

Modernity, Culture And Democracy: Changes And Continuities Of The Oromo Gadaa System

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Abstract

The primary aim of this work is to analyze concept of modernity, culture and democracy; changes and continuities of the Oromo gadaa system in changing social and political paradigm. Gadaa system of the Oromo administers all aspects of Oromo life and activities including social, political, economic, cultural, environmental and religious issues. Gadaa system has major role in keeping social and political order of the Oromo nation. It has also a major role in keeping social and political order of the Oromo nation. For centuries Oromo nation were governing their affairs with the principles and values of the gadaa system. However, change is inevitable phenomenon. Indeed Gadaa system due to both internal and external factors declined structurally in most parts of Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. The role of gadaa as social institution is also undeniable in promoting peace and harmonious co-existence. It helps to analyze the past events and situations, understand the present and shape the future destiny for the common wellbeing.

Key words: Modernity; culture; democracy; Oromo; Gadaa system; social values

Introduction

This study focuses on conceptual analysis of modernity, culture, democracy; changes and continuities of the indigenous democratic political system of the Oromo gadaa system. Oromo is a single largest ethnic group with distinctive culture, language, and governance system, social and political values in Africa. The aim is to analyze concept of modernity, culture and democracy; changes and continuities of the Oromo gadaa system in changing social and political paradigm. It is better to see the changes and continuities of the Oromo gadaa system and underlying social and political values in a general human conditions and social dynamics. As the Oromo aphorism goes “*Kan darbe yaadatanii, isa gara fuula duraa itti yaadu*”, which Maimire Mennasemay translate it as “remembering the past, the future is remembered”. This aphorism contains significant meaning in the current Oromo politics in Ethiopian context.

Modernity, Culture and Democracy

The concepts of modernity and democracy related to change in one way or another. In this changing world; change is inevitable phenomenon. However, in this change what ought to be changed, which part of social values ought to be preserved might ascend questions. Concerning the issues of modernity and culture Mirsepassi raise the following important questions. Accordingly Mirsepassi (2000) asks that “is modernity a totalizing ... ideology primarily and

inescapably grounded in European cultural and moral experience and therefore incapable of understanding other cultures as anything other than as its inferior ‘other’”? He also raises another additional question “Or, is modernity a mode of social and cultural experience of the present that is open to all forms of contemporary experiences and possibilities?” (Mirsepassi, 2000)

These are important questions that one has to raise in attempts to understand the relationships between influences of one trend over the other in human life. Since both modernity and tradition is vital, how we ought to handle them might be the most important issue. According to Mirsepassi (2000) the dilemma here is how to reconcile the tension between modernity’s promise of openness and inclusive qualities (the Enlightenment moral promise and the modernist radical vision). “In addition he states the blatant Eurocentric narrative of modernization that forecloses the possibility of real ‘local’ experiences and of their contribution in the realization of modernity” (Mirsepassi, 2000). Mirsepassi states that modernization, then, is understood as a world-historical process resulting in the entire world crossing the threshold of this shared experience.

How could social institutions compete with modernization project at least in peace making, managing social order and democratization processes? Ta’a notes that the Oromo people are governed by the historic Gadaa system as their political culture (Ta’a, 2016:81). Gadaa has prominent importance to the Oromo nation in settling disputes and promoting sustainable peace among Oromo nation and beyond. The values in gadaa system are “much closer to the hearts and minds of the people and are more helpful than the modern system of governance, particularly for maintaining sustainable peace, tranquility and prosperity” (Ta’a, 2016:81). Ta’a argues that “as the role of indigenous systems of governance is becoming so vital in democratization globally, it is necessary to depict the role that *Gadaa* institutions play in good governance and peaceful coexistence” (p.82). Tesema argues that “Gadaa as a system of governance embodies several institutions which manifest themselves in an overall socio-economic and political culture” (Ta’a, 2016:84).

Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge (2016) argue that if democracy really has a global destiny, it must grow out of, rather than replace, the values of different cultures. They further argue that for any democracy promoted by the West that is construed as culturally hegemonic will be a democracy in name only. Their assumption is that democracy should emerge from the culture of the society and shouldn’t be imposed from outside. Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge argue that “democracy is a universal ideal in the sense that it is universalizable under certain conditions” (ibid). Therefore, it is possible to investigate, examine and analyze democratic ideals in the tradition of the society, universalize and help democracy to grow out of the tradition rather than imposing and representing the existing democracy in tradition the society. Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge argue that:

A (Deweyan) democratic ideal, for example, does not justify Americanization or Westernization, because “government by the people” will take different forms in different cultures. Accommodation of cultural diversity must extend to contesting the meaning of the democratic ideal. Such a contest will be resolved only through social inquiries into

varied experiences, and its resolution will expand and enrich both the ideals and the experience (Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, 2008: 7).

Accordingly, to be truly democratic, inquiry must develop out of the shared problems, concerns, and issues of the publics that it serves experience (Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, 2008: 8). They argue that Culture is not and does not have an external authority or a fixed goal; as a living process. In addition culture is part of the larger process of human life and growth, a dynamic open-ended process that is its own end rather than being directed at something fixed and changeless beyond growth (Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, 2008: 43). Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge argue that if democracy must be realized in cultural terms, democratic culture is still something to achieve and to create. "It is a culture that must be achieved on a worldwide scale if it is to be achieved at all, but not by coercion, economic domination of one country over others, or by hegemony of one culture over others" (Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, 2008: 48).

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) argue that mass values play a crucial role in the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions. They affirm that modernization is evolving into a process of human development, in which socioeconomic development brings cultural changes that make individual autonomy, gender equality. In addition, they note that democracy increasingly give rise to a new type of society that promotes human emancipation on many fronts. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) argue that democracy is not simply the result of clever elite bargaining and constitutional engineering. They indicate that concept and existence of democracy depends on deep-rooted orientations among the people themselves. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel state that:

These orientations motivate them to demand freedom and responsive government – and to act to ensure that the governing elites remain responsive to them. A genuine democracy is not simply a machine that once set up, functions by itself. It depends on the people (Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, 2005: 2).

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) interpreted contemporary social changes based on Welzel work as a process of human development, which is producing increasingly humanistic societies that place growing emphasis on human freedom and self-expression. According to Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, a massive body of cross-national data demonstrates that: (1) socioeconomic modernization, (2) a cultural shift toward rising emphasis on self-expression values, and (3) democratization are all components of a single underlying process i.e., human development. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel argue that:

Socioeconomic modernization reduces the external constraints on human choice by increasing people's material, cognitive, and social resources. This brings growing mass emphasis on self-expression values, which in turn lead to growing public demands for civil and political liberties, gender equality, and responsive government, helping to establish and sustain the institutions best suited to maximize human choice – in a word, democracy (Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, 2005:2).

Culture is a dynamic process in human development and change is also inevitable. Idang (2015) argues that it is obvious that culture is shared since it consists of cherished values or beliefs that are shared by a group, lineage, and religious sect and so on. Idang argues that apart from this, culture is dynamic in the sense that it is continually changing. A “culture is not static” (Idang, 2015:100). Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) also indicate that “the core of the human development sequence is the expansion of human choice and autonomy” (p.2). Inglehart and Welzel suggest that as this aspect of modernization becomes more prominent, it brings cultural changes that make democracy the logical institutional outcome. As they state in previous accounts of modernization, the central role played by cultural change has been either overlooked or underestimated. Idang citing Etuk (2002) argues that cultures are not static, they change. Based on this assumption he argues that “culture needs to change; which wants to remain static and resistant to change would not be a living culture” (Idang, 2015, 100). However, which aspect of culture ought to be changed and what kind of change it ought to be raise question that need critical engagement to answer. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) indicate that:

In short, socioeconomic modernization brings the objective capabilities that enable people to base their lives on autonomous choices. A rising emphasis on self-expression values leads people to demand and defend freedom of choice. And democratic institutions establish the rights that entitle people to exert free choice in their activities. These three processes all focus on the growth of autonomous human choice. Because autonomous choice is a specifically human ability, we characterize the processes that develop this potential as “human” development (Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, 2005:3)

