

The Role of Women in the ‘Shanee-Salgee’ Structure of the Macca Gadaa System

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Abstract

This paper investigated the empowerment of women in the Maccaa Gadaa system through the 'Shanee-Salgee' structure, despite their underrepresentation in research. The study claims that women have equal rights in lawmaking and decision-making, based on the proportion of seats held by women in the Shanee-Salagee structure. The research uses a descriptive design and qualitative approach, with data provided by elders and specialists in history and culture. Methods such as document reviews, focus groups, and individual interviews were used. The data analysis confirms the long-standing contributions of women to the Maccaa Oromo Gadaa System. The Maccaa Gadaa Shanee-Salgee structure reveals that women have always had the same rights as men under the system. They start with an equal proportion of seats with males across ages, allowing them to make their voices heard in the assembly of lawmakers and pass decisions. Women in Oromo culture have the legal right to engage in social practices and own property, and have significant influence over religious practices, household finances, and social, economic, and religious development. The anointing of Haadha Siiqqee was necessary for Abbaa Gadaa to be empowered. It is crucial to maintain and transmit the Gadaa system, where women play crucial roles, to future generations.

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INTRODUCTION

The Oromo people are the largest nation in Ethiopia. They speak Afaan Oromoo, which is one of the Cush language families (Gadaa, 1998). Living in the Horn of Africa for a long period of time, the Oromo have created their own administrative philosophy known as the Gadaa system. They have also developed varieties of rituals, morals, values, and lifestyles that are bound to be performed according to their Gadaa system. The Oromo Gadaa system is said to have been the most

democratic in African traditions. Gadaa is a wonderful democratic system of governance that has been proven by many historians and social scientists. It also expresses that the Gadaa system is a democratic system of self-government, a virtuous and admirable system of governance (Dirribii, 2009, p. 207).

The Oromo Gadaa system has a constitution that has been passed from generation to generation as a tradition. Like any other state administration, the constitution

of the Gadaa system is divided into sections that include any sector of society. The constitution deals with various issues such as rights and honours, duties and responsibilities, and the roles of various sectors. It also carries legal punishment if there is no obedience to the constitution. Therefore, it can be testified that Gadaa has an organisation of lawyers, prosecutors, judges, and people of different ages and social groups with shared social roles and responsibilities (Getachew Gudina). It is the system in which different legal bodies are divided on different issues and stand for the law. It describes the life and living of the Oromoo in all directions (Tolera & others, 1995, p. 57).

When the Oromo Gadaa began to be enacted, it endorsed a strong and wonderful law for all creation, human beings and all living things. The system is not only the law for the Oromo people but also the law for other living beings, including all animals and plants. Furthermore, the Gadaa system is about having an equal view of everything Waaqaa (God) has created.

In the Oromo political and Gadaa administrative system, everyone has a role and duty to fulfill, starting from the age level that allows. All age groups except Gadamooji [age above 80] have a social role to play. Being born at the right age is essential in maintaining the continuity of the Gadaa system. They start learning the myths and values of their people, herding sheep and goats and have social education practices until they start hunting.

Because of the large territorial areas that prevented them from frequent contacts, the Oromo established different centres of the Gada administration as low as Kora Ollaa

(assemblies of the neighbors). Xuuxee Bisil, which is the Gadaa centre of the Maccaa Oromoo, and the main focus of the study are located between the present-day West Shawa and East Wollega. The exact location of this site is a continuing point of debate among scholars and Gadaa elders. Some argue that its exact location is about ten kilometres to the east of Ijaajjii town (Mohammed Hassen, Tesema Ta'a, and Tsega Endalu). Ijaajjii is a town along the Finfinnee Naqamtee main road. It is 210 kilometres from Finfinnee to the west and 120 kilometres from Naqamtee to the east.

The other group argued that the location of Xuuxee Bisil is in Gudiyaa Biilaa of East Wollega exactly at the site from where River Gibee starts to flow (Informants: Chernet Waqawayyaa, ...). In fact, this location is where this study focused on and used the ancient symbols of the Maccaa Gadaa Shanee-Salgee assembly represented by rows of stones as main data. This paper also argues that the Maccaa Oromoo Gadaa center is this site.

