or father of history. Like the Christen chronicles, *Abbaa Ragaa* have engaged in social-political events, experiences, and changes of different *Gadaa* periods, and memorized them and teach children about the Oromo history, values, beliefs, politic, custom, tradition, resource conservation and utilization skills, and etc.

6. Teaching Methods

Like many non-literate societies in Africa, the Guji indigenous education is dominantly used oral method to teach children about all aspects of their life such as history, culture, and political information circulate across generations without any interruption. Mostly, proverbs are believed to have also used as a medium of transmission of socio-cultural information like customs, beliefs, norms, moral codes etc. from elders to the youths, among the people in all occasions. In this regard, elders have significant role to transmit the traditional values to the young; and they are responsible to teach citizens about the values of each aspects of morality such as truthfulness, purity, charity, respectfulness and etc., and the importance of social laws by which the people are governed.

Group discussion is also another teaching-learning method through which indigenous education has been implemented.

It becomes more applicable on different occasions like in people's daily life, on festivals, assemblies, and various ceremonies in the society. Therefore, members of different stages were expected to meet under *Gadaa* center and shared knowledge; and successful achievement of age specific task or activity at any *Gadaa* age-set is believed to have taken as special criteria to transfer from the lower age group level to the next *Gadaa* age-set structure. Therefore, the interest to have clear insight about the nature of the indigenous education system seems to have been unthinkable fact without the knowledge of the *Gadaa* system. The system is very complex philosophical achievement, which discovered by the Oromo forefathers.

It is the obvious that the Guji indigenous education is hierarchically structured through which knowledge is grown step by step in each specific age-set or age-grade system. Like, after preliminary life skill training (0-8 age of years) peer group teaching approach would be employed to train the next age-set group members. Here, group interactive learning activities are mainly presented to the group members, and everybody needs to take part in group activities and learn from others and contribute his/her knowledge to his/her partners as well.

Moreover, a better understanding of the Oromo indigenous education system in general and the Guji in particular, requires purposeful identification and exploration of the main characteristics and the essence of the *Gadaa* system. Let us have some understanding of the Oromo kinship system since it has been the basic social structure for defining common interests in resource management and utilization and in the process of the establishing political and religious leadership and in forming leagues or confederations among the Oromo society.

7. Age-grade Institution

The Oromo ancestors, as part of the ancient Cushitic stock, in the Horn of Africa, were known by their innovative talent; and they have left behind to us sometime important socio-political achievements without which the success of local development schemes could not be achieved. Among others, the invention of the *Gadaa* system by the Oromo social scientists has not yet covered by the scholars.

Furthermore, under the *Gadaa* government rule, the Guji-Oromo divided into different social organizations or institutions, which provided them favorable condition to promote social, political, economic and religious affairs. For example, the age-grade hierarchical organization of the society, particularly the male population to succeed the age sets each other every 8 years, and it laid the ground for the formation of indigenous social institution, which used as the center where citizens provided with the age-related trainings or learning opportunities, which helped them to develop their thinking or operation skills in economic, political, military and social responsibilities. Furthermore, Desalgn coins as, “The gadaa system organizes [the Guji] social life around a series of generation grades that assign obligations [and] rights to all the males...each man...is...placed for life into a ready-made pattern position and moved through it, performing various services....”

Therefore, under the *Gadaa* government rule, the Guji-Oromo were organized into different successive age-sets or grades, which provided educators with important precondition to provide age-specific or related instructional services that aimed to bring the expected behavioral change at each human psycho-social developmental stage. Therefore, educational significance of the age-grades is described as, “The grades are also periods

of initiation, training, work and performance. The roles and rules attached to the age-grade system are the most important elements... that [e]very Oromo man...is expected to perform a certain function....”In addition, the age-set or age-grades play their vital role in the creation of favorable condition for a human generation to share common cultural, social, political, and religious values of the society as an important aspects of the education system.

