

Waaqeffannaa In Brief

INTRODUCTION

The Oromo people are descendants of an ancient, Cushitic-speaking branch of the Cushitic race. According to Argaa-dhageettii¹ teaching, nearly 6,400 years ago, their forefather, Oromo, established their Gadaa system at Odaa Mormor, the eastern land of Nuubiyaa, the land of Cushitic-speaking people with physical characteristics varying from light skinned Hamitic to dark skinned Nilotic peoples who live in eastern Africa. The term Oromo was applied to all tribes of Oromo.

The Oromo Land, known as Biyya Oromoo, is the cradle land of the Oromo people of southern Abyssinia where they lived for centuries with Grace, Peace and independence. This Oromo land is also known as Oromiyaa, the land of Grace and Peace. As the first Qaalluu had stated to the Oromo's forefathers, Waaqaa gives this cradle land not only for the previous forefather, Oromo, but also for their coming generation.

The Concept of Waaqaa

There are three religions in Oromiyaa: Waaqeffannaa (traditional and original religion), Islam and Christianity. Many Oromo practice traditional religion parallel with Islam or Christianity. Oromo religious belief is based on the view that there is only one Waaqaa (God). The Arabic word Rabbi is also used by the Muslim Oromo and others to refer to their supreme being. According to the Oromo traditional religion, Waaqeffannaa, Waaqaa has multiple attributes. Waaqaa is before everything else. Waaqaa is Uumaa (a Creator of everything in the world). Waaqaa is Hundaa beekaa (omniscient). Waaqaa is hundaa tolaa (omni benevolent). Waaqaa is hundaa danda'aa (omnipotent). Waaqaa is the source and lover of dhugaa (truth). Waaqaa is Qulqulluu (pure). Waaqaa is intolerant of injustice, crime, sin and all falsehood.

The Oromo never worshipped carved statues, trees, rivers, mountains ' or animals as substitutes. But who is the Creator of Waaqaa? All Waaqeffannaa followers believe that Waaqaa is not a created being. Waaqaa does not have an elder. There is nothing that has power over Waaqaa. For the Oromo Waaqaa is eternal and the final cause of all things. The Oromo thus had the concept of the monotheistic supreme God from time immemorial.

What are Waaqeffannaa

The word 'Waaqeffannaa' comes from the Afaan Oromoo root 'Waaqaa' and 'Aanfannaa', which means God and be loyal to His law which is the source of peace ; a practising

¹ It is derived from two Oromo words: *Argaa* literally means "to see" whereas *dhageettii* means "that which is heard." *Argaa-dhageettii* refers to both past and present events where wisdom, knowledge and experiences are acquired. *Argaa* refers to that has been witnessed in the past that is being witnessed in the present and will be witnessed in the future. *Dhageettii* also refers to stories that are heard about events in the past and that will be heard about future events. Thus, it is the source of knowledge, wisdom and civilisation. Accordingly, those who have "*argaa-dhageettii*" are experts in cultures, customs, history and traditions. They have been observing different things and listening to elders and other knowledgeable persons.

Waaqeffataa/ttuu strives to submit wholeheartedly to Waaqaa, thereby achieving peace in this life and the Next. Submitting to Waaqaa's will does not mean that a person need no longer think, or that he must give up his free will to choose; rather, like a law-abiding citizen, a person who observes Waaqaa's commands benefits himself and others by respecting Seemaa Divine laws and using his freedom wisely. The Waaqeffannaa concept of submission to Waaqaa's law and order is thus an active one; a Waaqeffataa/ttuu struggles to increase his knowledge, develop his character, and do what is right to the best of his ability - after which he accepts that the outcome of his affairs is ultimately in Waaqaa's hands.

Waaqeffannaa is based on faith in a Higher Power, the Gracious Lord and Creator of the Universe, without family or partners, called 'Waaqaa'. Waaqeffattootaa prefer to use the Afaan Oromoo word Waaqaa for God, because it has no plural, feminine or diminutive form that could be associated with idolatry (i.e. gods, goddesses or 'demi-gods'). Waaqaa is Merciful and Just, All-Knowing and All-Seeing, Friend and Guide, and the only one worthy of our worship and devotion.