In fact, the scholars' debates are not only on the exact location of Xuuxee Bisil but also on the roles of women in the Gadaa System. Several scholars who have undertaken their studies on the Gadaa system or indirectly mentioned the Gadaa system have referred to it as an exclusively male system (Asmarom, Baxter, Mohammed, etc.). Asmerom Legese (2006), who fully devoted his scholarship to the Oromo Gadaa System, defined it as an exclusively male system. He has also given a generalised conclusion, as the Maccaa Oromo left the Gadaa system at the beginning of the 19th century, just based on his data from the

Booranaa Oromoo. Paul Baxter, another contemporary of Asmarom, committed similar mistakes as Asmarom did. He gave a solid conclusion, as though the women and the Maccaa Oromoo have not been part of the Gadaa system. Mohammed Hassen (1990), a distinguished Oromo historian who thoroughly dealt with the mediaeval history of the Maccaa Oromoo, silenced the roles of women in the Gadaa system and the position of the Gadaa system among Maccaa Oromoo. There are also a few individuals who have attempted to justify the position of women in the Gadaa system. Dirribii Demise, Yomiyu, and Kuwe Kumsa are among these categories. Dirribi (2012, f. 120) expresses his position, saying, "Yayichi alangeen yoo muru, bokkichi bokkuun yoo muru, dubartiin immoo siiqqeen murti." This means that hayyichi (the cultural lawyer) is decided by the prosecutor, 'bokkich' (the head of the state) is decided by bokkuu (the sceptre), and the woman makes the decision by the siiqqee. This means that women have their own roles and powers. He argues that the Oromo people in the Gadaa system of governance have gone beyond themselves to believe that just as men hold bokkuu, women hold siinqee and play a major role in politics, conflict resolution, and peacemaking. Nonetheless, he couldn't support his argument with empirical data on how exactly women have been involved in the Gadaa system. Yomiyuu (2015, p. 52) also attempted to explain the roles of women in the cultural aspect of the Gadaa system. He even explains the role of Siiqqee institutions from the perspective of ritual power rather than political bounding. Thus, although he has the

position that women have roles in the Gadaa system, he reduced the role to social issues.

Not very far from Yomiyuu, Endalkachew (2018, f. 9) explains as the roles of women in the Gadaa system is as a matter of enactment during social crisis. He sees their roles only to pray against drought, famine, lack of rain, infertility, disease, political instability and war. Reading his materials gives an understanding that he tried to make scientific and general facts what he heard from those who do not know the details of the Gadaa system and simply inform their opinions.

Kuween (2008), a formidable woman in Oromoo politics and scholarship, describes women's roles in the Gadaa system through the lens of Ateetee institutions. Although she is correct in stating that the Ateetee institution has a great role in protecting women's rights, she fails to realise that the Ateetee institution comes to the forefront only when problems happen to women. She has denied focus to what the Oromo women do and how they do before the problem comes to the scene. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the roles of women in all aspects of the Gadaa system by using the empirical data that was discovered at the Maccaa Gadaa centre of Xuuxee Bisil.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted qualitative research methods because qualitative research methods are more oriented towards generating rich data that express experiences and realities of the informants (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative research method enhances the in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data because

this research necessitates the generation of rich qualitative data that describe experiences and realities in relation to the Gadaa system and the people's life and living. The data sampling method used to identify the research participants was non-random sampling. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were employed to find research participants who could meet the study's goals and who were well-versed in the Gadaa system's customs and culture as well as the place of women within it. Consequently, anthropologists, mothers of Siiqqee, members of the Gadaa System, and intellectual elders were chosen for this study, and data was gathered until there was enough evidence.

The data were gathered from stones arranged in rows to represent the shares of Shanee-salgee seats during gadaa assembly, and through focus groups, unstructured interviews, and document analysis of written materials. Four knowledgeable elders, two historians, two anthropologists, and Hadha Siiqqees with knowledge of the Gadaa systems participated in the interview.

