

Research Article

The Role of Gada System in Economic and Tourism Development

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Abstract

This research paper explores the significant role of the Gadaa system in enhancing tourism and economic development. Oromia, like many African regions, is abundant with natural and cultural attractions, with the Gadaa system standing out as a major man-made cultural heritage. While previous studies have extensively examined the concept of the Gadaa system, a gap remains in understanding its impact on tourism and economic growth. This study aims to bridge this gap by employing a qualitative research methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources, including oral traditions and published materials. The findings reveal that the Gadaa system, with its rich democratic practices and cultural activities, holds substantial potential to attract tourists, thereby boosting the local economy. The study concludes with recommendations for preserving the Gadaa system for tourism development strategies, highlighting its importance as a catalyst for economic growth within the tourism industry.

Keywords

Gadaa, Tourism, Qutto, Conflict Resolution, Qumbii and Irreechaa Festival

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Tourism involves the temporary relocation of individuals from their usual place of residence to another location for a duration ranging from a minimum of one day to a maximum of one year. This movement does not involve establishing a permanent residence and is not related to any remunerated activities. People engage in tourism for a variety of reasons, including attending conferences, participating in pilgrimages, seeking leisure and pleasure, or engaging in trade. These diverse purposes highlight the multifaceted nature of tourism as an important cultural and economic activity [1]. Tourism is characterized by three key elements: the involvement of travel by nonresidents, a temporary stay in the area visited, and

activities that are not connected to earning income. As one of the world's fastest-growing industries, tourism plays a crucial role in the global economy, serving as a significant source of foreign exchange and employment for many countries. Its expansive growth underscores its importance as both an economic powerhouse and a vibrant cultural exchange platform [2]. Tourism is a global industry that engages millions of people worldwide, influencing and integrating with nearly every sector of life. As a multifaceted activity, tourism does not exist in isolation; rather, it encompasses a variety of components that work together to create a seamless experience. These components include attractions that draw visitors, transportation systems that facilitate travel, accommodations that provide places to stay, and supporting facilities and in-

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frastructure that enhance the overall experience. This interconnectedness underscores the complexity and broad impact of tourism as a major driver of economic and cultural exchange [3].

The Gadaa system holds significant tourism potential as a captivating cultural heritage of the Oromo people, offering a unique tourist attraction. This democratic system has long been instrumental in shaping and guiding the lives, governance methods, socio-economic conditions, and philosophical perspectives of the Oromo society. The Gadaa system fosters unity and solidarity among the people and is renowned for its peaceful conflict resolution strategies. It is a comprehensive social system where every eight years, members of the society cycle through roles and responsibilities within their *baallii*, ensuring active participation and continuity of cultural practices. This dynamic and inclusive approach to governance makes the Gadaa system not only a significant cultural legacy but also a compelling draw for tourists interested in exploring indigenous democratic practices and social organization [4].

The Gadaa system is an indigenous, foundational democratic framework of the Oromo people that upholds human rights without prejudice. It is a comprehensive system that regulates political stability, economic growth, social activities, cultural duties, and moral responsibilities through its well-defined structure, principles, and functions. As an egalitarian system, Gadaa accords great respect to all individuals, including the *Hayyuu* and *wayyuu*, seniors and juniors alike. Its essential quality lies in its division into quantified social purposes, which facilitates members in developing a dependable and stable sense of self and community. This inherent structure promotes equality and ensures that each member contributes to and benefits from the society's collective well-being, making Gadaa a unique and enduring model of indigenous democracy [5].

In the Gadaa system, the transfer of power from one Gadaa period to the next is a vibrant and artistic process, marked by attractiveness, love, and democratic principles that respect the voice of the nation. The outgoing leaders transfer authority with joy and transparency, devoid of any conspiracy, to the incoming leaders at the *Arada jilaa*, a sacred place. This seamless and celebratory transition reflects the deep-rooted democratic ethos of the Oromo people, who elect their leaders through periodic elections every eight years. This enduring tradition of periodic elections to assume state power is a hallmark of the Gadaa system, exemplifying a governance model that harmoniously blends cultural heritage with democratic values [6].

In the Oromo Borana tradition, the transfer of power is a ceremonious event held at midnight, where seven horses are used to ceremonially take the *baallii* from the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa*. This timing and method are deeply rooted in the Borana philosophy that no one, not even birds, should cross in front of those engaged in this significant activity, ensuring uninterrupted focus and sanctity. Conversely, within the Gujii

Oromo context, the transfer of power takes place during the day, showcasing the diversity of practices within the broader Oromo community. These varied approaches reflect the rich cultural tapestry and philosophical depth that characterize the Gadaa system's power transitions. Look the following figure when *Abbaa Gadaa* Gujii accept power from the previous *Abbaa Gadaa*.



Figure 1. In time of taking power (*baallii*) from former *Abbaa Gadaa* Gujii Oromo.

As a sophisticated political organization, the Gadaa system structures the Oromo society into age groups that actively participate in social and economic processes, taking over power through elections that reflect the people's interests. Political power is vested in members of the Gadaa Grade, who are responsible for governance. The Gadaa system features three branches of government executive, legislature, and judiciary each operating under the essential principle of checks and balances. This ensures that power is exercised responsibly and equitably, maintaining the integrity of governance and reflecting the democratic ethos at the heart of the Gadaa system [7].

