

Reclaiming Oromo Indigenous Organizational Structures and Fostering Supportive Environments for Health

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ABSTRACT

The health of the Oromo people is determined by complex and intertwined social and natural environments. Modifying or entirely changing these environments necessitates developing effective organizations and leadership. Colonial socio-cultural-structural impositions conditioned the Oromo people to adopt the Euro-centric discourses and its top-down organizational structure. The top-down organizational structure is incompatible with the Oromo episteme; it is inaccessible, inequitable and unsustainable. Such a structure does not foster full participation of community members and promote healthy social conditions. This paper provokes a discussion as to whether or not the Oromo people and other indigenous people need to adopt the Euro-centric organizational structure or maintain their indigenous structures to transform their society and promote health. The Oromo indigenous organizational structures are framed in an Oromo paradigm of thinking and they are in a better position to understand the social problems of the Oromo people. In addition, they foster the participation of people, create a stable, transparent and dynamic society and help to continuously improve the social environments in which the Oromo people work and live. This can prevent illness and injuries in the first place and helps implement the principles of health promotion strategies and creates supportive environments i.e. *nagaa* (peace), *haaqa* (social justice) and *tasgaabi* (social order).

Keywords: Ormo People, Ormo Indigenous Organizational Structure, Healthcare

INTRODUCTION

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

(Lorde cited in Smith, 1999 p.19).

The first quote is the words of the famous theoretical physicist Albert Einstein who developed the general theory of relativity. The second is the words of an African-American activist and scholar. These two statements convey one common message - to better understand and solve our social and environmental problems, we need to change the lenses through which we see the world around us. The statements of those scholars are consistent with the views of Karl Marx and Max Weber (Weber, 1930) who theorized that socio-cultural beliefs are a fundamental determining factor in promoting or hindering social transformation. These statements remind us to reflect, ask questions and critically see our social realities. Similarly, the Oromo and other colonized peoples need to ask whether or not they need to retain the euro-centric organizational structures or reclaim their Indigenous organizational structure.

In promoting and defending the quest of Indigenous people to self-determination, Michael Dodson stated that, "Self-determination is the river in which all other rights swim". Michael

Dodson (cited in Craig, 1996). The concept of self-determination is intertwined with the idea of human liberty. Many critical thinkers have given a wide range of definitions to the concept of self-determination. Although there are differences among them as to what freedom, dependency and interdependency mean, there is consensus that self-determination and liberty are two of the essential conditions needed for all human beings to flourish and thrive. The concept of self-determination could apply to the person or to a group. It means that groups or individuals have free will. It is the right to make free choices, unconstrained by external agencies, and immunity from the arbitrary exercise of authority. This includes social, economic, political and cultural independence, home rule or sovereignty. According to Van Scotter et. al. (1991), if societies wish to secure their survival and flourish, they have to establish peace and stability in the changing world and maintain social order and foster supportive environments for health. In addition, they need to reproduce biologically, culturally and socially as well as create conditions that guarantee them physical and mental health, have goals and aspirations, as well as find meaning and purpose in life. The concept of self-determination includes being governed by society's social philosophy, norms and by the traditional social structure.

Human beings solve their social problems by organizing and effectively utilizing their human and natural resources (Cummings & Worley, 2001) and creating supportive environment for health. Leadership and organizations help societies to envision a better future and coordinate the means to accomplish more than what individual members could ever achieve on their own (Dugassa, 2012). This makes organization and leadership the lifeblood for all societies. In the twenty first century, information technology has brought together the global community and this has intensified competition for resources and knowledge. The changes in the economic environment from local and national to global markets require leadership and organization that can function in complex conditions and create supportive environment for health. This makes the need for effective organization and leadership essential.

Community leaders and organizations employ a number of unique methods to transform their society. Transformational change requires considerable innovation (Cummings & Worley, 2001). Indigenous organizations and leadership are in a position to better understand the social factors that shape health, safety, risk, and develop comprehensive strategies for change. The interactive actions help to refine the way their organization approaches community health, and allows community members to better understand the challenges they face and the opportunities they have. Indigenous leaders can systematically shift the focus and create social environments that prevent illness and injury in the first place by applying health promotion strategies (Dugassa, 2012) or fostering supportive environments for health.

The recent attempt in epistemological re-orientation many Global institutions are interested to promote building the capacity of the colonized and marginalized people. These institutions use the language of institutional building and capacity building (Jelinek, 1979). The institutions they are referring to are the ones that resemble the Euro-American institutions and function in their epistemology. However, it is not clear if Indigenous people are better organized when the structures of their organization are based on the social structures and episteme of the group or when it is based on the Euro-centric – top-down structure. In this paper, I explore whether or not the Oromo indigenous social structure can be used to build their organizational structures. In particular, I take a close look at the ways that organizational structure inherited from the Euro-centric paradigm has affected the development of Oromo leadership and organizations. Understanding the ways in which the worldview of a society informs the organizational

structure of that society has vital importance in helping us to understanding the challenges that in this case the Oromo people face, in getting organized and mobilizing their natural and human resources and transforming their society.

Improvement in population health does not happen by chance. It requires creative vision, strategic decision making and a thoughtful implementation of knowledge of population health. This happens through the intentional allocation of human and natural resources, building appropriate infra-structure, programs and services (Dugassa,2008a). In this paper the questions I ask and try to answer include: to bring social transformation and foster supportive environments for health, what types of organizational structures are needed? Do the Oromo people have to maintain their own indigenous social organizational structures or make use of the Euro-centric organizational structure? What are the challenges of maintaining the indigenous organizational structures? Answering these questions requires rigorous thinking and soul searching.

This paper consists of five major parts. In the first part, I introduce the topic under investigation and present the statement of the research problem and objectives of the research. In the second part, I explore the constructs of the Indigenous Oromo social structure. In the third part, I examine the complex ways in which colonialism alters the social structures, institutions, and the customs and functionality of societies. I then take a close look at whether or not a centralized command system of organizational structures can effectively lead an egalitarian-democratic society and organize people to counterbalance the colonial agenda and advance their human liberty and dignity and prepare them to the better future. Finally, I take a critical look at the contemporary Oromo organizational structure.

Statement of Research Problem

Providing background and context in which an event occurred or is occurring, makes it easier to understand the conditions that have generated the question under investigation and hints at what we need to take into consideration. Oromos are an egalitarian society. Critical analyses into Oromo history reveals that the two major reasons that brought the Oromo people under Ethiopian rule were: a) the support that the European empire builders provided to Abyssinia; b) competition among the Oromo clans (Holcomb & Ibsa, 1991) and c) assimilation of the Gada leaders into the Abyssinian culture. The colonial power structure damaged supportive social environments for health and created unhealthy social conditions (Dugassa, 2008, Jalata, 2005). This exposed the Oromo people to both old and new diseases.