The informants discussed the Gadaa system in great detail, as well as the roles that women play in Oromoo culture generally and the Gadaa system specifically in a larger framework. In particular, the participants are able to contextualize and explain the roles played by women in the Gadaa system. They can also convey the concerns about gender equality in the Gadaa system and the strength of women in preserving Oromoo political, economic, and social issues. In addition, a variety of materials, including research papers and other pertinent literature, were looked up, and relevant information was gathered to

supplement the information gathered from interviews. I had to be careful to steer the conversation toward topics pertinent to my research question during the discussion. When I transitioned the informants from casual first conversations to open-ended interview questions, I took great care to avoid upsetting them. The stones that arranged in rows to represent the Shanee-Salgee assembly structures are the main data of this study. The structural arrangements are the living indicators of the way women across age represented in the law making and decision passing in the Maccaa Gadaa System. Focus group discussions were the other method of gathering data for the study. The informants were split up into concentrated groups and had in-depth discussions about the research questions. By posing guiding questions and pointing out the research's central theme to the participants, I contributed to the conversation. Document analysis is the final data collection method. In order to verify the information gathered through focus groups and interviews, this technique of data collection looks for books and other documents in various formats. As a result, in this study, data were gathered through document analysis.

Lastly, the collected data from both primary and secondary sources using interviews, focus group discussions, research works, studies of various levels and different documents were carefully transcribed, translated, arranged and qualitatively analyzed, and synthesized based on analytical research methods. I have tried to critically examine the data obtained from interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data collected from different informants using data gathering tools such as interviews, focus group discussions and data analysis disclosed the following findings.

1. The Gada system is based on two pillars: male and female. The Oromo people give great position to women in the administration of the Gada system. Regarding this finding, Women and male have their own roles in the Gada system. Hayyichi alangeen yoo muru, bokkichi bokkuun yoo muru, dubartiin immoo siiqqeen murti.
2. In addition to their participation in Caffee Odaa Bisil in Shanee-Salgee structure, the Gadaa System gives women supreme power and rights through the Siiqqee system. In the Gada system, women have their own power and role, respect and dignity.
3. In the Gada system, just as men hold Bokkuu, women hold Siiqqee and play an important role in politics, conflict resolution and peacemaking.
4. The idea which states women's lack of participation and role in the governance process of the Gada system indicates that they have little or no understanding of the Gada system.

The reality and culture of many countries around the world showed that women were neglected in society and limited in many ways; nutrition, employment opportunities, relationships and family affairs. Despite this, history affirms that the question of women's equality did not receive attention in the world until the 19th century. Similarly, there were times when women are perceived as having no

role in the Gadaa system. It is thought that the Gada system gives rights and powers only to men and that women do not participate in social, political and administrative affairs of the Gadaa system. However, this study shows that the Gadaa system is a system in which everyone knows his/her roles and plays his/her part in his/her authority. Women have different roles which they have shared according to their age and structure in the Gada system. According to the data collected from arrangements of stones representing the seats of Shanee-salgee participation, the informants, focus group discussions and document analysis, in the provisions of the Gada system, women participate in the Gadaa system by sharing different roles and responsibilities. These evidences show that, the role of women in the Gada system is high, taking the Shanee-Salgee of the ancient Maccaa Gada system as an example.

According to the data collected from the interviews and focus group discussions, the knowledgeable elders describe using the stones arranged in row to represent the seats of the assembly that the caffee assembly the Maccaa Gadaa at Xuuxee Bisil had 45 members. One of the members is Abbaa Caffee who leads the assembly. According to the informants, this person had no sound that could be counted in the decision making. Nonetheless, the 44 members were equally divided into male and female (22 males and 22 females). These 44 members are divided into five rows, having nine members in each row. From these nine rows:

1. The first line is given to Qarree (Female youth) whose age range is between 9 and 24 years. This group is known in the society as

Dubra Qarree which means females who were not married. All matters related to this age group are presented for discussions and decisions by this group. They argue to their maximum knowledge to maintain the interest of their group in the presiding of the Maccaa Gadaa system. According to this arrangement, female marriage in Maccaa Gadaa system is impossible even before 24 years old.

2. The second row is devoted to Qeerroo (Male youth,) whose ages are between 9 and 24 years. Like that of the female youth, all matters related to this age group are presented and discussed to the best advantage of the group. They are carefully listened and their issues are seriously addressed. The first two rows indicate that the Maccaa Gadaa system values not only values females’ rights in all aspects of the Gadaa system but also male youth’s rights.