The ancient Waaqeffannaa religion has developed and still practiced by millions of Waaqeffattootaa in the Land of Oromo-Oromiyaa and the Diaspora. Founded thousands of years ago, Waaqeffannaa, the religious beliefs and practices and the way of life of the Oromo. Waaqeffannaa was the first major religion to teach a belief in one Waaqaa. Waaqeffattootaa trace their ancestry to Cushitic and believe that Waaqaa promised to protect Oromo's people if they remained faithful to Seera Waaqaa. They established their first Galma at Odaa Mormor, Abbaa Yaa'aa before 6,400 years ago.

[The Waaqeffataa/ Pl. Waaqeffattootaa](#)

Waaqeffataa is a person, he or she, who follows Waaqeffannaa as an earnest faith, and believes in Waaqa; prays to Him and worships Him in the light of the religious doctrine of Waaqeffannaa. Waaqeffataa believes in the philosophical doctrine of Waaqeffannaa's altruism for the benefit of mankind. Waaqeffataa believes that, Waaqeffannaa deeply concerns for justice and right, and provides ideal guidelines by which people of different faiths can live with one another in harmony, giving love and sympathy to each other. Waaqeffataa is a follower of Waaqa's commandment who benefits himself and others, when he respects Seera Waaqaa (Waaqaa's Law), and Seera Gadaa (Rule of Gadaa). A Waaqeffataa person struggles to increase his knowledge, develop his character, and does what is right to the best of his ability - after which he accepts that the outcome of his activity is ultimately in Waaqaa's hands.

[The Foundations of Waaqeffannaa](#)

WAAQAFFANNAA is a monotheistic religion emanated from and based on the Supreme Order of Waaqaa. To believe in Waaqaa, means to be loyal to His law, acknowledge His wisdom as a Creator of source of all lives. The Waaqeffannaa considers the organization of spiritual, physical and human worlds as interconnected phenomena, and Waaqaa, the Creator, regulates their

existence and functions in balanced ways. Thus, Waaqeffannaa uses many fundamental concepts to explain the foundation of Waaqeffannaa religion as follows.

1. **WAAQAA** refers to the Oromo name of Supreme Being. Waaqaa creates and regulates the existence of all animate and inanimate as well as material and non-material nature placing them in a well-balanced cosmic order. As a Supreme Reality, Waaqaa had been serving many Kushitic families of nations in north eastern Africa before their conversion to Islam and Christianity.
2. **Daaniyaa** is new religious book which has been published and released in Finfinnee, Oromia's capital in 2006. It is also the first of its kind from the African continent, and most probably with the oldest concepts in wisdom traditions. Daaniyaa means searching for Waaqaa's knowledge and wisdom. Like all books, the Daaniyaa is a means to convey a message - in this case, a very special message from the Creator to all humanity. The Daaniyaa is a book of Waaqaa's knowledge and wisdom manual for the human being'; whoever wonders about the purpose of life and their own existence will find it to be a guide par excellence. Building on prior revelations, this Waaqaa message confirms the age-old truths of previous knowledge and Wisdom of Waaqaa, but clarifies points of faith where error or confusion has crept into them over the centuries.
3. **Seemaa** is the dynamic body of Waaqeffannaa religious law. The term means "way" or "path to the natural universe"; it is the legal framework within which the public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in a legal system based on Waaqeffannaa principles of jurisprudence. The term *Seemaa* itself coined from the two Oromo noun "seeraa and uumaa-uumamaa" which means "Law" and "Creator-creatures" Hence, literally it means "natural law", or the **law of Creator-Creature**. The Law of nature is a theory that posits the existence of a law whose content is set by nature and that therefore has validity everywhere.
4. **Seebaa** is the Universal law or Seera Walaabuu which binds life together, and not only human life but animal, plant, and mineral life as well. It is also known as the Great Seera Walaabuu from which the word was coined by the known makkalaa. Makkalaa are the messenger of the knowledge and wisdom of Waaqaa in the lower earth. The universality of the Law of Walaabuu, Seebaa, is one of the chief Seemaa, Natural Law, which guides Walaabuu from generation to generation without any change. There are five basic Seera Walaabuu: Seera Innoo, Seera Irroo, Seera Tajoo, Seera Latoo, and Seera Faanoo. These Laws of Walaabuu compose one big universe with a complicated and inseparable way of fashion.
5. **Yaayyaa Shanana** is the five fundamental acts of creation of Waaqaa. Firstly, Waaqaa created the body of water, knowing that water is the source of all life. He then called the water HORA WOLAABUU. Then divided the impregnated body of water into two parts: Bishaan Gubbaa-the water above and Bishaan Goodaa-the water below. He divided the waters of the above into three parts: water, sky and heavenly bodies.

