

## **Borana Traditional Governance System.**

### **Back ground.**

Borana Gada governing system has being in place for the last five centuries.

It is a viable social-political system of government where leaders are elected to position of authority through the will and active participation of the people they represent. Elected to position of authority not only to keep laws and rules of the land but also accountable for every decision they make during their tenure as councilors of their own constituency and leaders of the Borana society. Gada is still active system which command respect and loyalty form tradition borana communities in Ethiopia and Kenya.

The system is governed by Adula council (committee) of elders of six men lead by their presiding officer called Abba Gada (father of Gada). This system runs for eight years then election will be done to bring in new Abba Gada. The governing power of Borana totally is invested in Assemblies and councils where the apex Assembly is the Gumi Gayo (multitude of Gayo) and the Adula Council. (A. legese 1973, Baxter 1971, haberland 1963) The succession of generation set of one eight years cycle of public rite for the last five centuries.

Luba (gada class) which is also called Warra arbora follow age sets to ascend to power of lineage. The relationship between concept gogessa (patriclass) and Luba (gada class), between Ilman jaarsa (retired) and ilman korma (active) and hariyya (age set), between yuba (semi retired) and jaarsa (fully retired), between Luba(gada class)and hariyya (age set) and between both and ilman korma (active) and hariyya (age set) and between both these latter categories and their intersection in the category is of Barbara. They understand also the position of generation in the gada cycle and the patern of alliance (kadaddu)

and conflict (walanna) governing the relationships between generations between classes and between age sets.

The two bands of Adula (active) and garba (junior) councilors made up the gada assembly at the time. Adula election done through proclamation (Lallab) ceremony at place called Gutoby gonna Qallu. This event is central to boran high level interest. Attempt meetings will be done before guto to reduce candidate to one to avoid conflict.

Gada system rightly famous for being the few, if not the only oromo society in which Gada system remain virtually intact. The structural complexities of the Boran Gada system have been and still officiated as follows:

1. Abbaa Boku the president with 2 vices
2. Abbaa Chaffa the chairman of assembly
3. Abbaa dubbi the speaker
4. Abbaa seera the memorizer of laws
5. Abbaa Alanga the judge
6. Abbaa duula the army commander
7. Abbaa sa'a the economy commander.

These are the nine members governing boran assembly known as 'Salgan ya'a Borana' The nine of borana assembly.

There are also Hayyus (councillors or assistants of Abbaa Bokkus) in the lower level are deliberators in the boran assembly.

In the assemblies or meetings whether in higher or lower the main role of Abba Gada will be:

1. Summon (lallaba) the Gada Assembly or council together for meetings.

2. To ensure threat, all assembly men are in attendance to take disciplinary action against absentees (sera goro).
3. To oversee deliberation as they hammer out the law (Tuma sera)
4. To determine when there is a meeting of minds of present it as proposition at opportune moment.
5. To bring the discussion to an end with resolution (Mura). Abba muriti (father of resolution)
6. To pressure dissents to accept it, using a variety of techniques of which the blessing (Ebba) is the most important.

All decisions are made by assembly (Koor). Married men of the same community can either be participate or represented. Through the assembly organization, all binding decisions are reached by consensus with direct or indirect participation of the persons involved. Once the individual or his representative has accepted resolution, thus need to enforce. The general consensus is force. There procedures used to avoid or to get out of impasse situation. Executive power can be needed for advantages of community in decision making process for interest of Ya'a (decision making assembly).

### **Distinct function within Gada System**

There are several assemblies with their leaders or councils in making discussions by virtual of their rite.

1. War and peace is Raba- Gada assembly alone can decide whether Boran to be at war or peace with their neighbors'. They alone have authority of organizing, leading or overseeing warfare. They have authority to summon fighters form clan via their respective clan representative (Jallaba) to mobilize cavalry commander of food supplies and put boran

on war path. This division of labour is acknowledged by the Warra Qallu and Warra Bokku alike.

2. Gada leaders alone are empowered to punish serious offenders using a variety of techniques that stop just short of capital punishment. They can punish offenders by depriving use to water, pasture resource, excluding from all the life crisis services or banishing from the land and even death. They can cause the offenders and dangling for good and sufficient reasons since the capital punishment is formally in the hands of higher level of government.
3. Boran use the customs and law (Aada and Sera) to regulate the use of water sources, pasture lands, cattle, horse, mule, donkey, small stock, wild animals and all the goods use in homes. These customs and laws provide the requisite social and political order which enable them to move in and to live with each other in peace. The body that verbally transmitted customs and laws when revision and addition is as required by changing circumstances at the eight yearly assembly of the Gumi Gayo. They can be cleansed by straightening of law and custom. The first revision decision was undertaken by Gada Dawe Gobo (1706-1714) by three councillors selected by Garba Adula from three corners of Borana land.

In our case here Dedha which is associated with wells (Tula) and other water sources for Golbo and waso (Adadi and Springs). Wells are vital in the dry seasons and service as the focal of the social organization and ritual of their being and hence of their cultural ethnic identity. over centuries pastoralist were competing over water and grazing, so negotiation and renegotiation the resources borders with each other.

With these constant negotiation and renegotiation have created and preserved sense of moral ethnic identities.

