

# Oromo Indigenous Philosophy (Gadaa System): The Case of 74<sup>th</sup> Gujii Oromo Gadaa Power Transition

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate *Gadaa* power transfer, which is performed every eight years among the Oromo society in general and Gujii Oromo in particular. In this study the researcher employed both the primary and secondary sources. Secondary data sources were collected by assessing published and unpublished materials. The primary data were collected through observation, discussion and interview. Furthermore, these data were described qualitatively. Finally, all data were analyzed and interpreted carefully according to social science disciplines. As revealed by the study, power (*baallii*) transfer is a ritual celebration passing through different steps and concluded by sacrificial activities from giving and taking *Abbaa Gadaa's* peacefully. The findings of this paper indicated that in *Gadaa* Democracy power transferred peacefully through fair, free and periodic election. It has real significance in intercommunity peace-building and sustaining social solidarity and integration. Finally, the paper explored how the Oromo nation developed this amazing and exemplary philosophy for self-rule, self-determination and sustainable development. It also illustrates how it had functioned as a socio-political institution by preventing oppression and exploitation and promoting relative peace, security, sustainable development, and political sovereignty.

**Keywords:** Gadaa, Baallii, Gujii, Abbaa Gadaa, Oromo, Gumii Bokkoo

## Introduction

This paper has the product of several studies conducted on the *Gadaa* System. Among these scholars, Cerulli, Asmarom Legesse, Hunting Ford, Martial De Slavic, Marco Bassi and P. T. W. Baxter and some others are contributed a lot for the study of the indigenous Oromo socio-political philosophies. The 13<sup>th</sup>c was the emergence of powerful Christian kingdom and Muslim sultanates in the north central Ethiopia. It also the time of massive political and religious crisis which had affected the socio political and religious life the Oromo people. However, in 16<sup>th</sup>c as a result of the Oromo expansion they regain their lost power and territory. For many scholars, Oromo history began in the 16<sup>th</sup>c when the Oromo were actively recapturing their territories and rolling back the Christian and Muslim empires. At that time Oromo people had a form of constitutional government known as *Gadaa*. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>c, when various peoples were fighting over economic resources in the Horn of Africa, the Oromo were effectively organized under the *Gadaa* institution for both offensive and defensive wars [1].

*Gadaa* system helped the Oromo people both militarily and administratively, enabled them to expand their territories. However, after 19<sup>th</sup>c *Gadaa* had been reduced to ritual system among many Oromo areas. The decline of *Gadaa* system over Oromia regions were not the same. When in some areas of Oromia region it reduced to ritual system, while in some Oromia regions such as Gujii and Borena areas it was survived. These were as a result of internal and external problems. These are “nonfederal nature of the *Gadaa* System, lack of Strong Central government, lack of regular meeting of *Gadaa* official and long distance of *Gumii* (assembly) from political center made *Gadaa* system less Competent [2]”.

It is essential to know those internal factors such as class and state formation processes and their articulation with external factors such as European and Ethiopian colonialism, the emergence of an Oromo collaborative class, and the spread of Islam and Christianity undermined the political and military roles of the *Gadaa* system in the nineteenth century. These changes did not totally displace Oromo values and traditions. There are still some elements of these values and traditions in Oromo society. The *Gadaa* system still helps in maintaining peace, and transmitting knowledge, and practicing rituals between some moieties and groups in Gujii and Borena Oromia [3]. Under such conditions, it is very difficult for *Gadaa* officials to meet, discuss and decide developed social and economic problem and power transfer. As a result of these factors the political culture of the Oromo was restricted and *Gadaa* was reduced to ritual system [4].

The Gujii original homeland is known to be Adola. According to oral tradition the history of Gujii people is traced back to one man called Gujo. As researchers argued “Gujo born and lived in Adola for long period of time and moved northeast ward with his three sons Uraago, Mattoo and Hokkuu. They settled in the area called Girja. After many years his descendants moved to different areas. For instance, Uraago groups are moved to the west, Mattoo groups are moved to the north and Hokkuu groups moved to South. After long period of time the name Gujo changed to Gujii [5].” Gujii society is composed of seven major divisions, Uraaga, Maattii, Hookkuu, Haloo, Weessituu, Ottuu and Sheelloo. However, “only three of these (Uraaga, Maattii, Hookkuu) have currently

lived nearby environs to each other, while the others integrated with other ethnic group and settled separate from others”. As a result, only the three stand under common *Gadaa* democratic system and possess the *Haaganaa* (political power) of Gujii. This is why the Gujii’s traditional political administration often refers to *Haaganaa Sadiin* (the three regional states) [6].