Waaqaa then divided the waters of below into two parts: dachee (earth) and bishaan (water). Then, Waaqaa named these five acts of creation *Yaayyaa Shanaan Uumamaa*, or the five fundamentals of Creation.

6. **Dhugaa** is the concept involves both truth and justice. The Waaqeffannaa believes that *Waaqaa* likes *Dhugaa* and wants us to protect it. When the Waaqeffattootaa want to confirm something they raise the question "*Dhugaa Waaqaa?*" (Is it the truth of *Waaqaa?*). The Waaqeffattootaa employ different proverbs to underline the value of *Dhugaa*. For instance, *Hinqall'atti malee, dhugan hin duutu* (Truth can get thin but never dies); *Ijji dhugaan boochu, imimmaan hin dhabdu* (An eye which cries truthfully will not lack tears); *Dhugaa malee, dhugaatiin nama hin quubsu* (Truth not drinks that satisfy people). As a matter of fact, it is believed that one who failed to tell the truth violates the will of *Waaqaa*. *Waaqaa* is believed to be the protector of *Dhugaa*.
7. **Safuu** is an ethical and moral code that the Waaqeffattootaa use to differentiate bad from good and wrong from right. Safuu constitutes the ethical basis upon which all human action should be founded; it is that which directs one on the right path; it shows the way in which life can be best lived. Safuu, therefore, is an important religious and/or philosophical concept in Waaqeffannaa religion in which the society's moral and ethical set of divine rule. Waaqeffattootaa claim that the understanding of laws of Waaqaa, Seemaa, nature and society both morally and ethically and living accordingly is necessary. They believe in Waaqaa's law and the law of society that they establish through the *Gadaa System* of democracy to maintain *Nagaa(peace) and Safuu* among Waaqaa ,Society ,and nature to achieve their full human destiny known as KAAWOO or KAAYYOO. Therefore, this concept of peace and order of Waaqaa, Safuu, is extremely important in Waaqeffannaa religious and political thought.
8. **Horo** is the first man created in this Hora Walaabuu. As Waaqeffannaa teaches, Waaqaa drew ground plan upon which the rest of the world would be built. These began with the birth of the sun and the moon. The first day began when the sun rose at dawn and ended when the sun set on the first day. This first day Waaqaa called *Adulaa*, "first sun". It takes Waaqaa 27 days to complete his creation. These days occurred between the rising and setting of two new moons. Every tenth day, the creator rested, and so he took three days off. Then, Waaqaa made Nama (human) and named Horo.
9. **Qaalluu** are the messengers of Waaqaa and the ritual leaders of the Waaqeffannaa, representing the two great societal halves of the nation, whose shrines were historically associated with the cradle lands of the Borana and the Barettuma Oromo. They are honored by Oromo pilgrims who come from far and wide, to take part in the octennial ritual called *Muudaa* (the anointing). The Qaalluu are showered with gifts and, in return, they give their blessings.
10. **Galmaa** is the place of worship of Waaqeffannaa religion. The Galmaa is usually located on a hill top, hill side or in a grove of large trees. Many of these sites are now taken up by Abyssinian Orthodox Church buildings or Mosques. Places of worship also include under trees, beside large bodies of water, by the side of big mountains, hills, stones, etc.