In the Gadaa system, a generational gap of forty years between a father and his son is a key feature in the organization of society. The naming of the five classes, or *gogessa*, within the Gadaa system varies across different regions. Among the Macha and Tulama Oromo communities, the Gadaa system experienced weakening due to the incorporation by Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, yet it was revitalized in the 20th century through the efforts of Oromo experts. In these communities, the classes are named Birmaji, Horeta, Dullo, Michile, and Robale. Meanwhile, the Gujii Oromo, who rotate power every eight years, refer to their classes as Mudana, Halchisa, Dhalana, Harmufa, and Robale. Similarly, the Karayyu and Borana Oromo have distinct names for their classes, reflecting the cultural diversity and adaptability of the Gadaa system across different Oromo regions [8].

1.2. Statement of the Problem

It is deeply argued by different scholars on the concept of

Gada. Even though Gada is a complex system that contains various elements, scholars agree that it is a system of time-keeping or a calendar. It is also the name of the six hierarchies in the system. Likewise, Gada refers to the 8-year cycle in which each level stays in power and a traditional system of governance in which cultural aspects of the Oromo people, indigenous knowledge, and wisdom are reflected. However, scholars give very little attention to the contribution of Gada in tourism and economic development of the region. Different festivals and practices in the Gada system have significant potential to attract tourists to the area and foster economic development. During the time of Baallii transfer, various scholars, scientists, researchers, visitors, and tourists participate in the ceremony. Participants pay for different goods and services, including accommodation, accessibility, amenities, and destinations. The festival presents a valuable opportunity to increase foreign exchange, contributing to the future development of the country's economy. In the Ethiopian Empire, Gada is considered an indigenous democratic system of the Oromo. It addresses political instability in the Horn of Africa and beyond, paving the way for economic development through foreign exchange and bringing peace to all humankind. On the issue of the potential of Gada on tourism and its contribution to economic development, researchers have given very little attention. Therefore, the study address the absence of adequate research and attempt to fill the gap.

1.3. Research Question

In line with the title and objective, this study was tried to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which practices of Gada are used in tourism development?
- 2) How does Gada mark its role in the economic development of the country and foreign exchange?
- 3) What is the relationship between gada and tourism?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to examine the contribution of the Gada system to the tourism industry, and economic development of the country.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To investigate the major practices of Gada used for tourism development.
- 2) To analyze the role of Gada in the economic development of the country and foreign exchange.
- 3) To evaluate the role of Gada in peace building and the safety of tourists and other participants in the area.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design and Setting

Research Design

The study will be conducted based on interviews, observations, reading of relevant written materials, and oral information. This study was done in line with descriptive research Approach. Due to this, the study was used the descriptive approach to describe and interpret the various collected sources and explain the wide variety of data obtained from primary and secondary sources.

2.2. Method of Data Collection

To gather the data, the researcher used systematic data collection methods such as interviews, and observation of different practices and festivals of Gada. Thus, primary and secondary sources will be used to gather the necessary information for this study. Relevant written materials concerning Gada and tourism will be collected from various sources, either published or unpublished.

3. The Major Practices of Gada Used for Tourism Development

3.1. Laws That Declared at Sacred Site (*Ardaa jilaa*) in Gadaa System

Within the Gadaa system, a comprehensive set of laws is established and implemented to govern the community, underscoring the system's appeal and its extraordinary qualities as a governance framework. At sacred sites, known as *Ardaa jilaa*, proclamations are made regarding various laws, such as those of *waaqaa* (spiritual) and *lafaa* (earthly), as well as laws governing relationships with parents, *Hayyuu* (wise ones), and *wayyuu* (sacred ones). Additionally, laws for sons and daughters, along with environmental and wildlife regulations, are also declared. These legal proclamations, such as those made during the power transfer at Me'ee Bokko through specific declarations (Lalaba), illustrate the Gadaa system's role in maintaining social order and harmony while ensuring the protection of cultural and natural resources.

Declaration of son and daughter:

Intala gurgurachuun aadi malee.....It is not permissible to accept money in exchange for a girl

Haati shaashii nyaatinsi seera malee.....It is not permissible for mothers to receive clothing in this context

Hiyyessi fuudhuu hin dandenyee aadi malee.....It is not lawful for the poor to seek a price (dowry) for marriage

Gujiin intalaasaa hin gurguratu, yoo gurguree aadi malee.....The Gujii people do not engage in the sale of their daughters, it is unlawful

Gujiin Goromsa fudhataa santu seera.....Gujii

takes heifer it is lawful

Gumii goromsaa lama murteesse santu seera.....The Gumi has approved two heifer

Raadni kan Abbaa, karaxtni kan oboleessati.....Let the heifer be for the father and the karata for the brother

Maallaqa fuudhachuun aadi malee.....Transgressing the Gumi's decision and taking money is unlawful

Hiyyessi fuudhuu hin dandenyee aadi malee.....The poor is unable to get married, this is out of law

Intala fuudhuun seera (aadaa).....Having a wife is lawful, it is culture

Aadaa malee fuudhuun seera malee.....Having a wife contrary to culture is out of law

Intala gandaa fuudhuun aadaa.....Taking girl for wife from the other village is right

Obboleetii fuudhuun aadi-malee-, aadaan Gujii ka-

na.....Marring ones nice is not culture, this is Gujii culture.