Idang writes that “culture, as it is usually understood, entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other peoples or societies” (Idang, 2015: 98). According to Idang these peculiar traits go on to include the people’s language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing and so on. These traits also include a people’s social norms, taboos and values (Idang, 2015: 98). Concerning issues and importance of values and their concerns in human life Idang argues that “values here are to be understood as beliefs that are held about moral evaluations of what is right and wrong and what is important in life” (Idang, 2015, 98). In addition Idang states that “study of values rightly belongs to the discipline of philosophy (Idang, 2015, 98). Idang observes that “philosophical appraisal of African culture and values is not only apt and timely, but also appropriate” (Idang, 2015: 98).

According to Idang Culture embraces a wide range of human phenomena, material achievements and norms, beliefs, feelings, manners, morals and so on. It is the patterned way of life shared by a particular group of people that claim to share a single origin or descent (Idang, 2015: 98). Idang (2015) argues quoting Bello (1991) indicating the importance of culture in everyday life and way of life. Accordingly both Idang and Bello (1991) share same ideas and see culture as totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms thus distinguishing a people from their neighbors” (Idang, 2015: 98).

Idang and Etuk also share same idea on the place in human life and the way they perceive the world they inhabit. Accordingly they both have same idea on the issue that “an entire way of life would embody, among other things, what the people think of themselves and the universe in which they live – their world view – in other words, how they organize their lives in order to ensure their survival” (Idang, 2015: 99). Culture is to be understood as the way of life of a people. The idea that there is culture is understood as the way of life assumes the fact that there can be no people without a culture. To claim that there is no society without a culture would, by implication, mean that such a society has continued to survive without any form of social organization or institutions, norms, beliefs and taboos, and so on; and this kind of assertion is quite untrue. That is why even some Western scholars who may be tempted to use their cultural categories in judging other distinctively different people as “primitive”, often deny that such people have history, religion and even philosophy; but cannot say that they have no culture (Idang, 2015: 99).

Both Antia and Idang share same concerns on the issues of cultural values. Antia (2005) and Idang (2015) indicate that culture is not fixed and permanent. Accordingly, they both agree that culture will be changed and modified through assimilation of other peoples’ culture. Idang and Etuk also observe the inevitability that culture changes and not static or permanent. Idang state that culture needs to change; which wants to remain static and resistant to change would not be a living culture” (Idang, 2015: 100). Idang (2015) state that since culture is carried by people and people do change their social patterns and institutions, beliefs and values and even skills and tools of work, then culture cannot but be an adaptive system. “Once an aspect of culture adjusts or shifts in response to changes from within or outside the environment, then other aspects of the culture are affected, whether directly or indirectly” (Idang, 2015: 100).

The place of values in African culture of the Oromo nation

Oromo gadaa system and Ubuntu share some common characteristics as African traditional values. Ubuntu refers to traditional African values such as a sense of community, hospitality, sharing and consensus seeking (Pieter Boele van Hensbroe, 2001:48). Legesse (2000) writes that we study African culture so that they may live and grow to become the enduring foundation of a distinctive African civilization. According to Legesse in that process of growth, every culture has something to offer. Legesse make distinction between men’s cultural identities which is predatory expansion of one civilization and the complimentary integration of many diverse cultures. Legesse (2000) argues that cultural identities must be allowed to grow, not by the predatory expansion of one civilization but by the complimentary integration of many diverse cultures. He argues that:

No human community, however humble, should be forced to give up its cultural identity without making a critical contribution to the larger identity without making a critical contribution to the larger reality which it becomes a part. That remains true whether the larger reality is national culture, pan- African culture, or universal culture (Legesse, 1973, 2000: ix).