In the process of the formation of the present state of Ethiopia during the 1880s, the European empire builders provided racist theoretical reasoning (Dugassa, 2008), military hardware and personnel for Abyssinia to invade Oromia (Holcomb and Ibsa 1991; Jalata, 2005 and Bulcha, 2002). The deeply entrenched epistemological views that unified the European empire builders with Abyssinia were: a) Christians have the right to colonize and exploit others; b) the Christian world is the civilized world and it has a moral obligation to civilize uncivilized people. Driven by such racist convictions one of the methods the Ethiopian government used to colonize and maintain the power relation was by dismantling Oromo institutions, denying them leadership (Darkwah, 1978; Dugassa, 2012) and assimilating them into the Abyssinian culture.

Since the Oromo people lost their sovereignty in the 1880s, they have continuously been denied the right to become organized. The Ethiopian government exploits and controls the human and natural resources of Oromo people with little or no resistance to their policies. Indigenous Oromo institutions such as *Siiqee*, *Qaalu* and Gada leadership have either been

totally banned or incapacitated (Bokku, 2011). The teaching of Oromo worldviews and perspectives are either totally banned or hampered. The denial of both construction and transmission of Oromo centric knowledge has disrupted their relations with the social, natural world and divine power. For example, Ethiopian institutions teach Abyssinian and Oromo students that the Oromo worldview and institutions represent backwardness and savagery. The objectives of such schooling are to convince Abyssinians that the privileges they are enjoying are natural. The other objective is to convince the Oromo people that their knowledge and experiences are inferior to the Abyssinians and that the colonial power relations as well as their social problems are natural and inevitable (Dugassa, 2011). It is for this reason that the TPLF led Ethiopian government explains the social problems of Oromo people as being caused by “poverty, famine or drought” rather than the malignant colonial social policies.

The vanguard Oromo political organization, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has effectively mobilized the Oromo people on Oromo-centric ideas is facing several challenges. One of these challenges is its organizational structure. Influenced by the Western school of thought, modern Oromo leaders made the structure of their organization consistent with the European hierarchy system - where there is a head, body and tail. Although the OLF has effectively mobilized the Oromo people to reclaim their sovereignty, it is facing enormous difficulties in managing the dynamics in the organization and in maintaining internal stability. The reasons for the difficulties are compounded by the Ethiopian government’s tireless efforts to weaken an independent Oromo organization and the failure of the organization to manage internal social dynamics.

It is not only Oromo political organizations that face challenges. Oromo communities, Oromo churches and Oromo mosques are also facing enormous difficulties. Given that the members of Oromo political organizations and Oromo communities are diverse groups (some believe in centralism and others do not), it is not surprising. Paradoxically, although the members of the Oromo church and mosques theoretically accepted the structure of hierarchy, they are not keen on it. For church groups the ideas of God the Father, the Holy Spirit and God the Son are preached. In mosques Allah and about the teachings of last prophet are sermonized. Technically the teachings of these religious encourage discipleship, fellowship, hierarchy and centralism.

In the last fifty years, as Oromo intellectuals started to organize communities, religious institutions and political parties, they used the organizational structure framed by Euro-centric perspectives. Most Oromos maintained their indigenous organizational structures. When those who maintained, and those who have lost, indigenous structure came together the differences in view reveals. For some, centralized

What are the supportive environments for health?

Supportive environments for health are social conditions that offer people protection from threats to health, and enable them to expand their capabilities and develop self-reliance in health. They encompass where people live, their local community, their home, where they work and play, including people’s access to resources for health, and opportunities in life, peace, stability and empowerment (WHO, 1998). According to the WHO (1998) action to create supportive environments for health has many dimensions. This may include direct political action to develop and implement policies and regulations which help create supportive environments (healthy social and economic policies, developing community, regional and national leaderships, fostering sustainable economic development and social actions.

leadership where command and order goes is needed and they insist on getting organized accordingly. For others, a centralized command system is not equitable, democratic and transparent and they resist.

For the Oromo people, spirituality is part of their past, present and future (Bokku, 2011, Daaniyaa, 2007; Aguilar, 2009). Spirituality is known to give society theoretical lenses through which people can understand the social and natural world. The long protracted war perpetuated by the Ethiopian government against the Oromo people is intended to make them submissive (Jalata, 2007). The motives of Christian and Islam religious missionaries are consistent with the colonizers' racial and cultural superiority theory and their intentions are to legitimize colonial ideas and agendas (Dugassa, 2011). The worldview of a particular of society informs the members to name the problem, what to do about it and how to do it. Worldview set norms in social relations and inform members as to what constitutes proper social order, ethically rightness or dishonorable behavior.

The Ethiopian government banned Oromo social, political and religious institutions and this has created fertile ground for foreign religions to compete to control the Oromo mind. Religious conversions are seizing and reprogramming the mind. Reprogramming minds leads to losses of accumulated knowledge, wisdom and experiences. This causes the loss of spiritual and social capital, leads to confusion, disorganization, instability, poverty, and several other social problems (Aguilar, 2009).

Social transformation and the legitimization of colonial power relation begin by changing opinions. Let me give a specific example and show where religious conversion leads to confusion. According to (Weber, 1930), protestant church teaching fostered the development of work ethics and capitalism (accumulation of wealth, profit and hard-work). In Oromia, protestant teaching discourages profit making, accumulation of wealth and hard work. Instead, it promotes endless prayer and submissiveness. A result of the Ethiopian government's colonial social policies and protestant teaching, begging that had been taboo in Oromo culture has now become common. In Oromia, church leaders became uncritical followers and propagators of the teachings that they have not tested or lived under. This promoted blind faith in foreign ideas and perspectives. The teachings are contrary to the Oromo worldview and validate the colonizers' perspectives. For example, Jomo Kenyatta the first Kenyan President explained the impacts of religious conversion in Kenya when he said,

When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught [us] how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them [our eyes], they had the land and we had the Bible (Kenyatta).

Societies better solve their social problems if they are empowered and coordinate their human and natural resources (Mann et al. 1999). It is for these reasons that researchers, motivated by a sense of social justice, human emancipation and health promotion, promote the need to build the capacity of people to solve their own problems. The idea of capacity building includes three major areas (a) sustainable development, (b) building civil society and social capital, and (c) organizational development and management theory. On the institutional level, the idea of capacity building encompasses aiding pre-existing institutions in developing countries. This necessitates critically looking into the structures of an organization.

Leadership envisions a better future, set new standards, energizes, enables the members and transforms society (Cumming & Worley, 2001). It is hard to envisage achievements in social transformation, in social security reform and the fostering of supportive environments for

health without organizations and leadership. Leadership can be seen in the ability of policymakers and politicians to skillfully use their power to communicate a vision that they can realize through the mobilization of supportive coalitions. The purpose of this study is to meet four competing aims: developing effective Oromo social, economic, political and cultural organizations, maintaining the Oromo indigenous governance (leadership & organizational structure), managing the clan-regional political sentiments and making competition among leaders a peaceful one.

Objectives:

My research objective is motivated by a sense of social justice, human emancipation and a desire fostering supportive environments for health in Oromia. The primary objective of this paper is to study whether or not the Oromo people need to reclaim democratic, transparent and Oromo-centric institutions, leadership and organizational structures and make the center of decision making body of their organizations accessible and equitable or embrace the Euro-centric top-down organizational structure.