Declaration for power incoming and outgoing Abbaa Gadaas:

Har'a dooriin baallii fuudhaataa santu sera.....Today the Dori is receiving the balli (power) that is lawful

Abbaan Gadaa baallii kennaa santu seera.....The Abbaa Gadaa gives out the balli that is lawful

karaa qabaa santu seera, deebi'ee baallii kennaa santu seera.....You give the balli that is lawful

kan baallii fuudhee seera qaba santu seera.....Whoever takes power has laws and that is the law

Mana torba taa'aa santu seera.....There are seven houses that are designated for sitting

Sadeetafaa baallii kennitaa santu seera.....Power is bestowed in the eighth year that is law.



Figure 2. When Gujii sit at me'ee bokko and enacting different laws.

Abbaa Gadaa response in lalaba gumii:

Amma kan hafe gumii kaasu, Anile akkan deemuu naaf eeyamisa.....I want to let go the Gumi and allow me let the Gumi go

Gumii kaasii galii.....Let them go and go your way

Galii teesisii! Wan akeektee akeekii..... Let them sit down boy, let them show what they think about talk to the Jaldhaabaa (speaker), tell him this

Ammaa yeroon kan baallii dabarsaanii, jaldhaaba kiyyatti naaf himi.....Now the power is completely transferred isn't it? Yes it is, tell the Jaldhaabaa

Qorqoraan qe'ee yaadee.....The head of the family is thinking about his house

Afuuraan niitii yaadee.....The husband is thinking about his wife

Hojjataan hojii yaadee.....The worker is thinking his business

Ammaa yeroon geettee (gumii gallii geettee).....It is time to let go the Gumi

karraa bane jira.....Here, I open the door.

Look the following figure when Gujii open the door and returned to their usual residence.



Figure 3. When Gujii open the door and returned to their usual residence.

Declaration of environmental protection:

Hafaa mukaa hin muranuu, santi aadaa.....Do not cut age-old trees that is the custom

Bayaa mukaa hin murani, santi aadaa.....Refrain from cutting young plants; that is the custom.

Muka mul'isaa hin muranuu, santi aadaa.....Do not cut magnificent trees that is the custom

Muka maqaa hin muranuu, santi aadaa.....Do not cut functionally-titled trees (*birbirsaa, Ejersa, wadessa*) that is the custom

Muka Jilaa hin murani, santi aadaa.....Do not cut holly trees that is the custom

Mootii mukaa hin muranuu, santi aadaa.....Do not cut visible trees that is the custom

Sootii mukaa hin murani, santi aadaa.....Do not cut street trees that is the custom

Mukeen hin qululuchanuu, santi aadaa.....Do not clear the tree and its branches; that is the custom.

Raadaa fi jibichaan simuree, santi aadaa.....While cutting a tree, he said, "Your punishment is a heifer; that is the custom

Namni ibidda qabatee bosona seenu bishaan qabatee deemaa, santi aadaa.....Anyone who enters a forest with fire shall also take water with them; that is the custom.



Figure 4. *Abbaa Gadaa* when blessing *Arda jila* for different ceremony.

When oromo migrated to the *ardaa jilaa me'ee bakkoo*, they did not cut in the forest, they did not dig the ground with sharp iron when necessary for compulsory matters or to make a shelter, they pour cow's milk on it and bless it. This shows us that *me'ee bakkoo* is a highly respected land.

3.2. *Qaalluu* and *Qumbii* in Oromo Believe

Qaalluu are the messengers of *Waaqaa* and the ritual leaders of the *Waaqeffannaa*. They are honored by Oromo pilgrims who come from far and wide, to take part for *Muudaa* (anointment). *Qaalluu* were called as *Abbaa muudaa*. *Qalluu* considered as the son of God. In *Waaqeffannaa* religion the first *qaalluu* was born when God was created *Horo* (Alamayyoo, 2016). They did magnificent role to protect *safuu*, culture and *gada* system. *Qaalluu* give blessing for the *Abba gadas*. Before power transferred to *abbaa gadaa* the *Abba muudaa* gave *qumbii* for the candidate of *Abbaa gadaa* to take *qumbii* from *abba muudaa* shows to accept promise to be innocent and truth, not to do bad things [9].

The Potential of qumbii nyaachisu Ceremony to Attract Tourist

The practice of taking *qumbii* is a ceremonial tradition steeped in symbolic meaning, involving actions such as anointment, the giving and taking of *qumbii*, blessing, providing *mijuu* (*mijuu dhiheessuu*), *damma biifuu* (salivation

of bookaa), and singing traditional songs. The preparation of *qumbii* is a secret known only to the *Abbaa Qaalluu*, highlighting its sacred nature. The *Abbaa a Qaalluu* is responsible for administering oaths and anointments, holding the exclusive knowledge of *qumbii's* preparation and significance. Candidates for *Abbaa Gadaa* demonstrate their endurance and resilience by keeping *qumbii* in their mouths throughout the night, symbolizing their readiness to face challenges and maintain confidentiality. The *qumbii's* bitterness and heat are emblematic of the governance challenges they are prepared to undertake. Holding *qumbii* signifies maturity across social, cultural, mental, and intellectual dimensions and represents tolerance and the capability to protect the community's rights even in difficult times. This cultural practice profoundly expresses leadership qualities and societal values, deeply rooted in tradition and symbolism. *Qumbii* is a symbol of truth. Therefore, *qumbii* teach people how to overcome the hard condition through endurance and truth of God (*dhugaa waaqaa*) [10]. Oromo give special values for truth (*dhugaa*). According to Oromo believes *dhugaa* is the one that involves justice. *Waaqeeffata* believe that *dhugaan ilmoo waaqati* (truth is the son of God). Regarding the value of *Dhugaa* in Oromo proverbs, Oromo states different proverbs to underline its value. For instance, *Hinqall'atti malee, dhugan hin cittu* (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, satisfies people), *saala lafa hin dhoksanii dhugaa waaqa hin dhoksan* (do not hide the gender to the earth nor the truth for heaven).