Moreover, the age-set members have provided with instruction, which helped them to develop the sense of group identity. Depending on the group’s allocation of roles and self-esteem, the boy or adolescent also develop the sense of affiliation, and he begins to think of himself only as a part of the group. He is also expected to develop group skills through observation and working with adults, and he will gradually become expert of it. For instance, when an Oromo man passes from one age-set to the next, his duties and way of life in society also changes. For instance, during the first three grades of *qondaala*, *kuusaaand raabaa-doorii*, individuals learn war tactics, Oromo history, politics, ritual, law and administration over a period of 24 years. When they entered into the *gadaa* class or *luba* at the age of 40, they have already acquired all the necessary knowledge to handle the responsibility of administering the society and celebration of rituals. Accordingly, there is appropriate correspondence between the human psychological maturity level and the Oromo indigenous education structure, which designed to bring about the expected behavioral change in the minds of learners, who categorized into each age-set social institution. Furthermore, Asmerom, argues, “As though the man who graduated from all the college with the most important responsibilities of social and political leadership and with the obligation of transferring such responsibilities to younger groups in a handover ceremonies.”Similarly, Eyasu also notes in the following way.

..., if one want to be Gada, he has to pass through levels such as Dabale that takes (0-8 years), Game titika (9-16), Game gurguda (17-24), kusa (25-32), Raba Dori (Kondala) (33-40), Gada (41-48), Yuba I (49-56), Yuba II (57-64), Yuba III (65-72) and Gadamoji (73-80). In this hierarchy Gada is the highest level and the ruling one. After eight years on position of ruling the society he come back to Yuba I which is an advisor for Gada that of his descendent one. When one shifts from Raba Dori (Kondala) to Gada he has to do a lot (like on his speaking skill, military skill, and leadership skill and way of conflict resolution) in order to be Gada. This indicates that there is a clear cultural education that Gada has to pass through

The above evidence reveals that the *Gadaa* indigenous education system was developed in relation to these local socio-political realities. Therefore, it was a system “neither built over a night nor...something copied and pasted from others. It is an indigenous ruling system of the people. It is a long history of the people that passed from ancestors to successor through embedment. They teach their descendant through participatory method of

learning, which is a very strong teaching method that might be a base for today's constructivist theory of learning.”

Unlike the other forms of Ethiopian traditional education systems (Church and Mosque), the *Gadaa* indigenous education provision is equal for all, and people enjoy their education rights starting from birth to old age. They have their own activities to take part in. The system lets the students to engage in / embedded in / in all group activities, which can be taken as important criteria to pass from one *Gadaa* to the next on the basis of a graduation ceremony. The idea is elucidated in the following way: “The grades were also periods of initiation and training as well as periods of work and performance. The most important element that regulates *system* is the responsibilities and rules attached to the age-grade system. Every Oromo of specific age-grade is expected to perform a certain function according to specified rules and regulations.” In general, in the Oromo *Gadaa* indigenous education, learning and training activities could be happen from birth to the age of forty in five age grades that would be treated under the succeeding topics.

The Dabballee Gadaa Stage (0-8)

It is known that development (body and mind) is a gradual process through which the child is acquired knowledge of the environment, control of motor skills, linguistic abilities, and collective relationships. Therefore, the development of these elements is said to have begun at home. This reveals that the family at the early age of children could play a pivotal role in shaping all of their future.

Starting from birth, the Oromo children are immersed in a cultural setting that values the authority of elders and emphasizes practical knowledge. Thus, children (0-8 years of age), learn some basic life skills such as the law, respect for their ancestors' culture, admire of the Oromo nation, appreciate the Oromo brave, identify their ancestor, and learn about their unique ethnic identity and others orally from their family. Every citizen has to learn the dynamism of the *Gadaa* system and grades that consist of several elements that would appear in their livelihood. For instance, it is explained as: “...the fathers have to teach their children, practice with their children, in the family, informally with friends, formally at the public..., all Oromo are informally practicing it, ... and made it their culture; and reflect it in their daily lives...” At this early age, the family and relatives would be so busy to teach the kids about the Oromo values and cultures in the form of riddle, number, poem, dancing, singing, role playing, storytelling, legends, and others because at this age level having wide range of knowledge could exactly determine the kids future.