Contemporary Theory of Organization

The word organization is derived from the Greek word organon or ergon - as we know it "organ" - and it means a coordination of parts (of the body, a body system, cell. It can be the way in which living things are organized (Wikipedia). In the Western world the functions of organs are framed in relation to their social order and there is a hierarchy. The top is the head and the other body parts are subservient to it. The Oromo concept of organization should be consistent with their egalitarian social structures.

Why we have to study about organization when we are working in public health? Public health is defined as "the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts of society (WHO, 1998). One of the responsibilities of public health is fostering policies that promote health. Democratic, transparent and equitable organizations readily make efforts to create supportive environments. This means studying organization should be seen as part of our efforts to foster supportive environments for health.

The concept of organization can be explained in three different metaphors: mechanical, body organs and cultural (Gharajedaghi, 2011). The mechanical metaphor explains organization as a chain of actions and reactions through which it directs the bigger society. This metaphor represents the organizational structures that are led by the singular mind. This has been seen among societies ruled by monarchies, theocrats or dictators. The mechanical metaphor refers to the idea that power comes from a divine power. For example, in medieval Europe, it was believed that divine power gave the authority to the head of the church and church leaders acted as go-betweens between human and divine power and they set policies and practices. Even today, there are several states and institutions that still use this metaphor. In such organizational metaphor a few religious leaders or dictators decide on the fate of the people. This metaphor prescribes that the people ought to be docile followers rather than critical thinkers.

The second metaphor is about organisms that constitute different organ systems, tissues and cells (Gharajedaghi, 2011). Although this metaphor recognizes the importance of the interaction of all body parts, it recognizes that some parts of the body are more important than others. Organizations that are structured in this way recognize the participation of all parts of the organization; however, decision-making is left for the few powerful groups. This metaphor represents neo-liberal organizational structures. The metaphor that represents organization as a living body encourages the interaction of all the departments. However, when it comes to

decision making, the degree of involvement is limited to only the few. Such a form of organizational structure is inequitable and environmentally unsustainable. These types of organizational structure focus more on promoting the interests of the dominant group. The primary examples for such organizational structure are states led by Neoliberal democracy.

The third metaphor by which organizations are described is the cultural or worldview perspective. This metaphor recognizes the importance that culture and the worldview of the members of the society, have in framing the organizational structure. It sees that the structure of organizations resembles the structure of the society and that it is unique for different societies. The organization described in the cultural metaphor makes decision making more democratic, equitable and environmentally sustainable. This metaphor is consistent with the Oromo worldview and it entails the idea of equity, diversity and the accessibility of all organizations to all people.

Oromo Indigenous Social Organizations

Social organization is a system that has a characteristic pattern of relationships (McShane, 1998). The social organizations of all people are unique to their culture. The social organization of a group of people includes how people interact, how the mechanism kinship systems work, its marriage residency patterns, how people divide up the various tasks that need to be completed, who has access to specific goods and knowledge, and what ranking strategy is being used.

Oromos have unique complex, pluralistic and “organic” social organizations (Legesse, 2000; Elemo, 2005). One of the most important Oromo social organizations is patriarchal kinship – such as family, kin, sub-clan, clan, moiety and nationhood. The second is generational – *hoboo* – *cooraa* and Gadaa party membership and *Siiqee* for Oromo women. The third relates to age – *Hiriyya*- for boys *Addoyye* for girls. The fourth is based on the accessibility to spiritual and ethical knowledge – i.e. *Qaalu*. The Oromo social organization encompasses the basic facts of life, starting from conception, birth, marriage, kinship, death and others associated with them. It includes cultural identity, continuity and social stability.

One of the Oromo indigenous social organizations is the family, sub-clan and clan. The purposes of social organizations are to effectively manage the social and economic affairs of the members and guarantee their collective security and safety. Clans collectively protect their members from the threats of natural calamities and inter-intra -clan conflicts. However, Oromo clans are bonded together in marriage and one clan is not entirely distinct from the adjacent ones. Oromo tradition does not allow marriage between close family members. It requires the couple to be apart for at least nine generations. This requires different clans to find a marriage partner from another clan. Such cultural practices have significantly prevented public health problems that can result from consanguineous marriages. For example, consanguineous marriages (marriage between close family members) increases the risks of several genetic disorders including birth defects, still births, infant mortality, disabilities, different forms of eye diseases, deafness (Hamamy, 2012) and mental retardation (Woodley, 2009).

Although the Oromo people use the clan structure to establish safety and security for their members, the Ethiopian government uses it to divide and rule. The Oromo people are not empowered with regard to their affairs and their social problems and social structure are at the discretion of the colonizers. In addition, since the Oromo people colonized their social relations, problems and social structures are not vigorously evaluated and renewed. The absence of the renewal of social relations made the Oromo people vulnerable to the Ethiopian

government attacks. For example, when the Abyssinian king Menelik evicted the Abichu Oromos from their land, the Abichu moved to the Galaan Oromo territory. Binding to the traditional clan border, the Galaan did not welcome the Abichu (Darkwah, 1978). As a result, when conflict between the two Oromo clans started, Menelik pretended to support the Abichu and subdued both clans. This event became the beginning of the final successful attempt to colonize Oromia.

The second important Oromo social structure is generational – *hoboo* – *cooraa* and Gadaa party membership. Party membership is not by choice but by genealogy for Oromo men and marriage for women. This structure puts the father and the son into two distinct memberships and loyalties. If the father is *cooraa*, the son is *hoboo* and vice-versa. In all cases, they are expected to be loyal to their family, clan and their party membership. In the Gada system, the father and the son should be members of different parties (Leggese, 2000). This social norm requires every Oromo person to be loyal to the family, clan and the party. This promotes peace, stability, democracy and establishes checks and balances in society, a principle which is instrumental in fighting corruption. For example, in many parts of the world, dictators organize their family and clan members to defend their power and share the privileges. In the Oromos' case, loyalty to the family, clan and age grade are expected also trustworthiness to the party membership is anticipated. This means the indigenous Oromo social norm and structure does not allow dictators to emerge or corruption to spread. Oromo War chiefs like Gobana Dancee, Abba Jifar, Kumsa Moroda emerged after essential Oromo institutions like *Qaalu* were attacked and the Oromo worldview that guided their moral value was suppressed by colonial teachings.

The human brain perceives the world according to its own initial wiring. When we are conditioned to adopt a new perspective, many changes occur in the ways we see the world (Rock, 2007). Shifting the worldview of society brings change in the social structure, social values, perspectives and their universe. This makes people misrepresent, misperceive and misunderstand themselves (Said, 1994). In the long term, this destabilizes society and cripples their social conditions. It is for these reasons that colonial religious teachings are used to divide the Oromo people.