According to Diribii Damusee (2016) in his book entitled "Ilaalcha oromoo", the ceremony of taking an oath known as *qumbii nyaachisaa* is integral to leadership within the Gadaa system, as it is essential for gaining recognition and trust [11]. Without participating in this ceremony, no one can be regarded as a leader in the Oromo Gujii context. However, at one point, the practice of this ceremony was interrupted. Galgalo Hinsarmu (2023) explains that from the Gadaa Muudanaa of the 67th *Abbaa* Gadaa Jiloo Mixoo to the Gadaa Harmuufa of the 74th *Abbaa* Gadaa Jiloo Maandhoo, the *qumbii* ceremony was officially not practiced for 56 years. This interruption was due to various factors, including climate conditions, drought, famine, war, religious influences, and the impact of emperors. In the practice of taking *qumbii*, candidates aspiring to become *Abbaa Gadaa* must fulfill several ceremonial requirements, one of which is *buna naaqa or gumaata naquu*. According to various *yubaa*, this involves presenting a significant gift that includes ninety-nine calves and one sheep with a distinct white marking on its head, known as *hoolaa adda booqaa or balacuu*. This tradition underscores the cultural expectations and the symbolic importance of offering such gifts as part of the leadership initiation process within the Gadaa system.

According to Galgalo Hinsarmu states all candidates of *Abbaa Gadaa* can take or eat *qumbii* except Faga. *Qumbii* is given by *Qaalluu*, but it is provided (*nyaachisuu*) by Faga to Gadaa's councils (*Yaa'a Gadaa*). The members of *Yaa'aa* council are elected from their generation at the end of *Kuusaa* grade by their skill, ability, physical, mentality, history; and their wisdom and knowledge of culture and disciplines of Gadaa system.

During the *qumbii* ceremony, the Gujii Oromo engage in a barefoot journey from the sacred site of Uraagaa to other significant locations such as Gannaalee Malkaa, Cirrattee, Sammarroo, Boorama Barkoo, and Diida Guddaa. On the night of *Qumbii Nyaachuu*, the candidates remain awake, as falling asleep is believed to bring bad luck in their future roles. Throughout the night, they receive blessings and advice from the *Yubaa*. The candidates undergo extensive training on various subjects including the Gadaa rule, their future duties and responsibilities, and how to interact with both their alliance party (*qadadduu*) and opposition (*walaannaa*). Additionally, the training covers aspects of human life and leadership within society. After accepting *qumbii* from the *Qaallu*, they receive further counsel and guidance from the father of anointment (*qaalluu*), reinforcing their readiness to lead.

Dhugaa afaan sikaaye.....I put truth in what you express

Dhara afaanii si fuudhe.....I removed falsehoods from your speech

Daba hin qorin.....Avoid analyzing it

incorrectly

Qorii mooqaan hin qorin.....Do not examine speech by corruption

Buna bulluqaan hin qorin.....Avoid assessing speech while exploiting others' resources

Haqa hiriyyaan hin qorin.....Don't assess the truth by prioritizing friends

Firaa- warraan hinqorin.....Do not examine by your relatives

Dhugaa waaqaa lafaa qori.....Focus solely on the truths of *Waaqa* and *Lafaa*

Yoo daba qorte afaan dabi.....Your mouth will be bent if you examine wrongly.

The *qumbii* ceremony among the Gujii Oromo is not only a series of rituals but also a profound ethical commitment. A person who takes *qumbii* is expected to always speak the truth and never fabricate lies, embodying the ideals of honesty and integrity (Diribi, 2016). This truthfulness is a cornerstone of their leadership, as they are committed to finding and standing for the truth at all times. After completing the *qumbii* ceremony, the *Abbaa Gadaa* is deemed ready to assume leadership and take power from the outgoing *Abbaa Gadaa*, marking a significant transition in the Gadaa system's governance.

3.3. The Significance of Gadaa in Conflict Resolution for Sustainable Stability

The Oromo people, native to the northeastern regions of the Ethiopian Empire in East Africa, have long practiced a traditional method of conflict resolution known as *jaarsummaa*, or arbitration. This informal approach to settling disputes is deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and emphasizes community involvement and dialogue. Through *jaarsummaa*, elders and respected community members mediate between conflicting parties to reach amicable solutions that restore harmony and uphold communal values. This method highlights the Oromo's commitment to peaceful coexistence and their rich tradition of using wisdom and negotiation to resolve conflicts [12]. The Oromo people have effectively utilized the *jaarsummaa* method to resolve a wide range of interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, including serious issues such as homicide. This traditional arbitration process involves community elders who bring their wisdom and experience to mediate disputes, ensuring that justice is served while maintaining social harmony. Through open dialogue and negotiation, *jaarsummaa* facilitates reconciliation and healing, reflecting the Oromo's deep-rooted commitment to peace and community cohesion. This method underscores the community's ability to handle even the most grievous conflicts with a focus on restoration and collective well-being [13].