Idang (2015) state the relevance of culture to human conditions that: “A culture is an embodiment of different values with all of them closely related to each other” (p.103). according to Idang “that is why one can meaningfully talk about social, moral, religious, political, aesthetic and even economic values of a culture” (Idang, 2015: 103). “African notions of values and rights derive from African worldviews of social values that are considered universal (community based) rather than individualist (individual based)” (Obioma Iheduru 2006: 212) Iheduru argues that “African social values and, by implication, political values deal with community” (Iheduru, 2006: 212). Idang also argues that value of is defined as its worth. Idang (2015) states that:

The value of a thing, whether it is an object or a belief, is normally defined as its worth. Just as an object is seen to be of a high value that is treasured, our beliefs about what is right or wrong that are worth being held are equally treasure... value can be seen as some point of view or conviction which we can live with, live by and can even die for. This is why it seems that values actually permeate every aspect of human life. For instance, we can rightly speak of religious, political, social, aesthetic, moral, cultural and even personal values (Idang, 2015: 101).

In Africa valuable cultural and social values are often overlooked. For instance, the Oromo gadaa system and Ubuntu in South Africa contains important social and political values. Although, “such indigenous cultural resources may be essential to build a solid development in Africa from indigenous roots” (Pieter Boele van Hensbroe, 2001:5); it is overlooked both in academia and political spheres. The contested question as Hensbroe states is whether the roots of African philosophy should consist of a direct cultural continuation of indigenous African traditions or consist of critical work concerned with Africa issues and practiced by Africans (Pieter Boele van Hensbroe, 2001:5). Since every philosophy rises out of a particular culture or situation, African philosophy has to start from African situation. Philosophy as an activity ought to start from critical reflection on social and political issues of the society. As African traditional values both the Oromo gadaa system and Ubuntu contains respect, human dignity and compassion. Gadaa and Ubuntu contain democratic values based on consensus, peaceful co-existence and solidarity among society. These social values contain dialogical conversation and reconciliation on important social issues in the society. *Ilaa fi ilaamee* is an important sober dialogue which help to solve problems based discussion among the individuals or community. A critical philosophical reflection is important for philosophical enterprise and human understanding.

Gadaa system as alternative democratization process in Ethiopia

Do we really have alternative way to be taken or follow same way we came along in Ethiopian politics? Gadaa system contains important indigenous institutions, social and political values that bind and manage social order for better future. The concept of gadaa system contains political and administrative issues, revise existing laws and amend the new laws too. It determines and governs the way we act and behave in our daily life. On the other ways, it contains cultural and philosophical underpinnings. Gadaa system contains social values, their ways of life and existences, determines behavior and actions of the Oromo nation. Gadaa system, as such contains social and political values that serve the Oromo nation and other human kinds, since those values are not limited to a certain nation only. The concept of *nagaa* (peace), *safuu* (moral order) and

ilaa-fi-ilaamee (sober dialogue and consensus), *guddifachaa* (adoption with full rights and privileges of the son and daughter) are few among important concepts and social values of the Oromo nation. Gadaa system has a major role in settling quest for self-determination. It is also important in shaping future destiny of Oromo politics and Ethiopian political discourse. The past traditional values have to be remembered to understand the present scenarios and shape the future destiny.

As the Oromo aphorism goes “*Kan darbe yaadatanii, isa gara fuula duraa itti yaadu*”, which Maimire Mennasemay translate it as “remembering the past, the future is remembered”. This aphorism contains significant meaning in the current Oromo politics in Ethiopian context. Because it helps not to repeat the same past mistakes and promote social values that promote sustainable peace and development. Mennasemay (2013) argues that the aphorism incubates a non-linear conception of history, a future oriented understanding of tradition, and a conception of emancipation that embraces political and economic democracy, social justice and cultural flourishing. As Mennasemay indicates that the “concepts of ‘decentering’ and ‘fusion of horizons’ facilitate the nurturing of a crucial idea that gestates in the Oromo aphorism: the idea of emancipation as the means and goal of Ethiopian modernization” (Mennasemay, 2013:23).

Since the double remembering—of the past and of the future—is an activity that takes place in the present, the aphorism suggests that neither the intelligibility nor the coherence of the present could be available to us unless we start with the recognition that the past and the future are incorporated in the present, the site of the activity of “remembering”. An activity of “remembering” that latches on to the past and to the future as dimensions of the present gives depth to the present through which circulate our experiences of the past and the experiences that actualize themselves in the future (Mennasemay, 2013:24).