Children learn how to perform ‘imitative play’ in which children portray the roles of adults; through this role-playing, they become familiar with the behavior and attitudes expected from them as the future members of society. They also learn about other valuable cultural elements such as matters of procreation, parenting, and domestic life. Boys gathered in a cleared area of the forest in groups of as many as thirty or forty, and learned how to

construct houses, organize domestic spaces, store foods, defend against theft, and procreate with their future wives in such a way as to ensure conception. In contrast to this, girls gathered in smaller groups of fours or fives in the house of a ritual teacher and learned how to cook for their future husbands, prepare certain foods and medicines which ensured fertility or prevented pregnancy, maintain standards of hygiene, and feed and care for children. Both groups were believed to have initially instructed by village elders who quizzed and drilled them about their respective lessons. These lessons, although quite different in content from those taught in school. Most notably, initiation lessons address common issues of nutrition, commensally etiquette, and cooking. They are training courses for youth becoming adults. Both involve conveying to young adults the values and beliefs of an adult community interested in reproducing itself socially.

Thus, in the *Dabballee* age grade, members need immense care and affection not only from their family members, but also from the community at large, the clan, the neighboring and relatives. In addition, they learn jokes, folk names, and how to act, and pronounce words. Furthermore, they remain under sustainable protection that enhances to learn wide range of knowledge and experiences. Asmarom discuses as minor obligations would be given for this stage children from their family members. The family inculcates cultural and ritual values as code of ethics. Learners' cognitive maturity level is given account in selection of instructional contents. Thus, instructional contents composed of simple activities that fit to their age and learn through imitation from their elders, repeating of short poem songs, practicing names of the family (dad, *Abaa*, mam, *Ayyaa*...) and role playing is also immense. Thus, the Oromo parents have developed rich indigenous teaching culture, and children provided with the chance to learn about history, facts, their identity, and self-efficiency, which enable the learner culturally to be competent and mature members of society. This had been maintained for many thousands of years up to the encroachment of alien cultural elements. Dereje elucidated as the kids are the gift of God (*Waaqaa*) who created them, and the children considered as mediators between GOD and men, then they are the means to get blessing of *Waaqaa*.

Children learn about family management skills, like the habit of equality among others. Practically, in the family, there is no any sign that signifies the sense of inferiority, which demands separation at the table. Furthermore, Salviac notes as: "Men, children, women...are seated together at the family meal. The little boy and the little girls are not excluded. No slaves, no servants." Unlike the Abyssinians, therefore, the Oromo teach their children about the knowledge, which is helpful for their life and the society as well. This is coined as, "The male children learns to enumerate the names of his ancestors as far as the 15th or 20th generation...Everyone invariably traces the root of their genealogy tree..." This knowledge is essential to maintain cultural heritages, and it preserves the stability of conjugal union of the family. In the absence of a family for several generations, it is possible to get back by stating its genealogic title.

The children moral foundation is built on their family. In the family, children openly treat to develop emotional strength, which enables them to be competent enough in their future life. In this connection, Salviac, argues as, "Take a young Oromo of a good family,...he reflect the soul of a free...moment, he questions, he observes, he is diffident, he acknowledges without difficulty the ignorance of his nation, he wishes to learn and learns with success." In contrast to this, the Northern Oromo like Wollo, Rayya, Azebo and others have almost lost the above cultural heritages due to their assimilation into alien cultural elements. Currently, the practice of functional *Gadaa* system is questionable, except in Guji and Borana.