3. The third row is for Tadhii (Productive Women) whose age range is between 25 and 48 years. Matters related to this age group including that of children below eight years old were presented and discussed. They were

carefully listened and tolerated whatever matters they brought to the discussions.

4. The fourth line is for Buulaa namaa (Adolescent Males) whose age range varies between 33 and 64 years. The age groups between 25 and 32 were jumped as they are the military forces of the Gadaa system. In the Gadaa system, the ages that designated as fighting forces or who had any direct relation with the military activities were not allowed to make decisions as they were feared for manipulating the issues of discussions.

5. The fifth row is for Haadhoolii Caaccuu (Menopause Mothers) whose ages vary between 49 and 80 years and the five Gumii Elders whose ages vary between 65 and 80 years. One male of this group is Abbaa Caafee known in Maccaa Gadaa as Noolee. The duty of the Nolee was only presiding over the assembly and had no sound of decision making. Therefore, the members with sounds of decision makings are four females and four males. The stones are arranged in the following five rows as indicated in Figure 1.

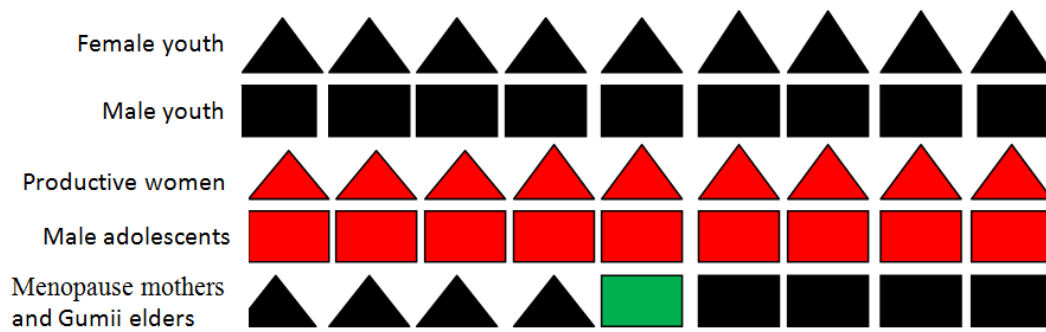


Figure 1: Raw of stones that represent how the seats of the caffee are arranged in rows

The above picture is set to represent the 45 members under the Xuuxee Bisil, where 45

bigger stones (Shanee Salgeen) still stand under that historical big tree (Odaa). Regarding these 45 bigger stones, which represent the 45 Caffee members of the Odaa Bulluq, one of the Maccaa Gadaa systems, the

interviewed knowledgeable elders stated that of these 45 members, 22 are women from different age groups, representing the whole women in the community. The informants stressed that this is one way we can realise the Gadaa system is a democratic system.

Women are one of the most important parts of society and play important roles in the Gadaa system. They have different roles in the Gada system, and they have shared roles according to their age and the structure of the Gada system. According to the provisions of the Gadaa system, women participated in different roles and played their responsibilities accordingly. The first stage of women's participation in the Gada system is called 'Guduruu' which covers the age group (5 days–8 years). According to the data collected from informants in the interviews and focus group discussions,

Sadarkaa sirna Gadaa keessatti dubbartootni hirmaatan keessaa inni jalqabaa Guduruu yoo ta'u umrii waggaa (Guyyaa 5–Waggaa 8), keessa jiran kan ilaallatudha. Guduruun ijoollee shamarranii cubbuufi waan safuu kamirraayyu bilisa ta'anidha. Daa'imman kunniin sammuun isaanii qulqulluu akka Waaqaa akka ta'aniifi daba kan hinbeekne; qajeelummaafi garraamummaadhaan kan beekamanidha. Kana malees, umrii kanatti hinsobani; hinhatani; dubbatanii nama hinmadeessani; raawwatanii hinhaalani; akkasumas lagu kan hinargine waan ta'aniif; Waaqaafi nama fuulduratti fudhatama argatu.