As Mennasemay indicates “the Oromo aphorism makes ‘remembering the past’ the road through which we need to go to discover the future, the ‘not-yet’ gestating in the past” (Mennasemay 2013:25). Mennasemay notes this Oromo aphorism as “a critique of spontaneous historical consciousness” (p.35). Mennasemay argues that this Oromo aphorism “conveys a critical historical consciousness, and thus a radically different understanding of the past and the future and of their relations to the present, that breaks through and goes beyond past glories and past sufferings” (Mennasemay, 2013:24).

The Oromo aphorism— “By remembering the past, the future is remembered”—is resolutely opposed to the Platonic idea of “recollection”. It invites Ethiopians, not to recollect the past but to question it and to undertake the crucial task of investigating the meaning of the future, the “not-yet”, in its relationship to the past, to the present, and to the future itself. The thickening of historical time—the folding of the future onto the past and of the two onto the present—that the Oromo aphorism proposes creates conditions for bringing to the surface the forgotten, the forbidden, the occluded, the repressed, the unsaid, the inaudible and the invisible of our past and present. It gives depth to the present and provides the ground and the opportunity for eliciting the potential that lies coiled in Ethiopia’s history for creating a new future. The knowledge about ourselves and

Ethiopia that we acquire through such “remembering” has an “astonishing” and a “shock” value that no amount of “recollection” of our past and indeed no linear narrative of Ethiopian history will ever be able to bring about (Mennasemay, 2013:24).

The study on Oromo gadaa system then contributes a lot to look back into social and political values in the system to understand present situation and shape future destiny. It is not to seek the glorious past, but search alternative path to democratization process for the common good of all Ethiopians. Mennasemay (2013) states that, “the Oromo aphorism thus leads us to a novel understanding of the future” (p.37). Mennasemay clearly indicates that ‘remembering’ the past becomes remembering the future only when the past and the present are challenged by that which they failed to achieve—the alternative Ethiopia. “The process of challenging the past through what it could have become but did not is also a process of challenging the present as the embodiment of the failures of the past and of its unfulfilled emancipatory anticipations” (Mennasemay, 2013:31). Remembering as Mennasemay states is not narrating about the past events and it is more about reflective activity. Mennasemay (2013) argues that:

‘Remembering’ then is more than narrating the past as a succession of events. Rather, it is a reflective activity that replaces the mere knowledge of historical facts with a critical historical consciousness that retrieves the signals of an alternative future as living but repressed promises of our history, and links them to our present life in ways that generate a theoretical and practical commitment to bring about an Ethiopian society free from both the inherited and the new economic, political and cultural dispossessions. That is, the ‘remembering’ of the Oromo aphorism calls for a ‘unity of intellect and will’ that is inherently transformative (Mennasemay, 2013:35).

There is still a part of Ethiopia—our ancestors who struggled for an alternative Ethiopia—that, though defeated and dead, is not yet buried and cannot be buried, *pace* Marx, because it is still agitated by unanswered questions, unfulfilled promises and aborted hopes. If Ethiopian reforms and revolutions are to run their full course, they must be rooted in a critical historical consciousness which, by opening the virtual past through the activity of “remembering”, gives a historical depth to the alternative society that beckons us from the future as a promise born in the past. The alternative Ethiopia that the Oromo aphorism anticipates draws its “poetry” from both the past and the future (Mennasemay, 2013:35). The “remembered future” relate to the past in search for alternative way out to better social justice, equality, freedom, human dignity is not to make same mistakes of the by gone days.

Mennasemay raise important and critical question concerning tradition and values embedded in to the tradition of the society. Accordingly he raises the following question “Is there a universal value neutral concept of tradition, or does every tradition has its own concept of tradition that sees itself as a universal concept?” (Mennasemay, 2013:36). Mennasemay indicates that “The Oromo aphorism, in articulating “remembering” the past with the “remembered future”, suggests that neither the past nor the future are value neutral terms”(p.36).