Culture and Social Structure

Culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize a given community, institution or organization (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Others see culture as an operating system that guides social organizations toward a predefined order (Gharajedaghi, 2011). Culture shapes individuals' abilities, roles, motives, knowledge, values, responsibilities and the leadership model. It influences outlook, perceptions, assumptions and directs individuals to come together, form organizations and pursue agreed on collective goals (Hall, 1997). Culture facilitates community members establishing networks with each other and among different communities and organizations. It influences the relationship between social and natural environments and governs individuals, family and community relationships. It sets beliefs, values, behaviors, laws, traditions, identities, institutions and responsibilities. Culture collectively programs the minds of individuals, organizations and societies. Culture influences the social structure, governance arrangement, the naming of social problems and the finding of solutions. This suggests that effective organization and leadership can be developed in the episteme of the society.

In this paper, Oromo culture is a belief system that guides the ideas and ideologies and ethical values of the Oromo people. Oromo culture gives meaning in life and it entails power, law and social order that govern the society and maintain *nagaa* (peace), *fayya* (health), *haaqa* (social justice) and *tasgabi* (social order). It shapes the ways community and institutional leaders exercise their position and foster their governing skills. Oromo culture supports the social structure of the society and helps to function in harmony and supports members to establish multiple layers of networks. In turn, these social structures and networks enable people and organizations to effectively manage and organize society and solve their own problems.

Our world is not ruled by those who have the right worldviews or higher morality. It is run by those who have the power to convince others that they are right (Gharajedaghi, 2011). It is for this reason that cultural assimilation is seen as one of the tools colonizers use for social control. As did the European empire builders, the Ethiopian government has used assimilation as a tool to conquer, pacify and control. The Ethiopian government worked to force the Oromo people to abandon their epistemological view and adopt the colonizers' perspective. In my previous work (Dugassa, 2012), I have elaborated the ways the Ethiopian government used cultural assimilation as a means to deny the Oromo people a leadership. Assimilated and indoctrinated Oromo individuals were made to fight their own people on behalf of the Ethiopian government. Oromo individuals, who were enslaved, indoctrinated and assimilated into the Ethiopian culture, are trained to propagate the institutions and ideas that have subjugated them.

Education is a powerful colonial and anti-colonial tool. For example, many African liberation movement leaders were educated in the European school system and they used the knowledge they acquired to organize their people and resist colonial occupation. Although these leaders liberated African people from the colonial physical occupation, they legitimized Euro-centric perspectives, and delegitimized the Afro-centric worldviews. These leaders unwittingly inherited European ideas and perspectives and legitimized the colonial system of governance. The legitimized systems include the colonial legal system and centralized political power or command centers- which legitimized social hierarchy and denied the principles of diversity and equity. African leaders gave epistemological validity and adopted the European organizational structure. The organizational theory and structures that these leaders acquired from European schooling were used to govern the African people. If I use Fanon's words, although the African liberation movement was about people's self-determination, it turned out to be replacing black-skin and white-mind (Fanon, 1962). Postliberation African organizational structures are contrary to the core values of African people. As a result, although in most of African culture collective aspirations are valued more than individuals' desires the constitutions of many African countries emphasize individual rights. The embracing of the European organizational structure and perspectives did not produce the desired effects.

The Influence of Culture

In the same way that DNA is the source of information for biological systems, culture is the blueprint for socio-cultural groups (Seale, 2006; Hall, 1997). What makes the Oromo people different from others is their cultural blueprint. Culture can be better explained as the metaphor of a coat that protects individuals from external threats of natural and social environments, such as extreme cold or heat. This means that Oromo culture protected the Oromo people from the damages perpetuated by colonial forces and internal social anarchy. Oromo culture gives epistemological reasoning, a blueprint for the Oromo people, for individuals, communities and social organizations to function in harmony. For example, in Oromo prayers and blessings the most important words are peace (*nagaa*), health (*fayya*), social order (*tasgabbi*) and justice (*haaqa*) (Aguilar, 2009, Dugassa, 2011). In the Oromo worldview, centralized power is contrary to Oromo democratic values.

Culture and language greatly influence leadership. Language communicates meaning (Hall, 1997). When many African countries adopted European languages as their official languages, they legalized the colonial knowledge and leadership and delegitimized indigenous African languages, their knowledge and their types of leadership (Dugassa, 2011). Although many African countries have been celebrating their liberation for nearly six decades, the social conditions of many African people are not much different from when they were under colonial rule. The experiences of Oromo leaders are not different from other Africans. The structures of organizations that the Oromo leaders formed resemble those of other African leaders. Although these leaders have committed their precious time, energy and life to the liberation struggle, they are still functioning within the colonial organizational structure. What are the impacts of adopting the organizational structures that are foreign to the Oromo people?

Organization and Social Structure

What is organizational structure? Why do we need to study the structure of organizations? How it is relevant to the efforts of the Oromo people to decolonize themselves? The concept of structure involves the frameworks around which the group or institutions are organized and the underpinnings that keep the coalition functioning. Social structure binds members together and helps them function in harmony and gives members clear guidelines on how to proceed. A clearly established structure gives the group the means to maintain order and resolve disagreements. In other words, organizational structure is like the operating manual and it tells the ways it is put together and the ways it works. It describes the duties and responsibilities of different departments and the ways decisions are made.

All societies have a unique social structure and the structure of all organizations have to be consistent with the structures of that society. By definition, organization implies a social structure. Whether or not we recognize it all organizations represent the social structure of society. In usual cases, the structure of an organization matches the objective of the organization, and the society in which it functions. When organizational structures are imposed, a mismatch usually occurs. While the need for structure in an organization and society is vitally clear, the best structure for a particular socio-cultural group is harder to determine. The structure for any organization is dependent on the objectives, ideology of the organization and the socio-cultural setting, the history of the organization and its development.

The organizational structure of a society is shaped by its socio-cultural settings. The organizational structure determines the roles of the decision-making bodies and the ways

responsibilities are assigned, controlled, and coordinated, as well as ways information flows among different departments (McShane, 1998). Organizational structure depends on the objectives and the strategies of the institution and the social setting in which it functions. In a centralized structure i.e. a mechanistic structure, the top layer of the organization has most of the decision making power and has tight control over other divisions. In a less-centralized structure i.e. organic structure, the decision making power is distributed and all the departments have some degree of independence.

Organization is a social unit of people that is structured and manages to meet the needs or to pursue the collective aspirations of the group. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships among different departments and the members, and subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and the authority to carry out different tasks. In general, organizations are open systems--they affect, and are affected by, the social environments. The effectiveness of leadership and organizational structure are heavily dependent on the perspective and manner in which leaders create policy, whether there is coherence for a sustained period of time and whether steps are taken to ensure that this continues after their departure.

The structure of an organization is dependent on the objectives and strategy of the establishment (McShane, 1998). The structure of an organization is typically its arrangement of lines of authority, communications, rights and duties of departments and individuals. Organizational structure determines the roles, responsibilities are assigned, controlled, and coordinated, and information flows among different departments. In a centralized structure, the top layer of management has most of the decision making power and has tight control over departments and divisions. In a decentralized structure, the decision making power is distributed and all the departments and divisions may have different degrees of independence Patrick Sullivan (2007) studied the case of the indigenous Australian people and found out that sovereignty, culture and indigenous institution are critical for good governance.