According to the above data, Guduruu are girls who are free from any sin or anything immoral. These children are pure in mind and know no deceit; they are known for their righteousness and humility. Besides, they

don't lie at this age; they do not steal; they do not speak wrongly to harass people; they do not deny; and because they are not menstruating, they are acceptable to God and human beings. Thus, the stage is the time by which the future of children is shaped. It means that the humanity they built today will determine their tomorrow.

In addition, the informants explain that since these children are free from sin, their role is to reconcile heaven and earth (samiifi lafa walitti araarsu) and also to reconcile heaven and human beings (samiifi dhala namaa). Therefore, virgin girls, like other community groups, have their own roles in the Gadaa System. They go first in reconciliation. In summary, Guduru signifies holiness, the calling of the saints to the holy place, and the age of righteousness.

The other age group that represents women in the Gadaa system is Durba Qarree (female youth). According to the data from the focus group discussions and interviews, Durba Qarree is a virgin who knows the difference between good and evil and is an elderly woman who has reached marriage. She knows the difference between morality and decency and lives a clean life while maintaining her identity. According to Abba Gada, who participated in the interview, it is a time when young women practice various life skills. They are involved in cooking, housekeeping, various crafts such as weaving and spinning, and family security. Therefore, at this age, family advice and guidance will help her to stand firm and escape criticism. This is the time when the instructions, advice, and discipline of the elders and family will be

given to her properly, and it is her role to accept the advice given and apply it.

The role of Durba Qarree in the Gada system is that on the day of the Gada, five Durba Qarrees are presented and complete the jifuu. These girls have given all the luxuries that are given to the Foollee, and the same education given to the Foollee in the administration of the Gada system is also given to Durba Qarrees. Thus, teaching the Durba Qarrees about the Gada system is of great benefit in setting the stage for the next generation. Also, according to the informants presented in the group discussions, they offer durba Qarree and durba Guduruu to pray for the reconciliation of heaven and earth and heaven and human beings. It is believed that Durba Qarree and Ijoollee Guduruu are innocent or sinless. Reconciliation between heaven and earth is done by them when a person breaks morality and God turns away from them. When God turns away from the earth, various disasters occur on earth. To avoid this disaster, the Oromo community, according to the Gadaa system, uses the children of community groups such as Guduruu, Durba Qarree, Beera Kalaalee, Beera cifree, etc. to reconcile heaven and earth. This shows that women have a great place and a strong role in the Gadaa system.

Haadha Siiqqee is the other important age group in which women play their roles in the Gadaa system. According to the informants' explanation, Haadha Siiqqee is a woman who is married and has a marriage life, who has fulfilled all the rules, and all the rules are fulfilled for her. This stage is more responsible than previous stages and is the age when she develops patience for life. This stage

is when she takes on the responsibility of leading the home and family as her husband goes up and down for the affairs of the country. This means that she takes the husband's place and does all the things he does at home. One of the informant interviews states the roles and responsibilities of Haadha Siiqqee's as follows:

Haadha siiqqee jechuun dubartii heerumtee bultii ijaarratte, kan seera hundaa guuttee fi guutameefi kan abbaa mana gadaa qabachiistedha. Sadarkaa kun sadarkaa umrii darban duraa caalaa itti gaafatamummaan guddaan kan irra jiruufi umrii itti isheen jireenyaaf obsa horattudha. Sadarkaa kun yeroo itti abbaan warraashee dhimma biyyaatiif oliifi gadi deemu waan ta'eef itti gaafatamummaa hoggansa qe'eefi maatii yeroo baatudha.

The above quotation implies that the Haadha Siiqqee has rules by which she performs things and fulfils the rules by herself. On the other hand, the data above shows a greater degree of responsibility that Haadha Siiqqees play in the community. It is also a stage where she has higher authority and sees many of life's achievements. She welcomes the various delegations to her husband with special arrangements. She goes down the hill and crosses the river with him. She nourishes the guests who come to their home. She makes him anonymous. She takes Siinqee, goes with him to the pilgrimage site, and solves the problem. Therefore, Siiqqee is a symbol of feminine dignity and power. It is not only a power to protect women's rights, but also a symbol by which women are represented in the Gadaa system.