### The Structure of Gujii Oromo *Gadaa* System

The study of human history is started to administer themselves before thousands years during ancient time. Their early life was depending on the some arranged ways which determined their life. The Oromo nations have developed different systems of governance in their history. Among such governments, *Gadaa* System is the most comprehensive system of political, legal, religious and social system of the Oromo society. *Gadaa* is an indigenous socio-political system “that regulated political stability, economic development, social activities, cultural obligations, moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the society”. It is controversial among scholars when and how the indigenous Oromo *Gadaa* system emerged [7]. Among the various descriptions given on the origin of *Gadaa*, some holds that *Gadaa* laws are originally derived from ‘*Waaqa*’ (God). As different scholars described “*Ga*” represents *Seeraa* (law), “*Da*” represents *Waaqa*(God). Therefore, this view tall as *Gadaa* was derived from law of God (*Seeraa Waaqa*). Oromo oral tradition also supports in the early days, *Gadaa* was purely a religious institution that helped the society as a constitution later it came to bind the Socio-economic, political and religious life of Oromo [8]. The political philosophy of *Gadaa* has “principles of checks and balances, terms of eight years, balanced opposition between parties, and power sharing” to prevent power from falling into the hands of dictators. Other principles of the system have included balanced representation of all clans, lineages, regions and confederacies [9].

In the *Gujii* Oromo society, this system of administration used different social settings such as *Lubaa*’ (socio-political groupings), ‘*Baallii*’ (political power holder) ‘*Yaa’a*’ (regular session of delegates in the ‘*Lubaa*’), ‘*Gadaa*’ ( Ruling party headed by ‘*Abbaa Gadaa*’), ‘*Haaganaa*’ (members of congress who have political powers and represent three Administrative division of Gujii *Gadaa*(*Uraaga*, *Maattii* and *Hookku* ), *Gumii Bokkoo* (the congress of three Gujii *Haaganaas* held each eight years at place called ‘*Bokkoo*’) which is the highest authority in the Gujii *Gadaa* system. Thus, political, legal, cultural, social and religious administrative activities in the *Gadaa* System planned, organized, staffed, directed, coordinated, and reported by these channels of social settings. In the political structure of Gujii *Gadaa* system there are five *miseensaa* (parties). These five parts includes *Muudaana*, *Halchiisa*, *Dhallaana*, *Harmuufa* and *Roobalee*. These five parts (*Baallii Shanana*) were formed the cycle [10].

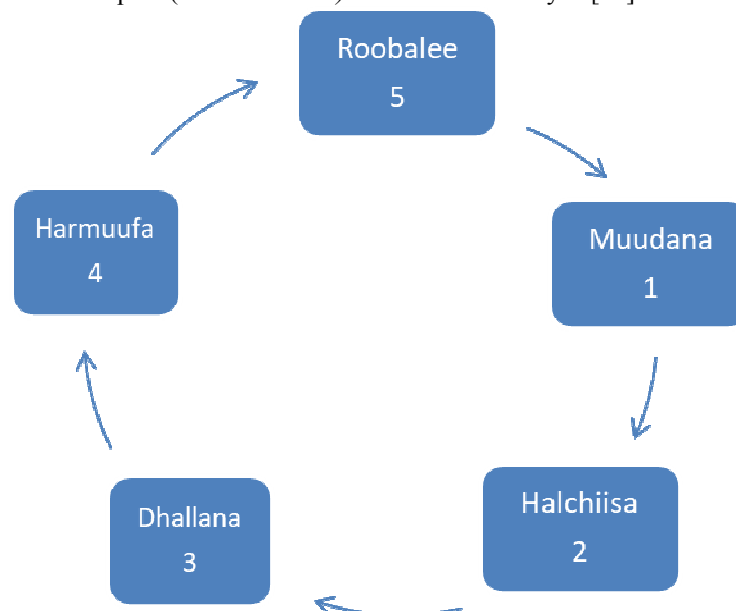


Fig 1: The cycle of five parts or *Baallii Shanana Gadaa* in Gujii Oromo

*Abbaa Gadaa*’s of Gujii are ranked in terms of their birth order. By the virtue of his seniority, the *Abbaa Gadaa* of *Uraagaa* is taken as the major (President) of the Guji Society. On the other hand, in the *Gadaa* governance system, the *Qaalluu* institution (religious institution) was significant in the check and balance of power. The primary role of *Qaalluu*’s (religious leaders) was offering religious leadership in the religion of *Waaqeffanna* [11]. *Qaalluu* used to direct *Gadaa* initiation ceremonies, handover power and *Muudaa* ceremony. “*Muudaa* ceremony is a ceremony performed every eight years when all elected Gada officials paid visit to the