The structure of an organization reflects the culture of that particular society. In the contemporary world, market economy has intensified competition at the local and global levels. The successes of societies are dependent on the structure of their organizations. In its turn, organizational performances depend on its structure and whether or not the structure of the organization is consistent with the local social philosophy. Society's social values guide the design process of the organization and help to discover areas for improvement and generate relevant innovations.

There are different types of organizational structures. Some of the structures are designed to maintain hierarchy while others promote the full participation of members of the society. For example, organizational structures that promote participation in the decision-making process channel much of the information-processing activities. Enabling an organizational structure facilitates society members to reorient, renew and brings large-scale changes as well as organizational transformation. Design processes address the systemic nature of organizational change.

Colonialism and Structural Assimilation

The word colony comes from the Latin word "colony" and it entails farming, cultivating and settlement. Colonialism is when a group of emigrants or their descendants' settle/cultivate in a distant territory but remain subject to or closely associated with the parent country. Colonialized people are those who are politically controlled or occupied by another country (Reference Dictionary). Initially, the concept of cultivation and settlement was simply linked to

space or land. For these reasons, in the 1960s in most African countries, liberation movements were intended to free the land from colonial physical occupation. However, forcing out the metropolitan armies from Africa did not lead to true liberation. After the colonial armies left, many African leaders who have adopted the European culture and ways of life, allowed the colonial language to be the official language of newly independent states. As a result, in many African countries the official languages became English, French, Portuguese or Arabic and official religions were either Christianity or Islam. Paradoxically the leaders who sacrificed their human and natural resources to liberate their people adopted the ideas, ideologies, worldviews and institutional structures that had dehumanized and subjected them to slavery, colonialism and unbearable poverty. To understand this paradox, one needs to examine the way colonialism is seen- because definitions lead to action.

Religious conversion and cultural impositions are some of the colonial tools used to control and disempower the colonized people (Said, 1994). For example, in Australia Christian missionaries attempted to control every aspect of Aboriginal lives. Missionaries cooperated with the colonial government to control the language that the indigenous people spoke, the type of housing they lived in, their labor, wages, education, even their movements to or from their communities, as well as their social relationships, marriages and even the number of children they should have (Sullivan, 2007). Religious impositions are basically reprogramming and controlling the mind. The Nigerian writer Achebe (1958p.176) described the damages that the colonial religious imposition causes when he said:

the white man is very clever. He came quietly ... with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.

Achebe's observations in the case of people in Nigeria five decades ago are consistent with the case in Oromia today. In Oromia, the indigenous religion is legally banned by the Ethiopian government. This has created favorable conditions for foreign religions i.e. Christianity and Islam and their different sects to compete over the Oromo episteme and minds. This has led to conflicts among communities (BBC News, 2006) and even the breakdown of families.

African liberation movement leaders were educated by Euro-centric schools and they conceptualized colonialism and liberation from the perspective of the colonizers. They understood that the presence of colonial agents makes the liberation incomplete. This understanding led to the colonizers being physically forced to leave Africa. However, this allowed the colonial ideas, ideologies, system of thinking (Dugassa, 2011) and governance structure to stay. When newly independent states were formed, they started to run the internal and external affairs of their perspective countries basing them on the ideology and value of the colonizers. This conditioned many African countries to be dependent on the ideas, ideologies and experiences of the empire builders (Mazrui, 1978). Such dependencies not only undermined the efforts of African people, but also it legitimized the idea of domination, exploitation and colonial power relation. In the minds of many Africans and Europeans, this has created the notion that Europe is a knowledge producer and charity giver and Africa is a consumer and receiver. This makes clear that the concept of colonialism goes beyond settling, cultivating and controlling the land. It includes economic exploitation and impositions of myths or controlling the minds. Oromo people need to learn from the mistake of other Africans and

widen their scope in defining colonialism. They need to redefine that the objective of their struggle is to end the social, economic, political, cultural and ideological imposition or domination and reclaim Oromo myth making.

Colonialism and Structural Assimilation

Structural assimilation refers to the integration of one society into the social customs, institutions and social groups of the dominant society. It entails the entrance of a group “into the social cliques, organizations, and institutional activities of another society. Structural assimilation is part of the colonialism of the mind. Cultural assimilation is one of the major pathways through which structural assimilation is perpetuated. A change in culture (worldview, language, values and perspectives) alters the epistemological foundation of the society, for example such understanding or conceptualizing what constitutes ethical right and wrong (Mazrui, 1978). Let me give a specific example and explore the ways the imposition of one language over the other brings change in epistemological orientation. To show this, I will to compare English grammar structure to the Oromo language grammar.

English Grammar Structure

Subject + Verb + Object
I eat bread

Oromo Grammar Structure

Subject + Object + Verb
Ani dabbon nyaadha

In English and Oromo language grammars, I (Ani) the subject go first. This makes the speakers of both languages put themselves ahead of anything else. In the English language, the verb follows the subject and the object comes last. English grammatical structure suggests that, next to me, what I do is important and what I do it upon is least important. In the case of the Oromo language, next to I (Ani) the object comes and the verb (what I do) comes last. The Oromo language structure suggests, next to me, that the subject I do upon comes and what I do comes last. These structures are not random and they reflect the social structure of society. Consistent with the grammatical structure, English and other European societies emphasize individual rights and individual efforts more. However, Oromo people as much as they value individual rights, they also treasure collective rights and collective work. Let us look at another example.

English

I eat
 He eats
 She eats
 You (s) eat
 You (p) eat
 We eat

Oromo

Ani nan nyaadha
Ini ni nyaataa
Isheen ni nyaati
Ati ni nyaataa
Isaan ni nyaatuu
Uni ni nyaanaa

In English grammar, he and she take the same form of verb “eats” and first person singular (you) and second person plural (you), third person plural (we) take the same form of verb “eat”. In Oromo there is differentiation for he and she (ni nyaataa and ni nyaati) as well as for Ati (you –first person singular and Isaan (second person plural you) and plural Uni (we). Language is the product of a social setting and it varies based on the social structure of the speakers (Lupyan & Dale, 2010). In English grammar, men and women use the same verb. This suggests they do the same thing. Consistent with the grammar structure, the English people developed an institution that can be led by male kings or female queens. However, the Oromo people have developed two distinct institutions: Gada – which is always a male figure and

Siiqee- which is exclusively led by Haadha Caacu – female head. This implies the language structure reflects the social structure of the society. The absence and presence of gender differentiations are reflective of a gender centered division of labor in society.

Spirituality and language set the norm in the mind of speakers. Language makes events and ideas meaningful and often defines our realities (Dugassa, 2006). It helps maintain individuals and collective ways of living and gives meaning in relationship (Dei and Asghazadeh, 2003). Language serves to bring people together or divide them (Kontra et. al, 1999). For example (Battiste, 2002) an indigenous scholar argues that indigenous languages and their symbolic, verbal, and grammatical structures provide unconscious orders of structure in society and help to maintain harmony in the group. Educators cannot teach indigenous knowledge outside of Indigenous languages. The Euro-centric episteme promoted hierarchy between the social and natural world and this allowed the knowledge of the environment to be lost. Battiste argues that there is an urgent need to conserve the indigenous knowledge to help develop mechanisms to protect the earth's biological diversity. Indeed, the impacts of the Eurocentric episteme are not limited to the earth's biodiversity; it allowed some people to live in poverty and in fear and others in luxury with few worries.

