

**THE REVITALIZATION OF WAAQEFFANNAA AND ITS  
IMPORTANCE IN TRANSFORMING VALUES OF  
HUMANNESS AND PEACE**

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## 1. Introduction

The Oromo people, like other human societies of antiquity, did not only act instinctively. They also acted consciously, and consequently they began to wonder about the creation of the universe. They began to ask questions like who created the universe and who created us? When we die, what happens to the energy that was our lives? Is there life after death? These and other questions were formed in the analytical minds of our Oromo ancestors. Ultimately, they had to get answers.

The Oromo word “*amanuu*”, literally meaning belief, was the first code used by the Oromos at answering these questions. They believed that the entire universe, including both living and non-living things, was created by a Supernatural Force who lives beyond their comprehension. They called this Supernatural Force *Waaqaa* in Afaan Oromo, which is also a common term in other Cushitic languages. Eventually, from *Waaqaa*, developed *Waaqeffannaa* as the term for the Oromo people’s monotheistic religion which originated out of natural awareness. Even if the word *Waaqeffannaa* was introduced only recently, Oromo’s belief in *Waaqaa* is not a new phenomena. It is ancient.

In this short paper, I will briefly present the core values of *Waaqeffannaa* such as *Safuu* (virtues), *laguu* (vices) and *cubbuu* (sin) *nagaa* (peace), *araaraa* (reconciliation) and others which can be a basis for the rules and laws of a society. The core values of *Waaqeffannaa* have the potential to transform the value of humanness and the essence of peace in Oromia and Ethiopia at large. The challenges *Waaqeffannaa* has gone through and some recommendations on the current and future status of *Waaqeffannaa* will also be highlighted in this presentation.

## 2. Waaqeffannaa – A Brief Introduction

*Waaqeffannaa* is an indigenous faith of the Oromo people in one *Waaqaa* and it is one of several notable monotheistic and indigenous African religions. Followers of *Waaqeffannaa* believe in one Supreme Being called *Waaqaa*. They call him “*Waaqaa maqaan dhibbaa*” (*Waaqaa* with a hundred names) to show the pluralism of *Waaqeffannaa*, “*Gurracha garaan garbaa leemuu garaa taliilaa*” is a phrase to show that *Waaqaa* has a black color, which in Oromo shows pureness as well as indicating that *Waaqaa* is beyond human comprehension. The many names of *Waaqaa* indicate the Oromo’s belief that the world has one common Supernatural Force, even if the name of religions differ. It indicates the Oromo’s positive recognition and respect for other religions.

Oromos believe that *Waaqaa* started his creation from water. There existed water (pre-existing water) from *Walaabuu* (*Uumee Walaabuu*). *Walaabuu* water divided into two. These are: the upper water and the lower water. (Gemetchu 1994:15). The upper water divided into three: water, sky, and the heavenly bodies and the lower water divided into two: water and dry land. According to Seera *uumama* (laws of creation)- the creation of *Waaqaa*, both on earth and in the sky is governed by the five basic laws, known as *yaayyaa shanan*. The five *Yaayyaas* are: the laws of those in the sky and heaven, the laws for human beings, the laws for cattle, the laws for horses and mules and the laws for wild animals and the forest . *Waaqaa*

used 27 days (*ayyaanaas*) to create everything in the universe including heaven and earth. Every creation has its own given *ayyaanaa* (spirit). The names of the days are designated after *ayyaanaa*.<sup>1</sup> Oromos use lunar calendar where the first 27 days have unique names and the last three reuse the first three names to fulfill the 30 days of lunar month.

*Waaqeffannaa* has its own core values such as: *Safuu* (virtues), *Laguu* (vices) and *Cubbuu* (sin), *Nagaa* (peace) and *Araaraa* (reconciliation) (Getachew 2008). *Waaqeffannaa* strongly teaches its followers to have *Safuu* (moral judgment and humane respect) for all creation of *Waaqaa* and to strictly observe the *Laguu* (social taboos) observed by the society. *Safuu* is a law of *Waaqaa* which cannot be amended. These are for example: respect for *Waaqaa*, respect for Earth and nature and other creations of *Waaqaa*, not to steal someone's property, not to kill etc. *Laguu* is a social taboo in the society. It can be things forbidden to eat and activities forbidden to do. *Laguu* can be applied to prohibit the disruption of social taboos.