*Qaalluu* and get blessing and recognitions for their next leadership.”*Muudaa* ceremony was conducted to consider *Qaalluu* as the father of law and the representative of *Waaqa* on the earth. It also regarded as a graduation time for those who entered the *Luba*[12].

In other words, *Abbaa Bokkuu* was a chief executive in the *Gadaa* assembly. According to G. W. B. Huntingford “The *Abbaa Bokkuu* and his two colleagues are chosen from the most distinguished families known as ‘*Hayyuu*.’ The principal function of the *Abbaa Bokkuu* is to preside over the parliament ... to proclaim the laws, and to act when necessary as ritual expert in the *Gadaa*-ceremonies.” *Abba Gadaa* is another name for *Abbaa Bokkuu*. The *Abbaa Bokkuu* was also supported by a council, known as *Salgee*, and retired *Gadaa* officials [13]. This might happen among *Gadaa* parties starting from lower level of *Gadaa* and through higher active and passive stages. Another character of *Gadaa* system of governance is it does not depend on property, social classes etc. This implies that political power was not in the hands of the rich class and the system in which the poor were dominated. In the *Gadaa* system of governance power is not exercised from the center. The nature of *Gadaa* system of governance is Federal type[14]. In electing leaders “there is a general understanding among the electors and the men competing for offices to be *Abbaa Gadaa*. These are past military achievements, Oratorical talent, mystical attributes, wisdom for settling dispute, traditional knowledge about the society and his potential for future leadership is the most important factors to be considered [15]”.



Fig 2: Jilo Mandho, the 74<sup>th</sup> *Abba Gadaa* of Uraaga

The value system of Oromo society has been influenced by the *Gadaa* and *Siiqqee* institutions. In pre-colonial Oromo society, women had the *Siiqqee* institution, a parallel institution to the *Gadaa* system that “functioned hands in hand with *Gadaa* system as one of its built-in mechanisms of checks and balances.” These two institutions helped to maintain *Safuu* in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private matters, social status and respect, and sisterhood and solidarity by preventing men from infringing upon their rights [16]. *Gadaa* system and the *Siiqqee* institution had influenced the value system of Oromo society. [17].

### Gujii Oromo *Gadaa* Grades

In socio-political aspect male members of Gujii Oromo are grouped into age grade “*hiriyaa*” (peer) system. To simplify these there are several *Gadaa* grades. For Example, *Dabballee* (0-8), *Qarreeduraa* (9-16), *Qarree duubaa* (17-24), *Kuusa* (25-28), *Raaba* (29-36), *Doorii* (37-40), *Gadaa* (41-48), *Baatuu* (49-56), *Yuuba Diqqaa* (57-64), *Yuuba Gudda* (65-72), *Jaarsa Guduruu* (73-80) and *Jaarsa Qululluu* (81-88). In the *huuba* cycle *Dabballee*, *Qarree Duraa* and *Qarree Duuba* are passive *Gadaa* stage. On the other hand *Kuusa*, *Raaba*, *Doorii* and *Gadaa* stages are active Political stage. However, *Baatuu*, *Yuuba Diqqaa* and *Yuuba Guddaa* stage are retirement or departure *Gadaa* stage. Moreover, *Jaarsa* stage is called Extinctive stages of *Gadaa* system [18].

In Oromo society, knowledge and information have been mainly transmitted from generation to generation through the institutions of family, religion, and *Gadaa*. *Dabballees* are expected to learn appropriate social behavior from their families, communities and experts. *Dabballee* is a productive time to study Oromo myth, riddles (*Hibboo*), stories of different types, *geerersa*, cultural songs. *Qarree duubaa* stage is the most important stage in the *Gadaa* cycle when the members shoulder family responsibilities and engage in military exercise. In other words, this period was the period of enjoyment and military training. In domestic life, they engaged in how to prepare and use plowing materials in agriculture, utilization of property, family management and social life by

observing culture and *seeraa* (law) of the society [19].