Indigenous Oromo Organizational Structure

Knowledge is socially constructed and this makes it diverse. Knowledge is constructed based on a specific epistemological starting point or belief (O'Brien, 2006). This makes the validity of knowledge grounded on the social location of the knower. Knowledge that is based on a specific epistemological starting point can be valid for one group of people, but not for others. The knowledge of the Oromo people reflects their lived experiences and realities and it is part of their worldview. The knowledge, worldview and the cultural norms of the Oromo people are instrumental in setting ethics and morality of the group and their individual behaviors. The Oromo worldview determines the ways that members of the society behave and create a unique social structure. The deeply instilled worldview and culture of a society inform the structure of their organizations. As the social, political and culture of a society changes, the structure of the society and organization also significantly changes.

The Gada system is one of the most important Oromo social-cultural-political organizations. It organizes Oromo society based on age and genealogy and assigns different responsibilities. It guides the social, political and economic life of the Oromo people (Legesse, 2000). The Gada system and Qaalu guide the Oromo worldview, epistemology, philosophy, art, history, methods of time-keeping and every aspect of the Oromo peoples' lives. The Gada system is democratic, equitable, and transparent and it is deep-seated in the Oromo worldview. When the Oromo people complain about the Ethiopian colonial policy, they say "baraa Gadaan buluu, cunqursaa fi samiich hinturee = when we were ruled by Gada, there was no oppression and exploitation. When they talk about the future of the Oromo government they say "akka gadaati buula = we will be governed in the Gada principles". When they say that Gada is adoptable, they say, "Gadaan hirruu hinqaabu =Gada is complete.

In the Gada system Oromos, are organized in grades and parties. The Gada grades are the stages of development which go through (7-11) different stages. The stage of development refers to the age of the male parts of the Oromo society. For the women, their Gadaa party membership goes with their husband (Elemo, 2005). Although Gadaa grades remain the same all over Oromia, some of the names are somewhat different. In the Gada system, there are five different parties (Birmajjim, Melba, Muudana, Roobale, Duuloo). By birth, one becomes

Dabballee - the first age grade (in one of the parties) and then is transferred to the next grade every eight years. Party membership is predetermined by the father's party membership. The party membership of the father and son is five parties apart. The elected Gada officers stay in power for eight years. The Gada leaders come to power when they are 40-48 years old. Under the Gadaa system, decisions are made by consensus. The Oromo people developed the principle of equity, collective security and safety. Gada gives rise to a group oriented, non-hierarchical organization, which operates by consensus and fosters full participation of all members of the society.

Freedom, justice and security are intertwined. One cannot be free if she/he is not secure and one cannot be secure if the person is not free (Gharajedaghi, 2011). The objective of the Oromo people's struggle to self-determination is to regain their collective security and safety which they have lost after their collective rights were violated. This includes regaining control over the decision making processes, revitalizing Oromo institutions and fostering the emergence of strongly held and revitalized Oromo cultural identities. This helps in making socially and culturally acceptable and economically feasible decisions and implementing them consistent with Oromo ideas and ideologies.

From the Oromo perspective, there are three intertwined principles i.e. peace, health and social order that are essential for their survival. These principles are the foundation on which Oromo society is built. In the Oromo perspective, the presence of personal, community, environmental peace and health as well as harmony with the divine power are essential conditions for their social wellbeing. The idea of group orientation means that the collective interests of the members, such as peace and harmony of the Oromo people with each other and with others, are more important than the individual interests. Collectivism emphasizes individuals' obligation to the group as well as group obligations for the individuals. It stresses collective security and safety over individual interests. Under Gada leadership, when decisions are made by consensus it guarantees that the decision making process is equitable, inclusive and transparent.

How do cultural assimilation and ideological imposition influence the development of leadership and institutions? How do cultural and ideological impositions influence the structure of a society? Should the organizational structure of a society reflect the culture and worldview of the group? What are the relationships between cultural assimilation and structural integration? It is clear that epistemologies, ideas and ideologies can be imposed on people's minds and used to control the society. According to Said (1994), colonialism is not necessarily about the presence or absence of the colonial army, but about culture and ideology. Assimilation leads to changes in opinions and it legitimizes the colonial myth, the dominant reality and the unjust power relation (Dugassa, 2011).

The following are the Gada Grades:

1. Dabballee (0-8 years of age)
2. Folle or Gamme Titiqaa (8-16)
3. Qondaala or Gamme Gurgudaa (16-24)
4. Kuusa (24-32)
5. Raaba Doorii (32-40)
6. Gadaa (40-48)
7. Yuba I (48-56)
8. Yuba II (56-64)
9. Yuba III (64-72)
10. Gadamojjii (72-80)
11. Jaarsa (80 and above)

Epistemological concepts guide our sense of particular social and political practices, as well as reinforce norms, beliefs and interests embedded in them. Education can be a colonial tool that is used to control and exploit, or it can be used for liberation and emancipation (Freire, 2000). Through education, the colonizers enforce or coerce their perspective in the minds of young students. Like many other African peoples, the Oromos have no control of their schooling.

Through formal and informal education, many Euro-Abyssinian-Arab perspectives have been foisted upon the Oromo people. For these reasons, many Oromo organizations have adopted the organizational structures of compliant control and command center.

Organization and Learning

Organizations and societies are living bodies and they continuously learn from their experiences by doing different things, trying out new ideas, structures and behaviors (Hanna, 1988). As do societies, organizations also learn how to detect and correct errors and then develop theoretical knowledge and practicality applying it. Organizations learn ways of changing the norms, assumptions, underlying theories and how to improve the learning process. When organizations make efforts to self-design and self-evaluate they enable members to generate new strategies, structures and in the process they learn to modify the ways they do things. The concept of organization and leadership are closely associated with challenges and changes; hence, they are part of the essence of the learning process. They help societies to learn how to better understand their problems, build their capacity, and more importantly learn how to learn. This means that organization and leadership are intertwined with the learning process (Dugassa, 2012).

Knowledge is the product of individuals' and groups' rigorous mind activities (Hacking, 2001; O'Brien, 2006). The knowledge produced is dependent on the epistemological starting point (Smith, 2002). This suggests that the structure in which societies get organized should be consistent with their culture, values, and experiences as well as their lived realities. Since knowledge is socially constructed, things that do not fit into our societal knowledge are seen as deviant knowledge. The sentiments we attach to our ideas have a powerful influence on us. Our political, religious and other ideas, for instance, are connected to our fundamental values and moral notions. Indeed, what primarily distinguishes human beings from other living things is their cognitive capacity. For human beings, what we do has deep meaning. If we are asked to do something that does not make sense to us, we either do sloppy jobs or resist doing it.