The aphorism’s implied articulation of the future through tradition and of tradition through the future suggests that a future without tradition is rudderless and a tradition

without a future suffers from paralysis. Since the 'remembered future' is not a given but one that is yet to be constructed, it needs tradition to start its work, intimating from the angle of the 'remembered future', that critique without tradition is empty and tradition without critique is depthless, that is, cut off from the virtual past. The implication is that tradition, interpreted from the perspective of the Oromo aphorism, neither blocks our intellectual horizon nor stifles our powers of critique and imagination, as development theories suggest. On the contrary, without tradition, critical thinking and imagination are stifled, for it is through the questioning of tradition via the "remembered future" that alternative political thinking and alternative political imagination could flourish. In a sense, tradition seen from the perspective of the Oromo aphorism is ex-centric and has, like a decentred circle or an ellipse, two centers: the past and the future. 'Remembering' articulates these two centers (Mennasemay, 2013:37).

In "remembering" one thus grasps tradition in its multiple temporalities— tradition as part of the virtual past, of the future in the past, of the present, and of the not-yet future (Mennasemay, 2013:37). Idang citing Etuk (2002) indicates that "no group of people can survive without a set of values which holds them together and guarantees their continued existence" (Idang, 2015:101). As Mennasemay indicates "Remembering" unveils the "epistemological crisis" of the reigning tradition and precipitates it into self-questioning. The aphorism itself is indeed a symptom of such an "epistemological crisis" in Ethiopian tradition. He states that by "remembering the past" articulated with the "remembered future" then becomes an interpretative activity that removes the scales from tradition's eyes and brings into its vision the structures and processes of oppression and exploitation that it was not able to see and was not able to overcome (Mennasemay, 2013:38).

Nagaso Gidada (2001) notes that, the writing of history and the knowledge of the past should also help us to understand the present and enable us to suggest possible trends in the future. Nagaso Gidada his study indicates that there are many features of the traditional Oromo Cultural values which could be adopted and developed further. According to Nagaso among important traditional values of the Oromo culture are decentralization of power, election and change of functionaries, freedom of verbal expression, decision- making by the people assembly and at a local level. Nagaso further indicates open criticism of others as well as self-criticism, and solution of conflicts through intervention and mediation of neutral individuals and the compensation for harm inflicted on another person and reconciliation ceremonies. He suggests that "The traditional option to be self-sufficient, independent and responsible to the whole community can be adopted and developed further" (Nagaso, 2001: xii).

Change and continuity of the Oromo gadaa system

Gadaa system is the prominent Oromo traditional governance system that encompasses all aspects of activities and existence of Oromo nation in Ethiopia. Gadaa system has five parties and each party succeed one other by taking power at every eight years. Some of its democratic features include freedom of expression, peaceful power transfer, multi-party system in which each succeed one another at every eight years. It serves as a symbol of unity and identity. Leonidas Donskis (2011) states that, Identity serves as an invitation both to the past and to the

future. Mennasemay also discuss the Oromo tradition of *gadaa*, in light of the dialectic of the past and the future that the Oromo aphorism proposes. The Oromo aphorism that goes “*Kan darbe yaadatani, isa gara fuula duraa itti yaadu*”, “remembering the past, the future is remembered” which Mennasemay state Oromo *gadaa* system in words of aphorism which says, “In remembering *gadaa*, the future is remembered” (Mennasemay, 2013:38).

Mennasemay argues that *gadaa* is a system of thought, beliefs and practices that constituted and legitimated a form of governance, production and reproductions for centuries. He also notes that in light of the dialectic of the past and the future that the Oromo aphorism proposes, we need also to look at *gadaa* as a system that in actualizing itself occluded that which in the *gadaa* system is more than *gadaa*: its future-oriented emancipatory aspirations (Mennasemay, 2013:38). Thus, it is in this way, as Mennasemay states that alternative political thinking and alternative political imagination could flourish.

Mennasemay observes Asmerom Legesse’s work that makes the usual distinction between the “underlying principles” that inform *gadaa* and the structures of governance that characterize it. Mennasemay further argues that the structures are part of the actual past, whereas the principles are part of the virtual past and thus transcend their particular historical contexts in that they still speak to the unresolved problems of the past and present: how to create a society wherein members could live a life of dignity, equality, solidarity and autonomy. As Mennasemay argues:

Insofar as these principles are not actualized in the structure and goal of *gadaa* governance, they exist only as emancipatory surplus meanings that are the “remembered future” of *gadaa* and are “not yet” thought out and conceptualized (Mennasemay, 2013:39).