*Kuusaa* stage is a matured stage for formal military engagement under the instruction of the *Abbaa Duulaa*. Horse fighting and horse riding games were the main activity of stage. This stage was attached with dual tasks in the society: military service and training for *Gadaa* leadership. *Raabaa /Doorii* are a period when the contenders were planning to take power in the next *Gadaa* period. Members of this grade were known as senior warrior. It is the remarkable stage at which individuals gain art of leadership and philosophy. The stage was also a period of preparation for leadership to take over *Baallii* from the exiting *Gadaa* leaders. *Gadaa /Luuba* stage is refer to men that accomplished all the five stages and then graduated. "This is the optimum age of having maturity, skill and capacity of carrying and discharging societal responsibilities. It is the most significant stage in the political life of Oromo male's society, in which they gained full rights and acted as the political leaders[20]".

"*Baatuu*, *Yuuba Diqqaa* and *Yuuba Guddaa* stages are called as advisors of the *Gadaa* government. The oldest group is the *Yuuba*. It is composed of person whose members were in power in previous times. Next is *Luuba*, the ruling party [21]. *Baallii-Shanan* or five parties system is the operational mechanism of the *Gadaa* cycle that regularly at even intervals, assumes political powers. *Haganaa* means the *Luuba* authority (political power) contained by the council who represents the entire population among Gujii. It is the *luba* administrative authority from the members of *Gadaa*, *Doorii* and *Raaba* parties of *Uraaga*, *Maattii* and *Hookkuu* [22].

### **The Role of Oromo Women in *Gadaa* System**

Historically, Scholars are argued as Oromo women have no powers during the period of *Gadaa* rule. In *Gadaa* democracy women cannot be *Abbaa Gadaa* or *hayyuu* in the clan leadership structure. However, this scholar validates this view as the wife of elected *Abbaa Gadaa* is equally treated like the *Abbaa Gadaa* himself. The question for why women marginalized from *Gadaa* System is still controversial among scholars. For some scholars, the reasons are rooted in cultural, socio-economic and biological factors[23],[24]. Other scholar also argued as "Under *Gadaa* system, women do not belong to the *Gadaa* grade of the clan in which they were born and to which they are married. Unmarried women are viewed as *keessummaa* (guest) and *Alagaa* (non-relative) in the clan to which they are married" [25]. Though, even if, the issue is still debatable it doesn't mean that women didn't have role in the *Gadaa* Democracy. Basically, *Gadaa* system is not the issue of being *Abbaa Gadaa* or not being *Abbaa Gadaa*. *Gadaa* Democracy is the issue of Oromo socio-political philosophies that required equal participation of both male and female.

Furthermore, others also argued as age-grading *Gadaa* system by itself is obstacle to women participation. This idea confirm that "naturally women need to give birth to children and to look after their home and children which affect them to pass through all *Gadaa* grades like the men"[26]. But as a mechanism of check and balance and to counter the male domination they developed their own parallel institution known as *Siiqqee* institution [27], [28]. However, under *Gadaa* umbrella the role of women as part of Oromo community is fundamental and very vital. Women are half part of Oromo society and equally considered with men under *Gadaa* system. It is believed that *Gadaa* system is not complete without role and participation of women. According to Debela, "women are pillar of the *Gadaa* system and in all cases without the women's participation there is no *Gadaa* System." He also argued as the role of women in *Gadaa* system to promote moral and ethical order of Oromo community is large. In the *Gadaa* system, "if *Abbaa Gadaa* dies by chance, it is his wife who takes the position and run *Gadaa* leadership until the next *Gadaa* leader elected." [29]. Thus, *Gadaa* system is a system in which the rights of women are respected. Therefore, that is why Oromo women formed a parallel institution of their own under the protection of *Gadaa* system and it stands for women's ritual, political and social power in the society. Therefore, for me *Gadaa* system and *Siiqqee* institution are a coin of opposite sides [30].