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PRAY AND WORSHIP

Waaqeffattootaa, in addition to morning and evening prayers, duly hold worship and thanksgiving rituals to celebrate the infinite wisdom of Waaqaa. It is based and depends on the seasonal variation of the year. Forms of the pray and places of worship are conventionally prescribed in the long-continued tradition of Waaqeffannaa creed.

Offering personal prayers and supplications, respecting the handiwork of Waaqaa, participating in Irreechaa (thanksgiving rituals), volunteering in service of the community, etc, besides which everything a person does with the intention of pleasing Waaqaa is considered solemn act of worship. In contrast, there are things that Waaqaa has prohibited because of the harm they engender to individuals and society; these include lying, stealing, disrespecting one's parents, extra-marital affairs, drugs, alcohol, gambling, and other destructive or unethical behaviour.

The Main Principles of Waaqeffannaa

Waaqeffannaa promotes and cultivates the Will of Waaqaa for the betterment of human being. It is also based on the Rules and the Principles of Waaqeffannaa, the Right Path to Gaarummaa, and the Avenue of Peace to attain Gaarummaa, happiness, and Peace. The major Waaqeffannaa Rules and Principles, its guiding values and principles emanated from and based on the Holy messages, the everlasting Laws and Principles of Waaqaa are as follows:

- 1. Belief in One Waaqaa**
- 2. The Waaqaa has Authority over All (Waaqni Walaabuu mara irratti aangoo olaanaa qaba.)**
- 3. Waaqaa's Knowledge and Wisdom**
- 4. Qaalluu is the Messenger of Waaqaa**
- 5. Waaqaa's Creation is Meaningful**
- 6. Man has a High-ranking Status**
- 7. Every Person Born Free**
- 8. The Whole Creation Praises Waaqaa**
- 9. Waaqeffannaa is the Universal Religion of Waaqaa**

10. Creatures/ Uumamaa/ are the Great Art of Waaqaa

According to Waaqeffannaa principle, a cheeky person of sneaky behavior, a counterfeiter, and a renegade, a socially inconsiderate, selfish and deceptive person is understood as existing against the Law of Waaqaa. Hence, Waaqeffannaa refrains from approving a 'certificate of integration' into the religious life of Gadaa Oromoo Families. No one can ever trust such person as a faithful citizen of the Republic of Gadaa Oromoland. Waaqeffannaa teaches the abhorrence of the root causes that emit cataclysmic social disorders and defile the established social norms with which the Oromos have been living in the longest period of their history, when they stood in the light of Seera Waaqaa and Safuu.

Holidays in WAAQEFFANNAA

The Oromo celebrate different ceremonial rites of passages like *Irreechaa*, *Hulluuqoo*, *Buttaa*, and others depend on the seasons and period of the events both as a culture and religious practices.

IRREECHAA: THE OROMO NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY

Irreechaa is an annual Thanksgiving Day of the Oromo nation in the months of September and October, and the largest Irreechaa celebration is held in Bishoftuu, Oromia, at the Horaa Arsadii Sanctuary, where more than five million pilgrims give thanks to Waaqaa (God). According to the Oromoo Dhahaa-Oromo Calender, for example, September 30 is the 2012, was annual Oromo National Thanksgiving day-Irreechaa Birraa of the year. An Irreechaa Birraa is a celebration that repeats once in a year-in birraa and involves special activities or amusements as it has a lot of importance in our lives.

The theme of this national Thanksgiving Day is **“Moving Forward: Restoring the Spirit of Oromummaa”** in which it aims to celebrate Irreechaa festivals to follow our tradition and religion in society, to create public awareness where Oromo cultural and religious issues will be discussed to provide a better understanding of Oromo culture and history, to pave the way for promotion of the Oromo culture, history and lifestyle and to celebrate Irreechaa, a national Thanksgiving Day.

The Oromo celebrates Irreechaa to thank Waaqaa for the blessings and mercies we have received throughout the past year at the sacred grounds of Hora Harsadi (Lake Harsadi), Bishoftu, Oromia. The Irreechaa festival is celebrated every year at the beginning of Birraa (the sunny new season after the dark, rainy winter season) throughout Oromia and around the world where Diaspora Oromos live. The also celebrate Irreechaa not only to thank Waaqaa (God) also to welcome the new season of plentiful harvests after the dark and rainy winter season associated with nature and creature. On Irreechaa festivals, friends, family, and relatives gather together and celebrate with joy and happiness. Irreechaa Festivals bring people closer to each other and make social bonds.