*Cubbuu* is what is committed when one does not abide with the laws of *Safuu* and *Laguu*. A *Waaqeffataa* man or woman believes that, if one commits *Cubbuu* (sin) he/she faces its negative consequences here on earth. However, if he/she dies without purifying himself/herself from the *Cubbuu* he/she had committed, it can be inherited by his/her offspring. It is not like other dominant religions of the world which do believe in the suffering of the sinned person after death in Hell, as it has been called. Hence, according to *Waaqeffannaa*, *Safuu* and *Laguu* help to keep the balance of nature and the ecosphere on earth, if they are constantly observed. In *Waaqeffannaa*, regarding life after death, the flesh disappears back to soil, the blood to water, the breath to air and the *Ekeraa* (spirit of the dead) goes to *Waaqaa* and lives in heaven (*waaqaa* = heaven, being written in small letters). Oromos normally call the place *Ekeraa* goes to *Iddoo Dhugaa* (place of the truth). The *Ekeraa* visits the vicinity of the family if it needs soothing from the family like *Daddarbaa* (libation) to be given. After someone dies, family of the deceased visits *Eker-dubbiftuu* (one with ability to talk to the spirit of the dead) and asks if the *Ekeraa* needs anything. At this moment, the *Ekeraa* appeals to the family to pay if there is anything *Cubbuu* the deceased committed, or if it was challenged by *Waaqaa* upon arrival of the *Ekeraa* at the gate of heaven. *Daddarbaa* is a piece of food or drink which is sacrificed as a feeding to the *Ekeraa*. Oromos also practice *daddarbaa* as a pay back to Earth for its feeding and carrying the creation of *Waaqaa*. It is a way of thanking mother Earth. Sky is also called *Waaqaa*, connected to where *Waaqaa* lives. *Waaqaa* (sky in this case) is considered as a man, and earth (*Dachee*) as a woman.

Other ancient societies also describe the heaven as a man and earth as a woman. For Example, Newgrange tomb in Ireland was built 5000 years ago where the tomb has a hole on the roof that the sun's rays penetrate into the tomb via the hole to reach the chamber on 21 of December every year, winter solstice. This was considered as a kind of sexual intercourse. It was believed that the earth was then pregnant for 9 months and afterwards gave birth on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, symbolizing nature and seasonal change.

*Waaqeffannaa*, as many indigenous religions in Africa, has no written scripture as a guidance of the religion. The principle of *Waaqeffannaa* is told orally (*argaa-dhagettii*) from generation to generation. The story about the scripture of *Waaqeffannaa* as told by elders is that the first holy book given to Oromo by *Waaqaa* was eaten by a cow and that is why the

Oromo read '*Moora*' - fat covering the stomach and the experts (*Ragaas*) analyze what happened, is happening and will happen to the society by studying the structure of the strings on the fat<sup>2</sup>. (Tesema 2012:91).

In *Waaqeffannaa* religion, there is no concept of Satan/Devil. There is no competing super powers like God and the Devil in other dominant religions. *Waaqeffannaa* believes that there is only one Supernatural Power and that is *Waaqaa*. There is no other being which tempts people to do *Cubbuu* (sin). *Waaqaa* does not want us to be sinned at all. But there exists bad spirit (*ayyaana hamaa*).