The Oromo have developed rich indigenous moral energy of arousal knowledge through which is vital means to develop the quality of body gesture and oral narrative skills. They have the sense and the love of poetic beauty, which consists of different heroic chants, poems, fables, stories, the sacred stanzas, etc. Such knowledge is important to maintain prestige, dignity, success, independence, unity, fraternity, peace, security, honor, confidence, oratorical skill, etc. However, the new generation has lost the chance to learn such ancestral cultural heritages. Thus, the Oromo child is said to have accustomed from early on to explore his environment, which shapes the patterns of his intellectual talent, and his knowledge also crafted in line with the success of his future life demands.

At this stage, corporal punishment is forbidden. Therefore, children provided with parental love and affection, which enabled them to develop the sense comfort and trust to their caregivers and family members or environs. Physically, they have long *guduruu* (hair) that regarded as a symbol of this particular age. No need of shaving hair in this stage since it considered as age related symbol and grows longer and longer up to the upcoming of the next *gadaa* grade. In the family, in general, children learn different life skills through practical engagement such as imitation, and they express their personal feelings through the practice of lyric songs, and they exercise some short personal poems and other easy activities that are essential to master starting from birth to the next age grade level. At the end of the *Dabballee* age grade (ceremony), gifts presented from their family and relatives. Here, the child could create personal property and relatively begin to think independently.

The childhood protection and provision of all necessary needs for every child could affect their life in the future. Thus, the Oromo give proper attention for their kids of this age (0-8). The attention of the family for kids of this age is immense even today. Rather than other *Gadaa* grades, the *Dabballee* age grade is still more or less functional in all the Oromo lands.

The Gaammee Xixiqqaa age Grade (8-16)

The Oromo child in general and the Guji in particular, provided with different practical activities, which helped them to learn more about physical and psycho-social parental skills. This is stated as, "From his childhood, the young Oromo, in following the herds, plays...to run, learns how to handle spear...on the razed grass...; he slides, he jumps,...he depicts

bending and shows the face of a circle...The young men share the thousand catastrophes of hunting with the grownups.”Therefore, in the Oromo family, *Gadaa* is an important institution, where the child equipped with principles, rules, ethics, conduct and he becomes competent without modern school, and he becomes eloquent without rhetoric, soldier without enlistment, lawyer without code, theosophist without effort, and he advances with steps in the accomplishment of his duties, and he assimilates the character of the race.

Under this stage, the members are expected to learn and take some minor duties like looking after the cattle. In addition, they learn electively some artistic and physical skills. These include how to dance, how to sing, how to perform *geerarsa*, how to swim, how to ride horse, how to obey orders of family and elders, how to celebrate holy days with family and elders. Unlike, their predecessors, children’s hair would be shaved but at the middle small size of hair let to grow up called *roggee*. They learn how to comb, wash, and keep the beauty of their hair and body as well. In this stage, the students permitted to drink some soft local beer. They feel happy, thus, participate in dancing, chanting individually or in group.

Unlike the former stage, children begin to act independently, and they develop the sense of the lower self-esteem. According to tradition, *Gaammee Xixiqqaa* members (small children) are free from any type of corporal punishment that has been imposed over them either by their family or relatives. They are respected and helped to construct moral values, and they become efficient enough to obey moral orders that emanated from different parts of the society.

The Gaammee Gurguddaa (Foollee) age Grade (16-24)

Unlike the preceding age grade members, *Gaammee Gurguddaa Gadaa* grade members begin to lead independent life, even at home they are expected to have separate bed. Scholars confirm this age grade as the end of adolescent age and beginning of adulthood. It is a unique period to exercise some potential responsibilities. They learn knowledge related to architecture, craft techniques, military and physical skills through observation and direct participation approaches. They have to involve in hunting, killing of wild beasts, protect cattle from beasts at the grazing field. They learn how to fight, how to throw the spears, how to protect spears of enemy, how to use shield during fighting and how to swim. The skill of using horses on fighting also begins in this stage. They develop the knowledge about their environs.