Fig 3: Both Gujii Oromo elder men and women marching to 74<sup>th</sup> *Gumii Bokkoo* assembly

During the *Gadaa* power transfer, it is the women with the *Siiqqee* that blesses and decorates the ceremonies for the person who gives and takes over the *Gadaa* offices. Again, Ragatu quotes as ‘‘The newly elected officials walk under the *Siiqqee* sticks raised up by women standing in two rows and touching the other tips of their *Siiqqee* together’’ [31]. Thus, both *Gadaa* and *Siiqqee* institutions helped to maintain *Safuu* (Oromo moral codes) of Oromo society. It functions hand in hand with *Gadaa* system and it has given big opportunity for Oromo women to articulate their views and address issues of concerning to women [32]. Generally, in the *Gadaa* leadership, women are actively engaged through *Siiqqee* institution and they deal with all aspects of their life [33], [34].

#### The Assessment of 74<sup>th</sup> *Gumii Bokkoo* Assembly

*Gumii Bokkoo* is the congress of the Gujii confederacy (*Uraagaa, Maattii and Hookkuu*) held once eight years at a place *Me’ee Bokkoo*. It composed of nine authoritative organs called *Haaganaa Saglan* comprising of *Haaganaa Sadiin (Gadaa, Doorii and Raaba)* and *Yuuba Sadiin (Baatuu, Yuuba and Yuuba Guddaa)* from each three tribes of Gujii as a law making body. *Me’ee Bokko* is currently located in the East Gujii zone, Anna Sorra District between Bore and Adooladistricts. *Gumii Bokkoo* is central authority, legislative organ, and Supreme Court for all political administrations, power transition, law-rehearsing, law-makings, and highest judiciary of the Gujii people [35]. According to the *Gadaa* system of government, power is in the hand of the people. The members of *Caffee* or *Gumii* used to work as a representative of the clan. The *Gumii Bokkoo* assembly has the highest degree of authority than the *Gadaa* and other assemblies, and what *Gumii* decides cannot be reversed by any other assembly [36]. The main task of this parliament was to enact reform and proclaim laws. The assembly was held in the *Caffee* which under the shade of *Me’ee* tree. The Shade of *Me’ee* tree was assumed ‘‘the source of peace, the office of the government, the meeting ground for the elders and the sacred place of the religious duties’’. When the *Gumii* members met under the *Me’ee* tree the *Abbaa Gadaa* sat on the right and other notables on the left, by seniority of their tribes or clan and the age of the participants [37].

According to Gujii *Gadaa* structure *Gumii* is the general assembly that the previous laws are revised and new legislations were introduced by the *Gadaa* council every eight years. Accordingly, a well-known community leaders, key informants and prominent *Gadaa* leaders of Gujii communities were fully interviewed primarily on procedures and practice the transition of *Gadaa* power (*Baallii*) [38]. The 74<sup>th</sup> *Gumii Bokkoo* Assembly is held in the East Gujii Zone, Anna Sorra district at place called *Me’ee Bokko*. According to Bule Hora University indigenous Knowledge team report it estimated to be ‘‘more than half of million people were attended the events’’. During this *Gumii* assembly, different indigenous laws proclaimed, amended and rehearsed, cases entertained, different individuals and social rites of passage were performed, customary and traditional values updated [39].





Fig 4: 74<sup>th</sup> Gumii Assembly at Me'eeBokkoo

As Gujii elders narrate, the assembly takes five consecutive days before power transition. Each day, members of different *Gadaa* classes such as *Gadaa*, *Doorii* and *Raabaa* members of *Uraagaa*, *Maattii* and *Hookkuu* confederacy move in line to the center of meeting or '*Agaalla*' [40]. There are two travelling roots. The first leading segment belongs to the line of *Gadaa* members of the three confederacies orderly keeping their own line. The second segment is '*Doorii*' members of all three confederacies respectively and the third segment is '*Raabaa*' members of the three confederacies. During this *Gumii* traveling to the center of assembly various announcements are made, including travelling norms and other laws by the *Yuubas*. This speech continues up to the arrival of '*Gumii*' members to the '*Agaalla*' and formal discussion officially opened [41].



Picture 5: Gujii Oromo elders marching to *Gumii Bokkoo* during 74<sup>th</sup> *Baallii* transfer from *Dhallana* to *Harmuufa*.

On their way to '*Agaalla*', the walking approaches, wearing styles, spear holding sides and forms, walking speeds, passing norms, and other relevant issues are popularly announced to all to be respected. These announcements made by responsible '*Yubaa*', who moving forth and back in passing *Gumii* expedition, being in each travelling roots. Throughout the stay of '*Gumii*' assembly, these procedures, orders and norms are always kept and followed. If one misses it, the peace keeping '*Jaldhabaa*' or Police will order him to correct it. In fact, these announcements always used to notify every travelling member up to the end day of general convention as '*Gumii*' moves in same pattern [42].