Conflict, as defined by Gemechu (2002), Biratu & Kosa, (2020) is the disagreement that arises within a society based on differing interests and benefits. These disagreements can stem from a variety of sources, including competition over natural resources, disputes over manmade assets, and divergent po-

litical views. Such conflicts are inherent in any community, reflecting the diverse needs and perspectives of its members. Addressing these conflicts requires understanding and negotiation to balance interests and promote societal harmony [12, 14]. According to Biratu and Kosa, referencing Francis (2006), conflict is a natural disagreement arising from differences in attitudes, beliefs, values, or needs between individuals or groups. Such conflicts can escalate, with one party potentially harming the other until a negotiation or resolution is reached. The Gadaa system, revered as the root of democracy among the Oromo people, provides a well-established mechanism for conflict resolution. It empowers the community to address challenges through open discussion and consensus-building, ensuring peaceful co-existence and fostering long-term peace. This democratic approach exemplifies how traditional systems can effectively manage conflicts and promote harmony within a society. In Oromo society, beyond conflict resolution, *Gumaa* is a widely practiced traditional method for settling disputes [15]. *Gumaa* involves the payment of blood money (Gemechu, 2002) which is compensation paid to the family of a murder victim or to individuals who have been seriously injured. The Gadaa system, an enduring indigenous institution, continues to play a crucial role in dispute settlement. Within this system, local elders, known as *Jaarsaa*, often mediate conflicts at the neighborhood level, working to reconcile disputing parties and restore community harmony. This approach underscores the effectiveness of traditional practices in maintaining peace and order within the Oromo culture. In the Oromo society, when local elders are unable to resolve serious cases, particularly those that may require the intervention of supernatural entities, the matters are escalated to religious institutions, as noted by Gumii Boru (2016). In addition, such complex issues are often transferred to knowledgeable elders known as *Hayyuu*. *Hayyuu* play a pivotal role in conflict management due to their deep understanding of the community's norms and customary laws. Their expertise and wisdom make them well-suited to handle intricate disputes that require more than just conventional mediation, ensuring that even the most challenging conflicts are approached with cultural sensitivity and respect [16].

The Oromo people have long utilized the *Gumaa* tradition to negotiate with the relatives of both murderers and victims, effectively resolving disputes through this practice. In today's world, where bureaucratic challenges can impede impartial conflict resolution, the *Gumaa* tradition holds significant value, particularly in addressing serious cases such as homicide. The process involves the community reaching consensus and agreement, often marked by the symbolic slaughtering of a sheep, which signifies reconciliation. This practice not only restores harmony but also serves as an attractive cultural event. The ritual's material preparations, the proclaimed laws, and the consensus-building process are compelling, drawing tourists to the sites where these profound traditions are enacted, thus highlighting the intersection of cultural heritage and modern tourism.

In the *Gumaa* arbitration process, specific cultural elements play a crucial role in facilitating reconciliation and negotiation after a homicide. The *hoolaa araraa*, or reconciliation sheep, is central to the festival, symbolizing the restoration of peace. Additionally, various items such as a knife, new cloth and the leaves of plants like *endod* or soapberry (*Phytolacca dodecandra*) are essential. These leaves are collected and powdered, known as *tumu* in Afaan Oromo, and used in the negotiation activities. Each element in this process is imbued with cultural significance, ensuring that the reconciliation is deeply rooted in tradition and community values, making the *Gumaa* system not only a mechanism for justice but also a rich cultural practice.

If an Oromo accidentally kills someone, they pray and intercede for the victims and the gods. They say, "*Ya waaq, warra gumaa garaa nuu laafisi, atis garaa nuu laafi*," which translates to "O God, have mercy on the victims, and have mercy on us." The elders repeatedly ask the victim's family for forgiveness. If the bereaved victim parents refuse to reconcile, the Oromo hold special objects such as *bokkuu*, *kallacha*, *caaccuu*, and *siinqee* and pray for peace. They do not refuse reconciliation because these special items are important in Oromo culture; they settle the matter by *Koottuu* and *dhufee*.

The parents of the murderer and the victim share their thoughts on reconciliation as follows: *Hayyee (x3) waaqa nagaan nu bulchite nagaan nu oolchi....* God, who ruled us in peace, save us in peace.

Waaqa nuuf araaramtee galata..... Thanks to God for forgiving us.

Siif uummata giddutti nagaan bu'ee galata..... I am thankful for your peaceful presence among the people.

Si achi nagaaf jaalalaa galata..... Thank you for your continued peace and love.

Through the victim, he begins his speech by saying:

"Koottuu" jedha, guullaniis "dhufee" jedha akka ati dhufte nagaan biyyaaf haa dhufuu jechuun dubbii isaa jalqaba which translates to He says, "Come," and the Gulla says, "I come." He begins his speech by saying, "As you come, may peace come to the country."

Oromoo waaqni ha eebbisu haa eebbisu God bless you Oromo..... Let him bless them

Waaqni rooba haa kennuu.... haa kennuu..... May God give rain..... Let him give it

Lafti marga haa kennuu.... haa kennuu..... Let the earth give grass..... Let him give it

Saani aannan ha kennu.... haa kennuu..... Let the cow give milk..... Let him give it

Horiin ha hooruu.... ha hooruu.... Let the cattle off-spring Let him off-spring

Dhugge haa booressu.... haa booressu.... Let him drink the water and relax.