Through observation method, they also learn about different geographical features such as mountains, rivers, ponds, lakes, streams, gorges, valleys, plateaus, forest, soil-type, climate or weather condition, rainfall, wild animals, grass, roads, etc. Such knowledge is important to promote social, religious, political and economic activities. Accordingly, young men have to take part in war campaigns and hunting activities because they have cumulative skills and knowledge of warfare, military organization, and fighting so that they can engage in battle to defend their country and

economic resources as well. In this regard, the Oromo have developed indigenous socio-political knowledge, which was vital in all aspects. It is stated as: "...to mobilize troops, and a quite distinct organization based on closeness of age-sets...exist for that purpose." This age grade members have the love, respect and reward from the society. They begin to act as a fame person in the society (developing sense of self-esteem and proud). They also practice how to build cows den, and the home of the family.

In the *Foollee Gadaa* age grade, during dancing praising of famous leaders, the wealth of the Oromo land, the prosperity of the Oromo people, the struggle that the Oromo made for their right and the wellbeing of the society have been briefly stated. In addition, they implement immense *gadaa* principles, values, procedures and rule of law. They considered as the agents of liberation, social justice and rule of law. They fight against corruption and maintain social order backed by the advice provided by elders. At this stage, the *Foollee* have the duty to struggle the corrupt leaders of the society. Furthermore, the elders told the *Foollee* members, how to play various roles in managing their family in the future, the process of marriage tie and the respect it has in the society, and the issue of administration would also the theme of this stage. They also learn how to enhance socially sustainable life and economic development. In addition, the members preserve *Gadaa* rules with the help and advice of the elders jointly. Advising, teaching and controlling those who have violated the culture of the society are also duties of these stage members.

The Qondaalaa Age Grade (24-32)

The Guji indigenous education includes a core set of lessons that integrates children and youth into the adult community. The *Qondaalaa* are exposed to practice dancing (*geerarsaa*) of high status. They are well experienced on this regard. They begin to prepare themselves to join the next *Gadaa* grade where several obligations awaiting them. They also play key role in the election of leaders. They know each other to make competence based election decision that has immense contribution to have stable and secured society. They expected to share experiences outside their clan and age grades. They also develop their political competence which is recognized as great reputation in the society. In addition, they develop the habit of team work, which enhances their sustainable cooperation skills. As to Asmarom, the members of this age grade expected to involve in activities like military campaigns that could influence their achievements in the future leadership duties.

For the purpose of election, they require open and participatory competition criteria that express physical and mental abilities like running, jumping, riding, throwing of spears, playing *qillee*, swimming and other games are some activities used for physical performance as indicators of candidate's achievements. In the process of election, the candidates should have to possess all rounded competences such as intellectual, social, and emotional maturity that eligible for election. Regarding this stage, it is noted as: "...the *gadaa* classes and the age set come into being as a formal corporate group:

Leaders are elected for both groups. The name of the most senior man in each group becomes the name of the group as a whole. Between the third and fourth *gadaa* grades, boys become adolescent and initiated into taking serious social responsibilities. The ruling group has responsibility to assign senior leaders and experts to instruct and council these young men in the importance of leadership, organization, and warfare. They also learn songs, parables, proverbs, cultural and historical maps, and other social skills that they can use in public speech to praise the living and dead heroes or to criticize and ridicule cowardice and traitors. Oratory, the art of public speaking, is highly valued in Oromo society; it is explained as follows: "...the forms of delivery, the wit of the speaker, his tone of voice, his posture, eye contact and ability to command the attention of the audience" are skills to be honed and admired."

The Raabaa Gadaa Age Grade (32-40)

Here, the members are ready to learn culture and law in broad manners. They perform special dancing and singing of various events like bravery and periotic reputations. They could also establish family institution (marriage), and then can have their own property like cattle and others. The view is stated by referring the Oromo proverbs as follows: "...the one who couldn't be for self couldn't be a *gadaa* leader." This implies that the role of management skill began from their home level. Here, we can determine the extents of family institution and its importance as basic criteria to take societal responsibilities. In this grade, they have to act as councilor, class leader, initiating different set of rituals, and blessings activities. They have the duty to defend their country from enemies, lead it in the future. They are matured in experience and have long experience, know each other well for the purpose of making proper decisions.