When *Gumii* expedition arrived to the center of the assembly the setting arrangement is done according to their '*Rigaa*' (teeth brush) stick prepared from 'Me'ee' tree. Start from first day of *Gumii* assembly this '*rigaa*' is put in specific place by each member to identify their previous seat. Thus, '*Hayyuu*' order the members to have a sit only on their previous place. They proclaimed and rehearsed laws on different social matters. These laws can be categorized as family law, administrative law, criminal law, personal law, environmental law, succession law, property law and some others. [43].

In the Gujii *Gadaa* system, '*Gumii Bokkoo*' is a legislative organ of Gujii *Gadaa* administration. To realize and discharge legislative roles, it held once within eight years [44]. During proclaiming laws, there is no formal procedure to proclaim and review laws as a means of managing session. Instead, the session is coordinated by

four communicative phrases.

These phrases are 'Toggise', 'Qophise', 'Qoxise' and 'Waabese'. Accordingly, these formal phrases help to avoid interruption. In other words, when one *Hayyuu* orally proclaimed and rehearsed laws he memorized once and concluded it by saying 'Toggise' which literally mean now I have this much and if I remember another I will continue. Then the one who made himself ready to proclaim and rehearse, take turns by pronouncing 'Qophise' which literally mean I have something forward for you. If two 'Hayyuu' once saying 'Qophise' then the one who want to be first said 'Qoxise' which mean I object to be first. Thus, when maybe there is 'Hayyuu' who go beyond the specified laws, the other 'Hayyuu' interrupted him to stop by saying 'Waabese' which literally mean he is exceeding, and transferred turn to others. After rehearsing and proclaiming of laws is done, *Abba Gadaa* of Uraaga order policy (*Jaldhaaba*) to let the participants of *Gumii* session to back to their 'Qachaa' or temporarily resident. Then 'Jaldhaaba of Boroo' let the participants of session to back to their resident [45].

### **Aftermath of *Gumii* Session and the Process of *Baallii* (power) Transfer**

After *Gumii* assembly takes five consecutive days before *Baallii* transfer, there are different ritual performances as a precondition for *Baallii* transfer. The handover ceremony began one year before the actual transfer of the *Baallii*. Among such ritual performances *Maqbaasa* (naming), *Qarre buufata*, *Hayyoma*, etc are the most prominent one. This ceremony is done by slaughtering of cattle in front of their 'Qachaa' (temporally resident). The members of 'Hagana Saglan' enjoy different cultural practices such as *weeddu* and *sirbaa* (song). Both female and male members enjoyed by playing songs of cattle, consolidate of their members, criticism each other and perform cultural value *Gadaa* system [46].

As it discussed above the term office of the elected *Gadaa* leaders was limited to eight years and ending with a formal power transfer ceremony called *Baallii*. According to *Gujii* elders, *Baallii* transfer may not be change unless the country faces natural or manmade problems such as dislocation of people, war, famine, drought etc. In *Gujii Gadaa* history due to above factors there are several periods that *Gadaa* power transfer is overlapped and one *Abbaa Gadaa* alone stayed for more than fifteen and above years. In *Gadaa* democracy the refusal to hand over power was considered as the violation of the *Seeraa Waaqa* and it disturbed the regular cycle of the *Gadaa* system. Even in *Gujii Gadaa* democracy there is a person called as Yaya Dale who refused to give power to the next *Abbaa Gadaa* [47], [48].

*Baallii* ceremony was a transitional ceremony that involved large feasting and extensive ritual activities. It was a period when the strength of the incoming *Gadaa* members (Luba) was tested. It was also a time when incoming *Gadaa* class took the socio-political and religious power from the outgoing *Gadaa* class. On the date, at early morning, groups of *Doorii* from each three *Gujii* congress or *Yaa'aa of Uraagaa*, *Maattii and Hookuu* come to 'Qachaa' of ruling *Abbaa Gadaa* to take the power. In the meantime, all *Abbaa Murtii*, the new *Abbaa Gadaa* comes to their respective clans from each seven *Gujii* clans. Soon after arriving at door of 'Qachaa' of *Abbaa Gadaa* he calls them saying 'Yaa Worra kana'- roughly speaking hello of this home. Then *Abba Gadaa* keeps silent until he repeatedly calls three times[49].