Dheedee ha barbaadeessu.... ha barbaadeessu.... Let the cattle feed

Waraanni fi dhibeen biyyaa ha badu.... biyyaa ha badu.... Let war and disease disappear from the country.

Aaarri Kun araara fulla'u haa ta'u..... May this be a full-fledged reconciliation.

Eebbi Kun eebba nagaa ha ta'u.... haa ta'u... May this be a blessing of peace..... Let it be.

What kind of reconciliation is this? They say "divine reconciliation" and then complete their reconciliation [17].

Among the Macha Oromo of the western Oromia region, a unique reconciliation process unfolds during negotiations between two clans. The mediators purchase a sheep of a single color, known as *hoolaa bifa tokkoo*, to symbolize unity. As the clans gather at a river, or *malkaa*, they stand on opposite sides while representatives from each clan meet at the river's center with the sheep. In a symbolic act, they pierce the sheep's belly while it is still alive, exchanging grass through the abdomen and spreading the sheep's blood with grass onto their respective clans. This ritual signifies the washing away of past grievances. The sheep is then cast into the river, and the clans return home together, marking their unity by eating from one dish. This profound ceremony emphasizes reconciliation and the restoration of harmony within the community. In order to remove the revenge between them. This all activities are the security ring of Gadaa for tourism and economic development of a country.

3.4. Irreechaa Ceremony

Irreecha is the Oromo people's thanksgiving ceremony, held to express gratitude to *Waaqa* for the blessings and compassion received throughout the year. This celebration marks the transition from the darkness of the rainy season to the brightness of spring. Rooted in the Gadaa system, *Irreecha* represents the Oromo's connection to each other and to their deity, emphasizing gratitude towards the supernatural. Celebrated after the Meskel holiday, *Irreecha* is observed in various areas of the Oromia regional state. On a national level, it draws millions of Oromos from across Oromia and diverse ethnic groups from other regions of Ethiopia, such as the Sidama, Kembata, Gamo, Konso, and Burji communities. Additionally, it is celebrated globally by the Oromo diaspora in countries including Sweden, Australia, Norway, Canada, Switzerland, the United States, and Germany, showcasing its cultural significance and unifying power [6]. The event is celebrated around the end of September, marking the end of the rainy season to Hora Finfinee and Hora Arsadi respectively [18]. During the *Irreecha* festivals, friends, family, and relatives gather with joy and pleasure, celebrating a vibrant cultural tradition that strengthens social bonds and promotes peaceful coexistence. The festivals bring people closer, enhancing understanding and unity among the Oromo. *Irreechaa* serves as a platform for building common values and sharing visions, reinforcing principles of peace, tolerance, brotherhood, fraternity, and resilience, all rooted in the Gadaa system. This celebration not only solidifies communal ties but also highlights the enduring cultural values that guide the Oromo people in maintaining harmony and cohesion within

their communities.

During the *Irreecha* festival, people wear/don/ traditional clothing that reflects their cultural identity, with participants from across the region showcasing their heritage. Women adorn themselves with beads, known as *callee*, on their foreheads, while men wear headscarves, or *ruufa*, and *kofoo* to partake in the celebrations. As they proceed to the lake, the celebrants sing ritual songs such as "*Hooyaa mare woo, mare woo, Alaa manaaf nuutolii yaa aayyolee woo*," which remind them of the seasonal cycles and express gratitude for the arrival of a new season and New Year, filled with hopes of abundance and prosperity. These songs also serve as a form of reconciliation with God (*Waaqa*) and Earth (*lafa*), highlighting the deep spiritual connection and cultural richness of the *Irreecha* celebration.

They also singing as- *Ulee leetii saaya ulee leetii*

Malkaa dhugaan keetii nuttii araarami

Araraamaan waaqaa, araarsiyeen uumaa malkaa dhugaan keetii nuti araarami (tube, nd). It is song saying by karrayyu Oromo women during *Irreecha* celebration.



Figure 5. The karayyu Oromo women when the move to Hora/lake/ for thanks ceremony.

Waaqayyoo roobee...ookoo
Roobee lolaasee...ookoo
Maddaa irra yaasee...ookoo
Xinnaa guddisee...ookoo
Guddataa bulchee...ookoo
Nagaan bobaasee...ookoo
Nagaan nu galchee ...ookoo
Birran bari'ee ...ookoo
Irrensa baannee...ookoo

Irree jabanee...ookoo is what Oromo people saying during thanks giving ceremony.

Participants in the *Irreecha* festival hold freshly picked green grass and flowers, known as *keelloo*, which they use to sprinkle themselves as a symbolic gesture of cleansing both body and soul. At the lake, or hora, they dip their grass into the water, participating in a ritual that signifies purification

and renewal. As they walk back in groups, they sing songs of reconciliation, such as “*araaraa gallaa*,” expressing the theme of returning from reconciliation. This act embodies the festival’s spirit of renewal and unity, reinforcing the cultural and spiritual significance of *Irreecha* as a time for communal harmony and personal renewal. Look the following figure for more clarification when Oromo hold fresh grass and flow to celebrate *Irreecha* ceremony along the river.