According to Rock (2006), leadership can be measured by leaders' ability to improve people's thinking. If leaders help people to critically think, they can help them to develop a whole new set of skills—i.e. the ability to create the physical and mental space for them to think, the ability to help others simplify their thinking, the ability to notice certain qualities in people's thinking, the ability to help others make their own connections. This means the most important skill that contemporary leadership should develop is to help the followers to critically think. This is consistent with the major functions of our brains which are known to create order out of the chaos of data coming to them. Our brain links the information it receives and gives our lives sense. It is for this reason that societies work to establish comfortable social conditions and maintain social order. Individuals and societies best function in such an atmosphere. Hence, the role of leadership is to connect and establish associations between items of information and support followers to think in a contemporary paradigm (Rock, 2006).

Epistemological re-orientation fosters a shift in our paradigm of thinking. Different ways of looking at the world produce unique knowledge. The shift in a paradigm of thinking fosters knowledge construction of a different kind. Given that a paradigm of thinking gives researchers and policy makers a framework of thinking, knowledge produced and policies set create new reality. A paradigm shift helps us to widen our scope, to better understand our social realities and to solve our social problems. However, if the dominant groups impose their paradigm of

thinking upon the marginalized groups, they will confuse them. In that case, instead of seeing and understanding their realities through their own lenses, they comprehend it through the eyes of the dominant. This distorts the reality of the marginalized groups. Let me give a concrete example. In the Oromo worldview, black and blackness represents purity and holiness (Dugassa, 2012). From the European perspective blackness represents sorrow, ugliness and crime. Both concepts are ingrained in the worldviews of the two peoples. If the European values are imposed upon the Oromo people, it overtly or covertly informs them that the social problems they face are natural and acceptable.

The Future Directions in Oromo Organizational Structure

The future of the Oromo people depends on the ways they get organized, manage their resources, accommodate their differences, revitalize their social structure, support the development of the minds of the younger generation and foster supportive environments for health. As I mentioned above, the word organization itself is derived from the Greek word organon or ergon - as we know it `organ` - and it means a compartment for a particular body. In the Western world, the structures of organizations are framed to be consistent with their social relation-- hierarchy form. The Oromo concept of organization should be consistent with the Oromo social structure and it should be egalitarian-equitable- accessible and democratic, fairly distribute tasks and privileges and develop strategies to achieve collective goals - the public good.

The reasons that have kept the Oromo people under colonial rule include: a) the support that the European empire builders provided to Ethiopia; b) the absence of cooperation and coordination among the Oromo clans; c) the absence of organizations founded on the Oromo indigenous structure. The Oromo people need to deeply reflect on their lived experiences and tackle them accordingly. To improve the community health development, the Oromo people need to get organized, challenge the colonial agenda and ideology and prove that they are a stabilizing force in the Horn of Africa region and beyond.

Culture collectively programs the mind of people (Cerulo, 2002). As Jalata put it (Jalata, 2007), the leading ideology of Oromo people should be Orommumma-- Oromo-centricity. Oromo organization should be based on the Oromo social structure. As has been seen in many African countries, the ideas, ideologies and organizational structures that are contrary to the Oromo worldview cannot lead them to liberation, foster social transformation and create supportive environments for health. Foreign ideology and organizational structure will not work for two reasons. First, ideas and an ideology that do not fit into the Oromo worldview condition them to adopt the perspective of others. Human beings are social beings and forcing the Oromo people to abandon their culture and perspective exposes them to unwanted risks. Abandoning Orommumma is losing the cultural blueprint and this sets the stage for people to be programmed, assimilated and to become nobody or anybody. The second reason is the challenge of practically adopting foreign ideas, ideologies and perspectives. The ideas and ideologies that do not correspond to the Oromo worldview take several generations to actually understand.

If we closely look at the reasons for the difficulties that Oromo churches and mosques have in getting organized, we see that both religious teachings are truly foreign to the Oromo people. Although in principle the members accepted these beliefs, the ideas and ideologies in those religious teachings promote a hierarchy and a centralized command system. These teachings are contrary to the Oromo worldview and irreconcilable in the minds of the members. Some of the agonizing concepts include a) lifetime church and mosque leaders; b) conceptualizing these leaders as if they are different from the members and being docile followers of them; c) the

hierarchy among the members and leaders.

The Oromo people have several unique social structures. The founding fathers and mothers of these structures set them for specific purposes. Some of the most visible purposes are maintaining peace, promoting health, equity, transparency and democracy. For these reasons, all Oromo individuals are expected to be loyal to the family, to the Gada grade party membership and to the clan. There are several phrases that exemplify this deeply engrained value. *Hidaa malee xanaachi hidhiigu* (= if the blood of close family members are shed, your blood is also shed). *Hirriya malee dhaqxee gaggessaa malee galtii* (=if you go out without your peers you will return with no escort). *Gosaa ufiti baqataani* (= you escape and hide in your clan). Indeed, it is morally wrong to be loyal to one and less loyal to the other. Gada principles are ingrained in the Oromo culture and do not require extensive teaching and learning.

What does it mean to adopt Gada as an Oromo organizational structure? The principles of Gada are deeply rooted in the minds of Oromo people. The need to adopt the Oromo indigenous social structure in institution building should not be a matter of debate. The intent is not just a simple devotion to the principle of self-determination; it goes beyond that. Making use of the Oromo social structure in institutional building fosters using the accumulated wisdom of Oromo people. This makes institution building easier, faster and relevant. Reclaiming Gada as an Oromo organizational structure means implementing the principle of democracy, transparency, equity and inclusiveness. This increases the participation of members of the Oromo society. In turn this increases creativity, learning and problem solving skills.

What type of transformation is required to revitalize Gada principles? Gada is part of the Oromo culture and it does not require major effort to revitalize it and it does not involve significant changes to make it work in the contemporary world. Transformation is helping the Oromo people realize the complexities and the magnitude of the challenges they are facing and convincing them that they can change their hopelessness to hopefulness, misery to happiness, destitution to prosperity and disease to health.

The Oromo Social Structure and Contemporary World

When the Oromo people developed Gada; the age grade system and Siiqee, the social realities of the Oromo people were very different from today. The contemporary Oromo world is fast paced and the challenges they face are complex and the opportunities they have are widespread. The challenges they face can be contained if they are effectively organized. If they are organized, they can effectively make use of the opportunities. They can effectively get organized if they frame the structures of their organizations to be compatible with the social structure of the Oromo people.

Creating a new and an alternative vision is considered a key element in a leadership framework; in its turn, vision is driven by the social problems of society and its values (Cummings & Worley, 2001). In Gada, leaders are elected on the merit of what they have done, rather than what they promised to do (Dugassa, 2012). Knowing that children and adults are judged by society fosters hard work, creativity and prepares everyone to act in socially acceptable ways. As students better focus on their studies when they know that they will be evaluated, children and adults do better when they realize that they are evaluated by society. The other fascinating reality about the Gada system is that the Oromo society starts grooming

children for leadership from their birth. This process informs the family and community members of the need to prepare their future leaders. The assessment of leadership continues even after power is transferred.