In *Waaqeffannaa* faith, there is no mediating body like angels but *Ayyaanaa* (spirit) is the one which connect people with *Waaqaa*. The relation or prayer is direct to father *Waaqaa*. Tesema in his article describes this as: “a follower of *Waaqaa* does not need a prophet, saints, clergy, priests and bishops but depends on intermediary spirits known as *Ayyaana* to worship *Waaqaa* which operate at different levels of reality and apply to different kinds of phenomena” (Tesema 2012:92). But the writer of this article argues that *Waaqeffannaa* has prophets (*raagaa*) who could foresee the future using different mechanisms like observing stars, animal stomach fat, coffee cups, and different aspects. *Waaqeffannaa* has also priests who are *Qaalluu/Qaallitti* (man *qaalluu*/woman *qaalluu*) and the clergy around him/her. But *Waaqeffannaa* has no Saints and the prayer is direct to *Waaqaa*.

*Waaqeffannaa* is guided and led by a *Qaalluu* (*Waaqeffannaa* priest). There are two types of *Qaalluus*. The one which first descended from *Waaqaa* is the one which Oromos believe to have been dropped in from *Waaqaa* and the second is the one who inherited *Qaalluu* power from his predecessor *Qaalluu*. It passes through kinship (*gosa*). A *Qaalluu* is responsible for praying to *Waaqaa* and guiding the rituals during the *Gadaa* ceremonies.

After the introduction of different religions to the Oromos, the name *Qaalluu* became misused and corrupted. This even happened to many names derived from it, such as *Qaallichaa* (Witchcraft). *Qaallichaa*s are corrupted people who misused the respect and acceptance of *Qaalluu* to earn money. *Qaallichaa* is not a part of *Waaqeffannaa*. They just used the name and earn money by trying to cheat people to believe that they can cure diseases, and even can influence the future fate of people. So, in the indigenous Oromo religion *Qaalluu* has nothing to do with *Qaallichaa*s (witchcrafts) and *Qaallichaa* was introduced during the interaction with other cultures. A *Qaalluu* does not accept money for the prayer he/she practices<sup>3</sup>. (Tesema 2012:95)

*Nagaa* and *araara* in Oromo has a deeper sense than just peace and reconciliation. *Nagaa* is a peaceful atmosphere for both humans and nature. The wild animals and trees have the right to be in peace. No one can just walk out and cut a tree or kill a wild animal without due reconsideration and permission from elders and responsible groups. Likewise, Oromos believe that one cannot be in peace if the neighbors have no peace. So, they have a solution if peace is disrupted, which is *araaraa* (reconciliation). The apology and compensation will be paid not only to human beings, but also to nature like wild animals and the forest etc. if one unnecessarily disturbs their peace. *Nagaa* Oromo (Oromo sense of peace) has a connection with *Nagaa Waaqaa* and for fear of their *Waaqaa* people abide with the *Nagaa* Oromo. So,

for peaceful co-existence with the neighboring societies as well as among themselves, *Nagaa* Oromo plays a vital role. The respect as well as the understanding of the concept that any creation has the right to use their resources and live in peace is deeply indoctrinated in *Waaqeffannaa* religion. The wild animals have the right to get water even in the areas where water is scarce. So, people should fill in a container accessible to wild animals and leave it to them during the night so that wild animals can also access water, especially in places where water is manually fetched from a deep well.

There are basic symbols carried during the ceremonies and special prayers. *Kallachaa* is held by men and *Caaccuu* by women. *Kallachaa* is an item made of iron from lightening and is held or given to selected persons. It is inherited through generations for many years and passed over and the selected people carry and keep it. *Caaccuu* is made of *Ilillaan* (sea shells - ornament) and especially prepared for women to wear during ceremonies. But *Callee* (necklace of glass beads) is used during prayer of *Ateetee* (women spirit). Another *Kallachaa* is an item made of metal worn on the forehead of a Gadaa leader as an indication for leadership.