Irreecha is a secular festival that serves as an emblem of the Oromo people’s norms, religion, cultural identity, and national unity [19]. Traditionally celebrated twice a year during

autumn and spring, the Oromo practice the *Irreecha* ritual at hilltops and riversides, respectively, to express gratitude to Waaqa (God) for peace, health, fertility, abundance, and the development of mind and body [20]. This thanksgiving celebration also emphasizes togetherness, harmony, and reconciliation [21]. The Gadaa system’s objective of decentralizing moral and ethical systems, along with norms and beliefs, aligns with the festival’s purpose of giving gratitude and recognition to God. Through these events, the Oromo reinforce their cultural identity and express their collective values and spiritual beliefs.



Figure 6. Oromo peoples during *Irreecha* celebration at hora arsade and hora finfinne.

The *Irreecha* festival, with its vibrant array of songs, colorful clothing, and symbolic items like fresh grass and spring flowers, not only captivates tourists with its aesthetic appeal but also significantly bolsters local and national economies. This annual celebration draws millions of participants who engage with various services, such as food, drink, and accommodations provided by the local community. For instance, if eight million people attend the festival, and the minimum cost of a bed per day is 300 birr, the total spending on accommodations alone would reach approximately 2.4 billion birr. This generates substantial tax revenue for the government, with an estimated 15% tax yielding around 360 million birr. Similarly, if each participant purchases a cup of coffee at 20 birr, the total expenditure would amount to 160 million birr, contributing an additional 24 million birr in taxes. Such economic activities underscore how the Gadaa system and its cultural events like *Irreecha* facilitate tourism development

and contribute to the country’s economic growth.

3.5. The Prominent Jilaa Land of Gujii, Called *Me’ee Bokkoo*

Ardaa Jilaa *Me’ee Bokkoo*, located in the Gujii Zone of Aannaa Sorra Woreda, holds profound historical and cultural significance for the Oromo people. This attraction site has long served as a central hub for Oromo culture and history. According to various pieces of evidence, *Me’ee Bokkoo* has been a focal point for cultural gatherings, rituals, and the preservation of the Oromo heritage over an extended period. Its enduring importance underscores the site’s role in maintaining and celebrating the rich traditions and historical narratives of the Oromo community [22]. *Me’ee Bokkoo* serves as a pivotal center for assembly and legal ratification within the Gadaa system, situated in a lush, biodiversity environment

rich with natural forests, vibrant grasslands, and wildlife such as the mountain Nyala. The site hosts the eight-yearly power transition ceremony, attracting a diverse gathering of people, including various nations and nationalities, as well as researchers, philosophers, journalists, and experts, all eager to learn from the cultural events. Taking place in the month of *Bitotessaa* (*Badheessa* in GujiiOromo), when the earth is verdant, the pilgrimage ceremony symbolizes renewal and unity. At Me'ee Bokkoo, different laws are declared, covering

aspects like the laws of *Waaqaa* and *Lafaa*, familial roles, and environmental stewardship. The site also serves as a place for evaluating leadership performance every four years, with potential for removal if necessary. With its strong tourism potential, Me'ee Bokkoo significantly boosts the local economy as participants utilize amenities such as accommodation, food, beverages, and local products, highlighting the Gadaa system's role in fostering economic development.



Figure 7. Gujii Oromo and other participant at Ardaa jilaa me'ee bokkoo.

3.6. *Qutto* in Respect of Oromo Girls That Shows the Identity of Kontomaa and Daarimu as Well as Sabboo and Goonaa

Quttoo is a culturally significant ornament worn by Gujii girls on their foreheads before marriage, symbolizing identity, honor, and virginity. This adornment, crafted from materials such as beads, skin, wire, and threads, is traditionally prepared by the girl's mother once she reaches the age of above 15 years old. The *quttoo* serves a dual purpose: it signifies the girl's readiness for marriage and marks her transition into adolescence. By presenting her daughter with a *quttoo*, a mother is proclaiming her daughter's eligibility for marriage, inviting potential suitors. Thus, *quttoo* holds good cultural meaning and is a cherished symbol within the Gujii community, representing both a rite of passage and a declaration of maturity [23]. Before the practice of wearing *quttoo*, the Gujii people engaged in the tradition of *qarree haaduu*, which

involved shaving the hair on the tip of a girl's head. This practice served to distinguish unmarried girls from married women and was maintained until the girls entered marriage. *Qarree haaduu* symbolized a girl's untouched status and virginity, marking her as eligible for marriage. Over time, this practice evolved into the wearing of *quttoo*, maintaining the cultural emphasis on identity, honor, and virginity while signifying readiness for marriage. Both practices reflect the Gujii community's rich traditions and the symbolic transitions in a girl's life.

In Gujii Oromo culture, girls who wear the *quttoo* are afforded significant protection, underscored by the saying, “*intalti quttoo farda kooraati; hin qaban, yoo qaban qabaa qabdi*,” which translates to “a girl with *quttoo* is like a horse with a saddle; no one can touch her.” This cultural norm ensures that no one may touch a girl adorned with a *quttoo*, and violation of this rule results in a severe penalty a heifer of cattle. Remarkably, the Gujii culture dictates that no evidence is needed to substantiate such an offense. Should an offender

refuse to accept this punishment, they face an escalated penalty of seven cattle. The authority to adjudicate these matters rests with the *Hayyuu*, or *Abbaa a*, who ensures that cultural laws and protections are upheld, reinforcing the respect and autonomy granted to girls within the community [22].