Furthermore, the main purpose of Siiqqee is to emerge when conflict arises between the community and the laws of God and social ethics are violated. The focus group participants address the fact that women manifest their power through their Siiqqee and take part in the conflict to solve problems and bring about reconciliation. It was also used to uphold the laws of Waaqaa and the morals of society. Thus, women call for Haadha Siiqqees to come together and express their issues, which manifest the power of the figure.

The data from the informant interviews and documentary analysis describes that according to the customs and traditions of the Oromo people, women have a high position in politics. They participate in ensuring security when various wars are launched by intervening with their siinqee to prevent loss of life. Thus, Siiqqee is one of the organisations built by the Gadaa system and is heavily armed with the power and rights of women. Just as the Horooroo and Bokkuu express the power and strength of the Abbaa Gadaa and the Abbaa Bokkuu, the siiqqee expresses the glory of the power and strength of women.

In relation to the above idea and the respect society has for women holding their Siiqqee and how it is deeply rooted in the Gadaa system, one of the intellectual elders states as follows:

Dubartoonni siiqqee qabatanii yeroo manaa yaa'an; maatiin hunduu nibeelofti; jabbileen saawwan bira hingeessu; kan hojiitti bobba'uuf nyaata kan qopheessu hinjiru. Sochiifi jiruun mana keessaa hunduu nidhaabbata. Kanaafuu, jaarsoliifi hayyoonni warri bokkuufi abbootiin Gadaa waltajjii

sanarratti ariitiin argamuun dubartoota bira dhaabbatu. Rakkina jiru qoratanii warra wal-lolan lamaanuu akka araaramaniif dirqisiisu. Bifa kanaan siiqqeen jaarmiyaa araaraa tahuun akka uummata keessatti tajaajila guddaa kennaa turtedha. Akka aadaa Oromootti walitti bu'insi guddaan uumamee duulli guddaan yoo ka'e walitti bu'insa kana dhaabuuf dubartiin gaheefi mirga guddaa qabdi. Kunis sodaafi mamii tokko malee dubartiin siiqqee qabatee "Dhilteen dhillina" jechuun ilaalcha waraana wal fixuu kana gidduu yoo seentu warri wal waraanaa jiran waraana harkatti qabatan gadi garagalchuun "bobba'i" jechuun waraana dhaabu. Hayyoonni jidduu galuun rakkinichi fala akka argatu godhu. Kunis ulfina hawwaasni siiqqeef qabu kan argisiisudha.

When women leave home with Siiqqee, it means that the whole family is hungry. No one in the house cooks the baby's food. No one prepares food for those who are busy. All movements and life in the house stop. Therefore, the elders and intellectuals of the bokkuu and the Gada leaders rush to the stage and stand by the women. They investigate the problem and force both parties to reconcile; they sit for reconciliation to prevent conflicts. In this form, the figure was a reconciliation organisation that served the people. According to Oromo culture, if a major conflict occurs and a major campaign is launched, women have a great role and the right to stop the conflict. This is without any fear or doubt when a woman with a figure of speech says "Dhilteen dhillina" and the fighters turn down their weapons and say "bobba'i", which

literally means 'let's stop war and go'. Experts intervene to cool down and solve the problem. [This shows the respect the community has for the Siiqqee.

In general, Siiqqee is given by the mother to the bride on her wedding day. The gift is a fertility symbol in memory of her mother. It is the desire of birth that she reaps the children she gives birth to. It is also the success of wealth and a good life. Siiqqee is the one with which she cleans her property; the right to express her property; with which you restrain the evil of men; it is the means by which she defends her rights. On the other hand, Siiqqee is a pilgrimage stick (ulee jilaa), which women hold on the day of the buttaa ceremony and festivals such as Irreechaa, Gubbisaa, and Guddisaa, which are celebrated by women.

Alamaayyoo (2006) supports the above idea by stating that on the days when the men move for the jila with horooroo, the women move with them carrying siiqqee. Therefore, he says, the glory given to the bokku, kallacha, and caaccuu is given to the siiqqee accordingly. On the other hand, the dignity of the siiqqee is measured by the dignity of the mother. Furthermore, according to Oromo custom, when the warriors move to war, they dive under the siiqqee and go by excuse. Therefore, where there is conflict, Haadha Siiqqees intervene in the fight by holding their Siiqqee without any fear and becoming a boundary to prevent evil acts from being committed and stop the conflict. This shows the roles and responsibilities that women play in the name of Siiqqee in the Gadaa system.