Among the ceremonies of *Waaqeffannaa*, *Irreecha* and *Muuda* pilgrimages are just a few of many worthy of mention. *Waaqeffataa* walk to a mountain or river and practice prayers by holding green grass during the *Irreecha* ceremony while *Muuda* is visiting a holy place or *Abbaa Muudaa/ayyaantuu* like known *Qaalluu/Qaallitti*. The head of the Qaallus is *Abbaa Muudaa*. Today the annual *Irreechaa* in Bishoftu, central Oromia at the end of September and the *Muudaa* pilgrimage to Ananjina in Bale is very popular and millions take part. The *Muudaa* of Sheik Hussien Bale is a mix of indigenous and Muslim religions. It is originally Oromo *Abbaa Muudaa* and then converted to Muslim as told by Oromo oral story. But is still visited by pilgrims from Muslim, christian and *Waaqeffataa* Oromos. People have reestablished *Irreecha* Malka Ateete (River Atete) and different places and it is seen as reviving identity today. The previously banned *Irreechaa* at different lakes and rivers is now reemerging and seen as part of national identity. Taking part in *Irreechaa* is inclusive, it is not only by *Waaqeffataas* but any Oromo regardless of their religion can be taking part in the *Irreechaa* ceremony. It was also used by *Qeerroos* (Oromo youth) as a platform for taking oath during the peaceful struggle for the recent years to bring political change in Ethiopia. Many claims that *Irreechaa* is a tradition and it is not a part of religion. But as can be obviously observed, it is a prayer to *Waaqaa* and religion and tradition are usually interrelated in Oromo as in many other societies.

*Abdaarii* is prayer done under a holy tree. Every Oromo village has its own *Abdaarii* tree under which they pray to *Waaqaa* at different occasions and seasons. *Odaa* (sycamore tree) is one of the sacred trees where the Oromos pray, hold *Araaraa* (reconciliation) and conferences for peace.

### **3. How Waaqeffannaa Was Targeted for attack**

Before I strive to answer this question, I want to take a close look at colonial history. The original word for the colony is derived from Latin, and it means “settlement and cultivation.”

Indeed that is why the empire builders justified their colonial agenda in a positive term as a “civilizing mission.” During the liberation struggle, many African countries saw colonialism as the settlement of the Europeans. Liberation is seen as sending the colonizers back where they came from. Later on, they realized that colonialism goes beyond the mere physical presence of the colonial forces. The settlement goes not only on the land but also in the mind. Settling on land is visible, whereas settling in the mind may not be visible, and this makes it more challenging. For that reason, the colonial agenda goes hand in hand with religious conversions. The colonizers saw that if they control the mind, they can control the human and natural resources. For example, Jomo Kenyatta – the first president of an independent state of Kenya and the leader of its liberation struggle explained the ways the European colonizers used their religion to take African land and leave the Kenyan people in poverty and misery when he said:

When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They taught us to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them [our eyes], we had the Bible in our hand, and they had the land.

The similar situation happened to the Oromo people. Knowledge is socially constructed. Knowledge and power are intertwined. What is true to one cultural group, is void for others. With no proof, the colonizers claimed to have sound knowledge and strove to impose upon us. This means that knowledge and power are one of the areas in which the colonized and the colonizers compete. The experiences of the Oromo people are similar to that of the above mentioned characters of other colonized people.

The story about Oromos first introduction to the dominant religions (Christian and Islam) varies. But most writers agree that the first forced conversion of Oromos to Orthodox Christianity was in 1878 by King Yohannes and then by Minilik II, whereas Catholic missionaries first contact with the Oromos was in 1843. The Protestant missionaries were introduced in 1889 where as the first contact with Islam was in the 15th C by Ahmed Giragn and it was reintroduced again in the 18th C (Benti 2018: 83-133).

Both Christianity and Islam came through two ways: Forced conversion or approaching as friendly but then corrupting people. Roughly seen from history, the Orthodox Christian and Islam came to Oromia mostly through forced conversion and the Catholic and protestant missionaries followed systematic conversion by friendly approach.