Moreover, the Oromos are celebrating this auspicious event to mark the end of rainy season^[1], known as Birraa, was established by Oromo forefathers, in the time of Gadaa Melbaa^[2] in Mormor, Oromia. The auspicious day on which this last Mormor^[3]Day of Gadaa Belbaa^[4]-the Dark Time of starvation and hunger- was established on the 1st Sunday of last week of September or the 1st Sunday of the 1st week of October according to the Gadaa lunar calendar -- has been designated as our National Thanksgiving Day by modern-day Oromo people, serving with Oromo foods and featuring with traditional dances by Oromo children, youth and dance troupes. The Oromo communities both at home and abroad celebrate this National Thanksgiving Day every year.

[1] Rainy season symbolized as a dark, disunity and challenging time in Oromia.

[2] Gadaa Melbaa was established before 6400 years ago at Odaa Mormor, North-west Oromia.

[3] Mormor in Oromo means division, disunity, chaos.

[4] Gadaa Belbaa is the end time of starvation.

In general *Irreechaa*, as a national thanksgiving day, is not only the day of blessing and praying, but also a symbol for a day of a public freedom from the oppressive regimes like the brutal Abyssinian elites with colonialist mentality. On this day, the celebrating Oromo people do feel free, at least on this single day out of a year-round oppression, even though the security machine of the colonizers continue harassing this freedom-loving and pro-democracy nation. *Irreechaa* also signifies the victory of the Oromo liberation struggle – the reason why Oromo nationals say: *Irreechi irree keenya!*²

RELATIONSHIPS in WAAQEFFANNA

Both in religious and secular life, the Oromos are friendly people, and they express their feelings openly. Oromos greet one another by shaking hands; they talk to one another warmly. *Ashama?* (How are you?), *Fayyaadha?* (Are you healthy?), and *Maatiinkee akkam?* (Is your family well?) are common greeting phrases or questions. The other person answers, *Ani fayyaadha* (I am fine), *Maatiinkoos nagadha* (My family is o.k.), and *Ati fayyaadha?* (What about you, are you fine?). When Oromos visit other families, they are provided with something to drink or eat. It is expected that visitors will eat or drink what is offered. People can drop by and visit friends or relatives without letting them know ahead of time.

FAMILY LIFE in WAAQEFFANNA

² <http://waaqeffannaa.org/?p=934>

The basic unit of a household is the patrilineal (male-headed) extended family. Neighborhoods and communities are important social networks connected to the extended family. A man, as head of the family, has authority over his wife and unmarried sons and daughters. The typical Waaqeffataa-Oromo man has one wife. But because of religious conversion to Islam and other cultural influences, some Oromo men marry more than one wife (a practice known as polygyny). Divorce is discouraged in Oromo society. In Waaqeffannaa, the women have an institution known as *Siiqqee* to help them oppose male domination and oppression.

CONCLUSION

Waaqeffannaa is an indigenous religion of African origin, which is followed by millions of people. Waaqeffannaa does give holistic, convincing, and historically remarkable answers to its followers. The door of Waaqeffannaa was open; and it is still open; it must continue to be open to those constructive ideas and various innovations that help enhance the creative capacity of the Oromo people.

Waaqeffannaa, therefore, can play the beneficial role Waaqeffannaa has been playing in protecting Namummaa throughout the ages. As Waaqeffannaa strongly believes, a wise act would help to develop and construct moral judgments and human compassion by respecting and deeply exploring the values of the indigenous religions. It can also pave the way for the future peace building activities by restoring social harmonies among the human beings. As an extension of this phenomenon, Waaqeffannaa believes that society collapses unless a balance is struck between female and male, young and old, spiritual and physical power in the cosmic order of Waaqaa's wisdom by restoring the Waaqaa's Rules of Law in the world.