Beera Kalaalee (a married and experienced woman) is the other position for women in the

Gadaa system. One of the cultural experts interviewed states the role of Beera Kalaalee in society as follows: “Berri kalaaleen dubartii mana dhaabbatee bultii keessa turteefi muuxannoo jiruufi jireenyaa qabdu taatee, kan ilmashii 40 ga’ee gadoomedha. Umrii kanatti ijoolleen ishee aangoorra waan jiraniif sadarkaa ijoollee isheetiif gorsa laattudha. Kan ga’e fuusistee kan geesses sadarkaa itti heerumsiistedha.” Which means that Beerra Kalalee is a married woman with experience in life whose son has taken 40th to take the Abba Gadaa position. At this age, her children are in power, and she is at the level to advise her children. It is also the stage at which her children have married. Thus, it is a time when she is widely involved in social life, such as funerals, visiting the sick, blessing childbirth, reconciling quarrels, and participating in various social concerns. In general, the data indicates that the Beera Kalaalee is socially active and shares many life experiences, advice, and guides for society.

In the Macca Oromoo Gadaa system, the role of Beera Cifiree is very vital. Beera Cifiree is a woman whose husband is at the stage of Gadamojjii. She is free from any activities or responsibilities. Instead, she teaches and blesses the culture and traditions over time. What makes Beera Cifiree different from other women is that she can participate in all the activities of the Shannacha. Beera Cifirees do not shave their heads at this stage; they can make their hair short and curly. It is considered impolite to make their hair long at this age. Moreover, data from the focus group discussion expresses the roles of Beera Cifiree in the Maccaa Gadaa system as follows:

Bakka Beerri Cifireen hindhiyaannetti tumaan Gadaa guutuu ta'uu hindanda'u. Beerri Cifreen Gadaa oofkalchitee qananii shanachi Abbaa Gadaa qabu hunda qabdi. Shan ta'anii tumaa Gadaa guutuu taasisu. Shanacha taatee dhugaa dubbattee araarsuu dandeessi.

This means that where the Beera Cifiree is not presented in the ceremony of Abbaa Gadaa nomination, the provisions of the Gada cannot be complete. Beera Cifree blesses and (ofkaltii qadhatti) for the Shannacha tribal chief. Five of them (Shannacha) make up the whole of the Gada system. She is one of the five Shannacha members and participates in reconciliation.

From the above data, we can understand that just as the men became gadamooji and left the affairs of Gada, so did the Beera Cifiree. It is also the stage at which they are retired and cared for. They are only present in the place of reconciliation and peacekeeping. They are free from sin at this stage. In summary, this age is the stage for telling the truth and justifying the truth.

CONCLUSIONS

The Oromo people are a people who know the meaning of the culture, history, and traditions of their ancestors, understand their benefits, and recognise the identity and role of mothers in political, economic, and social aspects. It is well known that equality and the role of women in society have not been recognised in the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the study revealed that the opposite is true for the Oromo people.

In general, women are respected as they are the backbone of society, and there is no success anywhere without them. In the Gada

system, a woman is a symbol of blessing, reconciliation, and fertility. Moreover, the Gada system is incomplete without women. Another reflection of women's participation is that women follow the legitimacy and justice of Abbaa Gada's rule. In general, women participate in the Gada system from childhood to old age.

Therefore, this research shows that the Oromo people are aware of the nature and role of mothers in society. The Oromo people have built their own administrative laws, invented various natural and man-made cultural materials (meeshaalee ulfoo), preserved the culture of their ancestors, and passed it on to the new generation in various ways.

However, according to the data, equality and the role of women in society were as low as in the rest of the world. The opposite was true for the Oromo, the study revealed. In summary, it is crucial to respect women, as they are the backbone, and to respect women knowing that there is no success anywhere without them.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENTS

The data of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

DECLARATION

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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