When Orthodox Christian priests came following the conquering of the Oromo land, mostly they built their Churches by cutting the Odaa tree (Sycamore tree where the Oromos used to pray) and replaced it with their churches. That is why we find Orthodox churches mostly on the tops of the mountains in most part of Oromia today. The Orthodox Christian leaders have destroyed the Oromo tradition and degraded it. Everything related to the Oromo indigenous religion of *Waaqeffannaa* was and still is seen by them as sinful act, devilish and dangerous by some priests/pastors/Imams. They burned *Caaccuu/Callee* - the ornament Oromo woman wear during their rituals, and also banned *Ateetee* (womens spiritual prayers), *Boranticha*-spiritual ritual and *Irreechaa* and other Oromo rituals.

As many writers agree, religion was used as means of conquering; as indicated by Abera: “During Menilek’s conquest, there had been a forceful introduction of Orthodox Christianity to the conquered peoples by the conquerors as a means of facilitating the full subjugation and submission of the newly conquered areas” (Abera 2005: 26-27) as quoted in Tesema (2012:101).

Even today, most of Muslim imams and Christian priests and pastors perceive *Waaqeffannaa* rituals as a sinful act and as cursed by their respective religions. They have based the success of their religion on destroying *Waaqeffannaa*. One should devalue, curse and degrade *Waaqeffannaa* to be converted and seen as good follower of their new faith.

Oromos with their indigenous religion are often described as *pagan* on most of the scripts of churches especially the Orthodox church. Then they define *Pagan* as a killer, someone without religion who is cruel. Even today, this sentiment has not changed, and some priests often refer to *Waaqeffannaa* as worshipping devil and *Irreechaa* as place for “Witchcrafts”. These priests/imams have no interest to learn what *Waaqeffannaa* is rather than blindly cursing it. It is very important to have a government policy on religion where respect to other parallel religions would be the focus for the peace and co-existence of diverse society. We observe some conflicts in different parts of Ethiopia due to lack of clear policy and laws regarding respect of other religions when one practice his/her own religion. In developed countries, it is compulsory that anyone can practice one’s religion regardless of what is dominant religion.

*Waaqeffannaa* was deliberately blackmailed by priests as worshipping trees, mountains and rivers while Oromos use this milieu only as a worshipping places and prays only to one *Waaqaa*; not to the trees, mountains and rivers.

Moreover; *Waaqeffannaa* is denied media coverage and official places even today for fear of repercussion from Islam and Christian religions. Very few journalists dare write or present news or documentary on *Waaqeffannaa*. Practicing *Waaqeffannaa* is still a struggle and winning the prejudices of the orientation from the dominant religions is far from over. That is why it is necessary to organize *Waaqeffannaa* in modern and structured way to protect it from more destruction and domination.

## **4. The Revitalization of *Waaqeffannaa***

### **4.1 Revitalization of *Waaqeffannaa* in Ethiopia**

*Waaqeffannaa* was banned by the successive monarchies and governments of Ethiopia since Oromia was invaded ca. 1880s. One should be either Christian or Islam to be buried in the cemeteries. But Oromos in some Oromia parts held their indigenous religion and cultural value *Gadaa* against all odds. Some parts of the Tulamas in central Oromia, Karayyu and Jille in the central east, the Arsi in Kokosa, the Boranas and Guji in the southern Oromia and few other places have resisted not to convert and held their indigenous religion even if it was totally isolated and not recognized by the consecutive governments of Ethiopia. But in the majority Oromia areas, Oromos have been converted to either Islam or Christian. Some have

become devoted Islam and Christians while the vast majority became passive followers of Christian and Islam. The passive followers are symbolically converted to either of the dominant religions, but they practice *Waaqeffannaa* at their homes. They go to the churches or Mosques for socialization and to get burial places while they practice *Waaqeffannaa* as their religion. In this regard, the statistical data from Oromia regarding religion followers does not show the real picture since they are registered as followers of the officially recognized religions though their faith is *Waaqeffannaa*.