In the Gujii Oromo culture, if a girl wearing a *quttoo* is touched without consent, she must remain at the scene and call for help by shouting, signaling a violation of her rights and demanding justice. If she leaves the scene, she forfeits her right to accuse the offender. The gathered community must wait for the arrival of the *Hayyuu* to make any decisions. The *Hayyuu* then imposes a punishment of one *goromsaa* (heifer) on the offender. Should the individual refuse to comply with the *Abbaa a* Gadaa's decision, the *Abbaa* Gadaa dispatches *Jaldhaabaa*, the Gadaa administration's police, to enforce the ruling. The *Jaldhaabaa* (Police) has the authority to flog the non-compliant person and confiscate seven cattle, distributing one to themselves, one to the girl, and the remaining five to the *Abbaa* Gadaa. These actions are sanctioned by the customary laws of the Gujii people. Before marriage, Gujii girls use the *quttoo* as a symbol of their rights, dignity, and identity, transitioning to the *siqqee*, a thin stick, which serves a similar function after marriage [24].



Figure 8. Gujii women's when they tied *quttoo* on their fore head for their identity and dignity.

4. Conclusion

The *Gadaa* system, an indigenous and democratic institution of the Oromo people, stands as a beacon for human rights and equality. One of its remarkable features is the seamless transfer of power from one *Gadaa* period to the next, upholding the voice of the nation. This system has immense potential to attract tourists, contributing to the tourism product and economic development of the country. Tourism, defined as travel from one's usual place of residence for a period ranging from 24 hours to one year, encompasses purposes such as conferences, pilgrimages, leisure, and trade. Within the *Gadaa* framework, various activities serve as tourist attractions, including the power transfer ceremonies, the declaration of laws at sacred sites, the *qumbii nyaachisuu* ceremony, conflict resolution

practices, the *Irreecha* festival, and the cultural dress such as *quttoo*, *borroo*, and *ruufa* (headscarves). Additionally, the singing like *qeexala* during *Irreecha* rituals and *baallii* (power) transfers enriches the cultural landscape, further enticing visitors and fostering economic growth.

5. Recommendation

Gada is not only a system of governance but also a strong economic and tourism resource.

Based on my founding, I would like to make the following recommendation:

- 1) Economy cannot thrive without peace. Gada has no rival in maintaining peace and needs to be preserved for sustainable development and to resolve various crises.
- 2) In the Gada system, rituals such as *Gumaa*, *Jaarsumma*, *Lukaa*, and *Lukee* strengthen social coexistence by resolving disputes. Therefore, establishing traditional courts universally would play an important role in solving social and political problems.
- 3) Gada has great potential to attract tourism through its various activities, such as *Jila Godaanuu*, *Maq Baasaa* (naming), *Qumbii Nyaachisuu*, *Jila Muudaa*, *Baallii Kennuu-Fudhachuu*, and other event like *Qeexaalaa* (songs). Additionally, it encompasses the proclamation of laws, arbitration, reconciliations, Adoption (*mog-gasaa* and *gudifachaa*) and evaluation periods until *Buqisuu* (recall). The state government should properly develop these aspects. Gada is a significant source of income. If the government focuses on Gada festivals, it will become a substantial indirect income source that requires strengthening.
- 4) The government should collaborate with Gadaa leaders, *Yubaas*, *Haadhoolii Siinqee*, *Kuusaa*, and *Raa-baa-Doorii* to ensure proper environmental protection and maintain the security of their boundaries and even to prolong peace of the society
- 5) The government should consider the positive aspects of the Gadaa system as input to guide society.

Abbreviations

<i>Abbaa</i>	Father, Leader, Head
<i>Abbaa Gadaa</i>	Head of Gadaa Assembly
<i>Abbaa Qallu</i>	Head of Qaalluu Institution (Spiritual Leader)
<i>Ardaa jilaa</i>	The Sacred Site, Where Oromo Meet Each Other for Different Purpose
<i>Booka</i>	Ceremonial Local Wine Made of Honey
<i>Bokkuu</i>	Emblem of Power
<i>Gadaa</i>	Oromo Traditional Government System Based on the Principle of Power and Leadership Rotation Among Five Political Lines Every Eight Years Period

<i>Gondooroo</i>	Indigenous Method of Conflict Resolution Among Gujii
<i>Gumaa</i>	Blood Price and Method for Settling Disputes
<i>Hayyuu</i>	The Retired Gadaa Officials or Ex-Gadaa Leaders or Judicial Elder Who Have Rich Experiences in Judicial Knowledge
<i>Intala</i>	Girl
<i>Irreechaa</i>	Oromo Thanks Giving Ceremony
<i>Nagaa</i>	Peace, Security, Stability
<i>Odaa</i>	Sycamore Tree and Oromo Political and Religious Center
<i>Qaalluu</i>	Oromo Religious Leader
<i>Qumbii</i>	The Bitter Object That Oromo's Used for Oath Prior Power Transfer
<i>Waaqa</i>	God, Supreme Power in Oromo Indigenous Religion
<i>Waaqefataa</i>	Oromo Traditional Believe
<i>Warra</i>	Family, Small Group That Had the Same Blood
<i>Waayyuu</i>	Respected Person

Author Contributions

Getu Gonfa Ararso is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Research Field

Getu Gonfa Ararso: Cultural and social, Philosophy, Historical, Tourism related issues