However, later on, at the fourth call he replays 'Yaa'. Greeting them they enter 'Qacha' of ruling *Abbaa Gadaa*. The transfer of power was carried out when *Abbaa Murtii (Hayyuu)* transferred the *Baallii Guchii* (ostrich feather) from the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* to the incoming one. To transfer *Baallii* means to transfer authority or Power. The two parties exchanged milk and blessings. Then the one who takes power accepted the 'Eebbaa' (blessing) through handing over seven 'Daraara' from outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa*. These 'Eebbaa' confirm the existence of abundances, peace, and respect during the passing *Abbaa Gadaa* and ambition of the same by taking *Abbaa Gadaa* in his *Gadaa* reign. During the ceremony the incoming and outgoing *Gadaa* class slaughtered bulls and the ceremony accomplished by the legal experts (*Hayyuu*). Finally, *Gadaa* Power transferred from leaders of 'Dhallana *Baallii*,' who were ruled for last eight years, to the candidates of 'Harmuufa *Baallii*,' who is going to rule for coming eight years[50].





Fig 6: Jilo Mandho, *Abbaa Gadaa* of Uraagaa after he took *Baallii* and marching to his '*Qacha*'

### Methodology

Many scholars have made an incredible effort to reconstruct the history and culture of Oromo society. In this study the researcher employed both the primary and secondary sources and different data gathering instruments. Secondary data sources were collected by brief review of related literatures by assessing published and unpublished materials. The primary data were collected through observation, discussion and interview. Moreover, these data were described, expressed and articulated qualitatively. Oral tradition is resourceful historical source that refers to human actions reported through speech and handed down from generation to generation. A critical use of Oral traditions helps the researcher to reconstruct history of Gujii society. This was followed by conducting field research among the Guji Oromo, which preserved *Gadaa* democracy for long period of time. This method provided me indispensable data to study *Gadaa* system. The data were gathered through interview and discussion with *Abbaa Gadaa*, *Hayyuu* or other Oromo elders during *Gadaa* power transfer. Finally, all data were analyzed and interpreted carefully in the standardized rules of the social science disciplines.

### Conclusion

*Gadaa* is an indigenous socio-political system that regulated Political stability, Economic development, Social activities, Cultural obligations, Moral responsibility, and the philosophy of religious order of the Oromo society. In Gujii *Gadaa* system there are *Muudaana*, *Halchiisa*, *Dhallaana*, *Harmufa* and *Roobalee* parties. These five party systems are the operational mechanism of the *Gadaa* cycle. *Gumii Bokkoo* is Gujii social assembly of the Gujii confederacy (*Uraagaa*, *Maattii* and *Hookkuu*) held every eight years at a place *Me'ee Bokkoo*. It composed of *Haaganaa Saglan* comprising *Gadaa*, *Doorii* and *Raaba* from *Uraagaa*, *Maattii* and *Hookkuu*. During this *Gumii* assembly, different indigenous laws proclaimed, amended and rehearsed. As Gujii Oromo elders narrate, *Baallii* transfer may not change unless the country faces natural or manmade problems such as dislocation of people, war, famine, drought etc. The term office of the elected *Gadaa* leaders was limited to eight years and ending with a formal power transfer ceremony called *Baallii*. Power was transferred from one party to other party peacefully through fair and free and periodic election. *Baallii* Ceremony was a transitional ceremony that involved large feasting and extensive ritual activities. It was a period when the strength of the incoming *Gadaa* members (*Luba*) was tested and it was a time when incoming *Gadaa* class took the socio-political and religious power from the outgoing *Gadaa* class. The transfer of power was carried out when the legal expert transferred the *Baallii Guchii* (ostrich feather) from the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa* to the incoming one. The two parties exchanged milk and blessings. Then the one who takes power accepted the '*Eebbaa*' (blessing) through handing over seven '*Daraara*'. It confirms the existence of peace, and respect between giving and taking power of *Gadaa* and ambition of the same by taking *Abbaa Gadaa* in his *Gadaa* reign. Finally, 74<sup>th</sup> Gujii *Gadaa* Power transferred from leaders of '*Dhallana Baallii*' who were ruled for last eight years from (2009 to 2016) to the candidates of '*Harmuufa Baallii*,' who is going to rule for coming eight years from (2016 to 2023).

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