This is similar to the situation in Nigeria where the Yoruba society held their indigenous religion even if they are converted to Islam or Christian as described by Peel (2016) in the book titled the three Circles of Yoruba Religion. The Gikuyu people of Kenya believe in Nagai in the same way as the Oromos believe in *Waaqaa* and Yorubas believe in Orisa. Mountains and trees are places to worship for Gikuyu people as is Odaa tree, Rivers and Mountains for the Oromo. The Japanese have similar belief to the *Waaqeffannaa* in regard to life after death. Japanese also believe that one does not disappear after death as the *Ekeraa* lives in heaven the same as in Oromo. They do practice *dhibaayyu* (libation – sacrifice to *ekeraa*) in the same way the Oromos do.

*Waaqeffannaa* was not recognized as a religion in Ethiopia and it was taken even as a shame and devalued if one speaks about this religion in public for many years. No one even dare say I am *Waaqeffataa* until recently. But *Waaqeffannaa* was organized and officially registered not long ago. Previously, it was practiced underground to protect it without mentioning it in a public. But after the Dergue government was overthrown in 1991, the Ethiopian constitution allowed to get organized and follow the religion one chooses. Following that, some *Waaqeffataas* started getting organized and register it as officially recognized religion.

The first modern form of organized *Waaqeffannaa* was established when a group of Oromos organized themselves under Matcha and Tulama Association as ‘a committee for Oromo history and culture’ in 1998. The group first worked on the revival of Oromo culture and through time *Waaqeffannaa* became the core of the subject. Then in 2002, the committee was changed to “*Waldaa hordoftoota amantii Waaqeffannaa*” means Organization for the followers of *Waaqeffannaa*. At the end of 2003, *Waaqeffannaa* was registered and got its permission from the government to officially operate as a religion. But, the then government relate every organization of Oromos to opponent politics and due to that, in early 2004, *Waaqeffannaa* was banned again and the permission was revoked 54 days after it was given. The reason given for the recall was that *Waaqeffannaa* was accused of working for opposition political party (Oromo Liberation Front).

It took time until Oromos again get organized, convinced the government that *Waaqeffannaa* has nothing to do with politics and got it registered for second time in 2009. Then another second group was registered in 2013. Now, many Galmas (worshiping places) are available in Oromia though still tough to be *Waaqeffataa* in Ethiopia due to all the prejudices.

#### **4.2 Revitalization of *Waaqeffannaa* outside Ethiopia**

A group of Oromos were organized by Abba Liban Dabbasa Guyyo and established Gadaa Oromo cultural Heritage Association in Kenya, Dagoretti at the suburb of Nairobi in the year



2000. The author of this article and Dabbasa Guyyo together with some dedicated Oromos wrote the first manual for the institution. The Association has done tremendous job in introducing *Gadaa* and *Waaqeffannaa* in abroad. Dabbasa's interview on VOA and giving clear introduction of *Waaqeffannaa* was a pioneer to start reestablishment of *Waaqeffannaa* in abroad. Then students of Dabbasa resettled in Europe and USA as well as in Australia started and registered *Waaqeffannaa* in their respective adoptive countries. *Waaqeffannaa* was first registered in abroad in Bergen, Norway in 2008. These followers of *Waaqeffannaa* come together from different countries working online and established *Gumii Waaqeffannaa Addunya* (Global *Waaqeffannaa* Council) in 2008.

Dabbasa Guyyo travelled around the world to reach out to similar indigenous societies like the Maya in Guatemala, the Indians in USA and some indigenous people in Kyrgyzstan. He visited Guatemala, USA, Norway and Kirgizstan and taught about *Waaqeffannaa* until he was kidnapped in Nairobi, Kenya in 2015 and his whereabouts is not known until the publication of this article.

Global Council of *Waaqeffannaa* has been working on introducing and further research on *Waaqeffannaa* as well as *Gadaa Oromo*. They publish books, videos, website and organize seminars to do more research on *Waaqeffannaa*.