Mennasemay states that whereas the “underlying principles” of *gadaa* exude universality, the structures of governance effectively exclude women from the institutions of governance. The liberation of women is one of the dimensions of the “Not-Yet-Conscious” and the “Not-Yet-Become” of *gadaa* (Mennasemay, 2013:39). Many criticisms rise on the issue of women in *gadaa* system, which is even problematic in the modern democracy and governance system itself. Either by lack of understanding how *gadaa* system works or else by ignoring the institutions in the *gadaa* system that safeguards the right of women some people criticizes the system. However on this point Mennasemay overlooked the role of *gadaa* system that it contains many institutions that serve different aspects of human concern and different segments of the society. First, Oromo women have *siiqqee/ateetee* institution with equal footing with *gadaa* system which serves the right of women and serve as indigenous feminism. Second, it is not who is in the structural governance of the *gadaa* system, but by what mechanism those in structure govern the people ought to be much concern and it is the rule of law that govern both the governed and the governor. The laws in *gadaa* system are applicable to both leaders and followers. In *gadaa* system, for instance, when the elected *Gadaa* leaders administered justice, maintained law and order, the local councils followed *Gadaa* laws and practices in the same way at grass root level (Tesema Ta’a, 2016:85). According to Tesemathis nature of the *Gadaa* system provided the Oromo with the mechanism for participation in public affairs or self-government.

Tesema also further indicates that the *Gadaa* system of governance is also rich in institutions for resource management, peace restoration and social integration that are worth in the modern system of governance. Tesema discuss that the system was based on the rule of law (*seera-tumaa caffee*) and institutional checks and balances that supported the removal of unfit or corrupt officials even before their term expired (Tesema Ta'a, 2016:85). Mennasemay argues that:

The Oromo aphorism suggests then that the ideas, beliefs and practices of Ethiopian social transformation must be immanent to Ethiopian society and traditions if the transformation is to be a liberating one. Social transformation cannot be borrowed from or imposed by external ideas, beliefs and practices unless "remembering" fertilizes and irrigates them with the emancipatory aspirations, ideas, beliefs and practices it liberates from within Ethiopian traditions. Indeed, from the perspective of the Oromo aphorism, traditions are indeed internal to what we call Ethiopian history (Mennasemay, 2013:39).

It is important to explore and examine social and political values in the cultural heritages of the society and analyze the past and present situation and fuse to the future in a way it can help the current and future generations. Accordingly, it is important to investigate the social and political values of the Oromo gadaa system, in explicating the concepts of *Nagaa* (peace), *safuu* (ethical and moral order), customary laws and self-governance in Oromo nation in the past and fusing it to present and the future. It paves the way to ground Gadaa political philosophy of the Oromo nation in its indigenous roots.

Conclusion

The concepts of modernity, culture and democracy related to changes in one way or another. In this changing world; change is inevitable phenomenon. Culture is a dynamic process in human development and change is also necessary and unavoidable. However, proper reconciliation between modernizations vis-avis tradition is important phenomenon. Gadaa system is the prominent Oromo traditional governance system that encompasses all aspects of activities and existence of Oromo nation in Ethiopia. It serves as a symbol of unity and identity. The "remembered future" relate to the past in search for alternative way out to better future in which social justice, equality, freedom and human dignity prevail. It is not to make same mistakes of the bygone days. The Oromo aphorism that goes "*Kan darbe yaadatanii, isa gara fuula duraa itti yaadu*", pave the way to think about the past, understand the present and approach the future. Gadaa system contains future-oriented emancipatory aspirations and encompasses social values, the Oromo ways of life and existences that determines behavior and actions of the Oromo nation. Gadaa system, as such contains social and political values that can serve justice to prevail, peace, solidarity and human dignity to be sustained. Thus, gadaa system is universalizable and has potential to assist humanity to flourish, peace and social justice to prevail.

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