For the sake of understanding, it is worth to address the disparity existed in their duties and obligations that expected from them in each grade. For instance, dancing and singing are all age duties that everyone performs accordingly. The difference is on the depth and full understanding of the historical values that could be stated in dancing and singing. At the lower stage, these physical activities are more of imitations of what others doing without knowing the detail meaning of poems. But, at the higher stage, the *gadaa* grade members fully understand all words and poems they used to address the historical facts. Thus, they express personal creativities and innovations with the reputations that lead them to be fame in the future.

The highest *Gadaa* grade, higher officials, the *Hayyuu* groups have developed indigenous leadership experience; and then they are considered as teachers, trainers, or advisors of the *Raabaa* group or the new *Abaa Gadaa*. Therefore, the higher officials teach the new *Abaa Gadaa* about leadership skills that enriched with the past experience. This may take a stays for a week or more weeks. The lesson include national history, the duties of the new officer, the advice how to keep leadership protocol (riding horse), how to maintain gender equality, how to protect human right, how to be ethical and efficient leader. Accordingly, the new *Abbaa Gadaa* is said to

have learned the terminologies of politics, learns how to administer, the history of decision-making, get the advice and experiences from the outgoing officials.

According to the Oromo tradition, in the *Gadaa* system, higher officials were considered as the sources of knowledge that enriched with long period of leadership experience. Thus, they can build the capacity of the people by teaching and training through their skills, sharing their knowledge, and they serve as reference books. Therefore, *Abaa Gadaa* is responsible to be a symbol of public representative who serves the people and he witnesses that the source of power is people, and he is accountable to ensure the success of development.

Historically, at each age-set level, citizens have provided with political education with the objective to develop their knowledge on the *Gadaa* democracy, which is relevant for the current condition of the 21st century mankind in the world. Therefore, learning about the *Gadaa* democratic principles (periodic election, the rule of law, majority rule and minority right, accountability and transparency, peaceful power transfer, public participation, the right to express one's opinion, the right to speech, etc.) becomes the essence of the Oromo indigenous political education, which enabled students to have an understanding on Oromo *Gadaa* system. This idea is mentioned as, "...how Oromo democracy had functioned as a socio-political institution by preventing oppression and exploitation and by promoting relative peace, security, sustainable development, and political sovereignty, and how the *gadaa* system organized Oromo society around economic, cultural and religious institutions." This stage is the final part of learning and training, in the next *Gadaa* grade, the trainees would be competent to accept various high level responsibilities. Therefore, the 5th *Gadaa* grade could be considered as the last level of learning, which resulted in graduation of members and becoming efficient and responsible expert to alleviate different challenges of the society. In addition, the Oromo moral education equips learners with ethical values such as peaceful coexistence, unity in diversity with all natural things. Students indoctrinated with the knowledge that help them to have understanding about the extent to which violation or breaking of natural law could affect the social and the cosmic order. Therefore, everyone has got courage to respect the *Safuu*, whose violation would breaks peace among people.

8. The Guji-Oromo Indigenous Education Experts (40-80)

In the *Gadaa* age-grade structure, these whose age is between 40 and 80, have been considered as knowledgeable and competent enough to take economic, social, political and cultural responsibilities. In most cases, in the society, they are perceived as leaders, court officials, administrators, ministers (minister of war, economy, justice, and etc. On the age of forty, all the age-set or grade members would have completed the highest education level, and became elites and capable to administer every aspect of the

society. Particularly, the year (40-48) is important time when citizens expected to implement what they have been studied, experienced, and achieved from the indigenous education provisions during the last five *Gadaa* grades (0-40). Therefore, on the *Baalli* ceremony (power transfer) of the *Gadaa* system, the young leaders would take leadership position from the outgoing party and administer the country for the next eight years of office term. According to the Oromo *Gadaa* law, remaining on power for more than eight years is forbidden. The power transfer is peaceful; and it is still practiced among the Borana and the Guji Oromo of south Oromia. The incoming *Gadaa* party members required to publicly demonstrate their various competences, which have been practically developed during the last *Gadaa* grades of *Kuusaa* and *Doorii*. Thus, the completion of the duration of indigenous education is noted as:

Gadaa /Luba (41-48): it refers to men that accomplished all the five stages and then graduated. This is the optimum age of having maturity, skill and capacity of shouldering and discharging societal responsibilities. The most significant stage in the political life of Oromo males came when they entered this stage, in which they gained full privileges and acted as the political leaders.

According to the above evidence, the *Lubaa* stage is said to be the stage of practical application of the skills and knowledge gained in the process of education. Therefore, in this stage, the members would be given the chance to implement what they have been learned in the last forty years in the indigenous academic life.

9. The Advisors (49-80)

The member of this stage-set is composed of individuals whose age is greater than 48 and less than 88. After eight years of ruling, then, the *Gadaa* retires and become a *yuuba* elder. These leaders are the *Yubaa* groups, who maintain the duty of consulting and advising of the new leaders, the different age grade members and the whole society as well. Therefore, the groups take over advisory functions and act a mediator, ritual expert and peacemaker. Even today, in all Oromo territories, such advisory roles of the elders are undoubtedly immense and functional.

In the passage of time, the Guji-Oromo indigenous education was eroded out, and scholars also became reluctant to conduct study and systematically demonstrate the contributions played by the Oromo indigenous education system in general and the Guji in particular. As a result, the knowledge and is subsequently being forgotten and replaced by "modern" education and technology. "... the formal or Western-style education system currently in place, is associated with Western thought; and provided by Western-oriented educators as better than indigenous instructors, whose knowledge is typically associated with folk knowledge and hence considered "inferior or traditional." This implies that the western educators are superimposed

their own style of education system at the expense of the indigenous education practices.

10. Conclusion

The Oromo in general and Guji-Oromo particular, have mainly transmitted their history and culture from generation to generation through application of indigenous education system, which was valuable to secure the quest for human and democratic rights. The system was well-adjusted, and became responsive to all social, political, economic and cultural demands of the society. However, scholars failed to give attention to the contributions of the Guji-Oromo indigenous education system. Instead, historians attracted by the study of the history of the Ethiopian traditional education systems (the Coptic Church and mosque) that provided people with spiritual conception instead of secular knowledge.

Specially, after the conquest of the Guji, in the 1890s, by Emperor Menilik II, the values of indigenous education system was obscured, and replaced by Western education system, which failed to suit local realities and circumstances. Western education system was superimposed on the Guji without due account to the values of public cultural identities. Thus, the imposition of modern education affects the indigenous education system and thereby produces social elites who alienated from their indigenous education system. As a result, the Guji indigenous education elements have been at the verge of disappearance, and scholars should have to take immediate measure to restore and register local values or facts with the objective to transfer them to the next generation, and thereby they are expected make conjunction between the notion of indigenous knowledge and Western scientific knowledge to ensure the success of national and local development schemes. Accordingly, the Guji indigenous knowledge, which is vital means to maintain cultural values, helps to cope up with socio-economic disorders. However, the contribution of the Guji indigenous education has not been clearly verified. Such historical treasures of the society seem to have been given little attention by researchers.

School curriculum needs to be formulated by individuals, families, communities, and indigenous teachers all have the opportunity to participate in formulating curriculum policies, developing curriculum programs, and implementing these policies and programs to ensure the success of development goals. With such participatory practice, community members would ensure sensitivity to traditional customs and social norms, leading to a more culturally appropriate formal education.

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