## **5. Why we need to revitalize *Waaqeffannaa*?**

Basically, knowledge is socially constructed, and it is power. Religion is also knowledge. So, Revitalizing *Waaqeffannaa* which is the base for Oromo culture is empowering the Oromo society. If a society has a power, one can speak, lead good life, and struggle for one's right. As many recognized religions are valid to their followers, *Waaqeffannaa* is also valid to the Oromos. Oromo wisdom is kept in *Gadaa* and *Waaqeffannaa*.

*Waaqeffannaa* promote *Nagaa* – peace in the family, community and between communities and the natural world. It is significant that *Waaqeffannaa* is practicing the Oromo *Safuu uumaf uumama* (ethics of the social and natural world), the balance of nature, ecosystem and harmony in competing societies. *Waaqeffannaa* promotes the idea of pluralism and it can be used to harmonize competing religions and create a buffer zone.

The role of *Waaqeffannaa* in promoting the rules and laws of the country is important. It is imperative to take into consideration the indigenous religion when one establishes the rules and laws of the society since *Waaqeffannaa* is deeply inculcated in the day to day lives of the society. The concept of *Safuu* (virtues), *Laguu* (vices) and *Cubbuu* (sin) in *Waaqeffannaa* can be a base for the rules and laws of the society. *Waaqeffannaa* can play a vital role in the Oromo society as well as for the peaceful co-existence with other societies in the region.

Oromos are also known in having an indigenous system of a republican form of egalitarian administration known as *Gadaa*. It is a comprehensive system ingeniously architected to guide the spiritual, ethical, political, social, economic and military activities of the society. The *Gadaa* leaders, if they seemed to be going astray, neglecting *Safuu Waaqaa* and *Seera Gadaa* (*Gadaa* laws), they were/are persistently checked and balanced by the *Ayyaantuus*

from the *Qaalluu* institution. The *Qaalluus* are regarded as the 'chief guardian' of the unchangeable law of *Waaqa* (*Seera Uumaa*) while the elected *Gadaa* leaders are serving the people being the custodian of the amendable *Seera Gadaa* (*Gadaa* laws). Thus, the two laws in the institutions are complimentary to each other, not contradictory to one another.

As indicated above, *Waaqeffannaa* keeps the wellbeing of *Gadaa* institution by keeping the *Gadaa* values. As Tesema states:

“The Oromo indigenous religion, *Waaqeffannaa* has been practiced as part and parcel of the *Gadaa* system and it involved different religious concepts, ceremonies, rituals, celebrations and above all it embodies the concept of *Oromummaa* (being an Oromo) — the Oromo national identity and citizenship. Consequently, since *Waaqeffannaa* is enshrined in the traditional *Gadaa* institution it has religious, socio-economic and political functions.” Tesema (2012:107)

In addition to the above mentioned values, *Waaqeffannaa* can be used as mediating among the Oromos with different religions.

Moreover; *Waaqeffannaa* helps to preserve Oromo culture, tradition, to keep Oromo wisdom and history. The cultural value in *Waaqeffannaa* is vital for the Oromo people. It is obvious that colonizers destroy the indigenous values of the conquered people. One can ask why the colonizers focus on the indigenous values and religion of the people. It is because they know that the wisdom and power of a given people is held and kept in the indigenous culture and religion. The same is true for the conquerors of the Oromo people.

## **6. Who can contribute to revitalize *Waaqeffannaa*?**

The role of Oromo institutions in research and support like Oromo Studies Association (OSA), Universities, *Gadaa* institute, non-governmental organizations and researchers is vital in revitalizing *Waaqeffannaa*. The role of government in reestablishing *Waaqeffannaa* institution is also important. As mentioned previously, the successive Ethiopian governments have used the government structure to destroy *Waaqeffannaa*. So, it is time to compensate and reestablish the value of the Oromo people. In addition, the role of dedicated Oromos in reestablishing *Waaqeffannaa* is very important. Collecting data, analyzing and researching on *Waaqeffannaa* is very important to filter out the core values of *Waaqeffannaa* from the intrusion of other elements like *Qaallichaa* (witchcraft).