4. Conflicts are common where resources are limited and demand is high in that stages resolving natural resources conflicts has to be the identification and analysis of the root causes of the conflict. Each ethnic group uses its own resources which history has legitimized for clans present at resources.
5. No matter what the studies of conflict exists between borana and non borana, boranas should always be in harmony among themselves and others because of customs and laws which fosters sense, consciousness of cultural identity so strong that maintenance of cultural uniformity becomes an ever present. In this manner, the intra-borana peace has guaranteed the cohesion and survival of the borana in the midst of frequent feuds with non – borana neighbors.
6. Borana distinguish two types of existence. One is Aada Sera boorana which is custom and law of borana which rule. The other is where no proper rules existed as human relations which are referred to as land where the customs and laws of Boorana has moral dimensions of peaceful well being unselfish and respect for common laws (Laaf Aada Sera Daawe). Violators of these moral standards are like foreigners (Nyaap) or perpetual enemies (sidi). Individuals who disturb the peace are said to lack Boorantitii. Booratitii creates a feeling of belonging of being Borana. It encapsulates borana awareness of their ethnicity.
7. Gabra maintained peace bond with borana for more than 300 years through inter marriage, common language and exchange of ritual materials. Gabra and borana relations in resources sharing can stretch back over those years which pre dates their alliance during the borana

Gutu entry into Liban. Gabra malbe presently grazing in northern Kenya from Turbi along the Ethiopian borders all the way to Dukana and bales saru borders which their share with boran until the height of Turbi massacre and also resolved by the Maikona declaration of 2009.

8. Both borana and Gabra have evolved symbiotic resources use and evolved the required socio-political arrangements. Gabra malbe clans formed peaceful Gosa and Gooli alliance with individual borana sub-clans but not pronounced Tiriiso. A good example is Algana been originally borana affiliated to the Karayu clan as client of gallu Afalata Dido provided gift of baggage camels, giraffe hide and water buckets in return access to borana resources (water and pasture).
9. Tulla wells as territorial resource has customs governing them. The well name and overseer (Koofi called Aana eela) appointed from amongst the clan or sub clan with hereditary rights. Koofi also act as abba **Erga** (father of watering rotas). The up keep of the wells is arduous and regimes extensive co-operation. If Koofi migrate a caretaker is appointed from his sub clan. The clans which contribute to the up keep of the wells and share water are said to be Hoola to each other e.g Waar jidda and maliyu formed alliance called Jidda-maliyu and Dambitu and Nonitu formed alliance of Dambe-Nono etc. share water resources maintained and known as Bissan Maala (water of demlap) from the dewlap of the bull slaughtered for work force that dug the wells.

In summary there are two gifts essential to borana pastoral people- The water gift from heaven and pasture gift from earth.

It is the above why the following three areas in borana social life play important roles in kinship.

- i) Performance of rituals which is a direct concern of kinship in particular a life crisis ceremonies (birth and marriage).
- ii) An importance corporate activity of clan and lineages such as digging of and maintenance of wells, regulations of wells and other source of water (pans). Wells are the center of boran social activity and emotionally charged focus of boran society. Boran said “the home is well not the hut”.
- iii) Moieties are prominent in election of gada councilors. The leaders of the moieties and clan are directly involved in the recruitment process. Men with responsibility and power to organize the election of gada leaders are the heads of the two moieties (the two Qallu (gona - oditu and sabbo – karrayyu). In addition to political responsibility the Qallus have othe competence largely concerning with rituals. The Qallu is the principal domain of the sacred. The Qallus are the most senior men in the kinship system. All major conflict between clans may be taken to them for adjudication. Their villages are spiritual centers around which political debates are organized. Their principal power lies in their right to elect the political (gada) leaders who govern boran for eight years period. The principle of balanced opposition is also reflected in the activities of age sets and gada classes. In all gada councils there must be the number of men from two moieties. This is a prescriptive rule and there are hardly any deviations from it. The elected council members are sabbo represented by one digalu, one karrayyu and one mattarri while gona are represented by one or two haroressa and one or two füllelle. These forms the Adula of gada to govern boran at higher level of gada system. The

electors of these six men are also elected from the Qallu lineage (mana Qallu) clans. The qallu council of oditu lineage which are elected by general meeting (koor) of the clan once every eight years and headed by the sitting qallu. This constitutes the top leadership of the moiety. There will be campaign by candidates or their supporters who moves around for three month to meet luba mates and performs ceremonies of slaughtering cattle to perform Wal'argi (seeing) to acquaint with each other.

Therefore, the principle of corporate unity is important where a man does not take his status with the society as an isolation individual but as member of a set of peer who assumes responsibility together. Thus every boy is due to become active in his society as a member of a group independently of his personal capacities and merits. The essential points of luba system principles are alternation of generation, corporate unity, transition, ritual bonding and re-occurrence names of the six luba sacred.

The gabra also follow luba system of generation set. All the five phratries of gabra have the concept of grade which is the level of social responsibilities and status in the society. The four grade of gabra social system are Qomicha (young men), Yuuba and Da'abela (have both religious and political powers) and Jaarsa (retired elders) with great respect. Da'abelas the common men with white turban led prayers and give blessing in many ceremonies. The gabra social political system is much mix with the ritual and most of the conflicts are solved through blessing and prayers (Ebba).

The Gabras have three most important men in the ya'a system the leaders and decision makers in each five phratries of gabra ya'a. These are Abba Dibbe



(father of Drum), Abba Magallata (father of Horn) and Abba Uchuma (father of fire). These are the leaders of ya'a unity sample and social political and ritual leaders with Da'abelas form all the succession ceremonies as the system evolve over the next 7 years. They are the center of decision making acceptable by all gabras without questions. The system includes Hayyus and Jallabas like boran who sit in the assemblies of decision making as active social conflict resolvers and resolution makers (mura).

The four grade system of gabra with seven years cycle of succession. Although the social political structure of gabra is based on what is called luba system just like borana, a variant of the gabra system common to all oromo speaking people few differences. Their whole life revolves around rituals day by day.