Organized *Waaqeffannaa* institutions together with concerned Oromos should demand compensation from the Ethiopian government for historical subjugation, destruction and eradication of *Waaqeffannaa*. The successive Ethiopian regimes have systematically abolished *Waaqeffannaa* values, segregated, humiliated and dehumanized *Waaqeffannaa* to the extent that people could not dare identify themselves as *Waaqeffataas*. It is also vital to include laws in the constitution of the country to protect indigenous religions like *Waaqeffannaa*. This is important because the dominant religions continue to contribute for the eradication of *Waaqeffannaa* unless and otherwise protected by due laws and regulations.

## 7. Recommendations

Some policy recommendations based on my above analyses:

- 7.1. Oromo holy days like *Irreechaa*, *Boranticha* and others should be included in the national holy day calendar of Ethiopia.
- 7.2. Ethiopian government should recognize the atrocities committed against *Waaqeffannaa* and compensate by providing worshipping Galmas, cemeteries and grave yards.
- 7.3. *Waaqeffannaa* is an instrument to check and balance the power of *Gadaa*. *Gadaa* is a core value in Oromo tradition for peace as well as for co-existence of the society. So, revitalizing *Waaqeffannaa* is important for existence of *Gadaa* and should be given due place.
- 7.4. The society, mostly those who believe in *Waaqeffannaa* has respect for *Waaqaa*. So, it can be used as oath taking method in government offices like in court and during starting service in public offices.
- 7.5. *Waaqeffannaa* gives due place for nature and it can be used for preservation of nature like forest, wild animals and natural resources.
- 7.6. For conflict exposed country like Ethiopia, peaceful co-existence is the main focus. *Waaqeffannaa*'s values like *Safuu*, *Laguu* and *Cubbuu* forbids the society from breaking laws and can be used in the law making and fact finding (*Afarsataa*).
- 7.7. For the peaceful and normal life of the society, respecting and giving due place for their religion is very important for psychological wellbeing.
- 7.8. People respect laws for the reason that if they commit crime, it has consequences. The consequence can be punishment by imprisonment or money. But if someone took oath in his/her religion, they fear the consequences more than imprisonment and paying money. Punishment of *Waaqaa* due to committing *Cubbuu* goes until seven generation according to *Waaqeffannaa*. So, it is more powerful to use religion than to try to stop corruption and misuse of power than threatening with other method of punishment in addition to the normal laws.
- 7.9. Peace and reconciliation (*Nagaa fi araara*) is very important concept of the Oromo culture. The understanding for *Nagaa* Oromo where every creation including insects and plants as well as wild animals has the right to be in peace is helpful in a society. One cannot disturb the peaceful habitat of any creation and they are given that right by *Waaqaa*. This concept related to *Waaqaa*'s creation (*uumaa waaqni uume*) and attached to *Cubbuu* if one doesn't respect it. So, *Waaqeffannaa* is important in keeping peace and reconciliation in the society as well as balance of nature if observed well.
- 7.10. *Irreechaa* in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) needs to be restored and given due place. In addition, *Waaqeffannaa* worshipping place (Galma) should be restored in Finfinnee.

- 7.11. *Waaqeffannaa* should be protected by law from attack. The criminal code should be amended in such a way that one can be sued if one attacks *Waaqeffannaa*.

## 8. Conclusion

Oromo indigenous religion, *Waaqeffannaa* is a religion which existed since the existence of the Oromo people and is indigenous to the Oromos. The new religions based their existence on abolishing of *Waaqeffannaa*. It is important to revitalize *Waaqeffannaa* to keep the balance of nature, to check and balance *Gadaa* institution and to keep *Nagaa* Oromo - peace between different religions and societies in Oromia. The Ethiopian government should reestablish *Waaqeffannaa* as a payback for destroying it for years. Knowledge is socially constructed, and indigenous religion is a knowledge. As knowledge is a power, strengthening *Waaqeffannaa* is working for the sustainability of Oromo people and empowering them.

## Notes

1. Interview with Dabbasa Guyyo and other elders from Tulama and Arsi.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

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