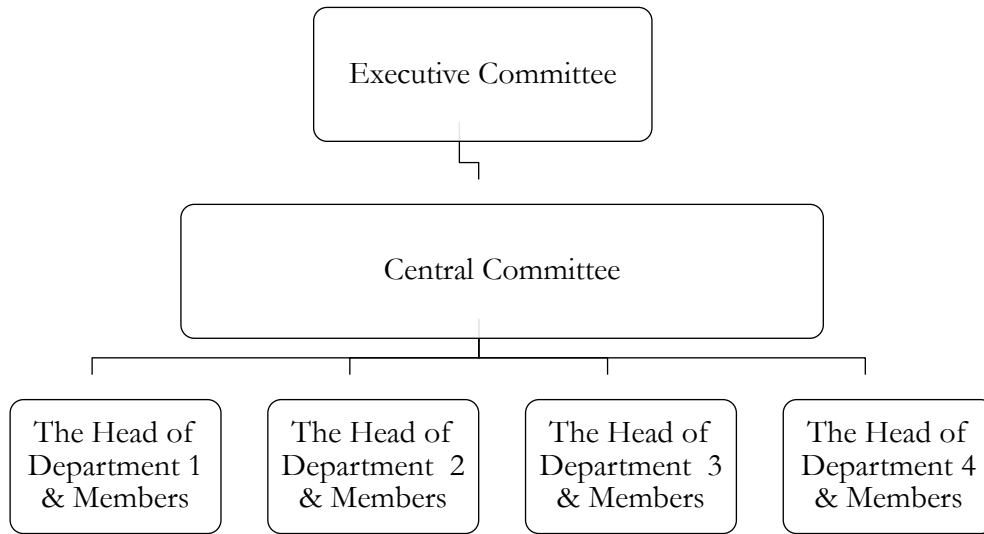


Figure 1: Hierarchical & Centralized Command Model of Organizational Structures

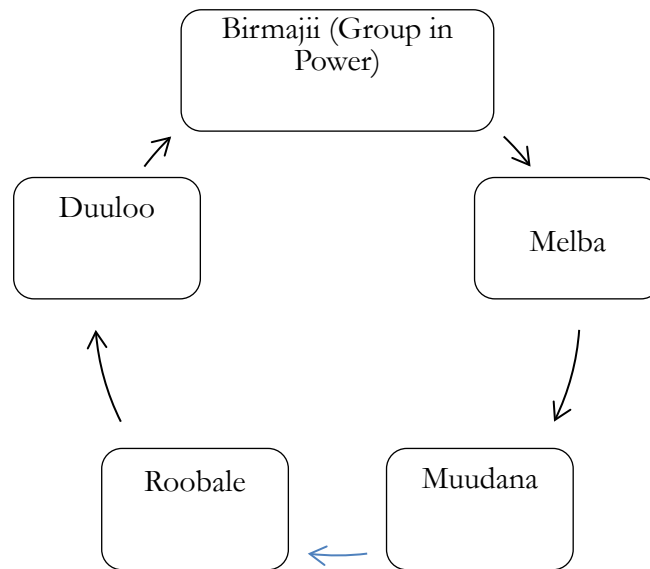


Figure 2: Gada based Organizational Structure

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The health conditions of the Oromo people are determined by complex and intertwined social and environmental conditions. Modifying or entirely changing these environments requires strategic planning and the collective efforts of society. This necessitates developing effective organizations and know how leadership. Ethiopian colonial policies conditioned the Oromo people to adopt the Euro-centric discourses and a top-down organizational structure. The top-down organizational structure is incompatible with the Oromo worldview and it is inaccessible, inequitable and unsustainable. This structure does not foster the full participation of community members. The Oromo indigenous organizational structure functions in the Oromo episteme. Such an organizational structure is better able to understand the social problems of the Oromo people, fostering the participation of people, creating a stable society

and healthy social environments and cultural relevant solutions. This significantly prevents illness and injuries in the first place and helps in applying of principles of health promotion strategies and fostering supportive environments for health i.e. as *nagaa* (peace) and *tasgaabi* (social order) and *haaqa* (social justice).

The structure of an organization is dependent on the objectives and the strategy of the establishment. Organized societies can effectively coordinate their human and natural resources. If societies are empowered and organized they can better understand their problems and solve them. It is for these reasons that postcolonial development literature promotes the need to build the capacity of people to solve their own problems. Indeed, the idea of capacity building encompasses three major areas (a) sustainable development, (b) building civil society and social capital, and (c) fostering organizational development and management theory. The idea of capacity building encompasses aiding pre-existing institutions in developing countries. This means that the need to get organized and identify appropriate organizational structure is critical to the very survival of the Oromo people.

Leadership is a process by which a person and a group use organizations to influence others to accomplish an objective, and direct society in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent (Dugassa, 2012). The quality of leadership is assessed by the ability to see the present in terms of the future. Developing organizations and leadership is critical in transforming and revitalizing colonized people. Colonizers overtly and covertly attack the leadership and the institutions of colonized people. This makes it hard for the Oromo and other colonized peoples to develop their own leaderships and institutions. Organizations and leaderships are essential to bring peace, stability and create healthy social conditions. The struggle of the Oromo people for self-determination, to develop their own leadership and organization should be seen as the means to empower themselves, solve their own problems, reduce emerging risks and make use of rising opportunities as well as creating healthy social conditions.

Transformative leaders at all levels of society use their positions to influence, enable and accelerate progress when they work in favorable institutional environments. Contemporary leaders are expected to use their position of influence to protect the public good and further enhance the rights and opportunities of the poor. Leadership is seen as the ability of policymakers and politicians to skillfully use their positions and knowledge to communicate their vision, vision that can be realized through the mobilization of supportive coalitions. Leadership plays an important role in any society. It is hard to envisage large scale achievement in establishing social security and healthy social condition without it. Transformative leadership and organization is not something that would be simply nice to have; it is something that the Oromo people need to rigorously pursue and continuously build on.

The use of indigenous organizational structure and leadership is critical to the development of effective Oromo organizations. Based on the above analyses, I propose that the contemporary Oromo organizations adopt the indigenous Oromo organizational structure and multi-headed leadership. The benefits of having more than one command center are: a) it helps to assure that all institutions are democratic and transparent, b) it makes institutions function compatibly with Oromo culture; c) it makes it hard for the colonial forces to target the institution; d) it opens more doors for ambitious leaders to freely compete, e) it makes the center more accessible to members of society; f) it diversifies methods of struggle, g) it

enhances the capacity of the Oromo people to defy colonial forces, h) it prevents clan and regional politics and i) it promotes peace and stability.

The social conditions in which the Oromo people live are different from those of the past. The life expectancy of the Oromo people is rising and the interaction of Oromo people with the global world makes the life of this society more complex. In the past, Gada leaders took office around the age of 40-48 and then transferred the power and retired (Legesse, 2000). Our world is becoming more complex and early retirement is not economically feasible. At the same time, of 40 is not old enough to have accumulated many experiences. This necessitates extending the age at which the Gada leaders take office.

The other important question that the Oromo people need to ask is whether or not they need to have five parties, as is the case in the Gada system or whether they need to adopt the Gada structure in the political party formation. In my view, having five different political parties cannot be turned into better choices. The practical and realistic choice is adopting a three party system - i.e. Conservative, Liberal and Leftist. All the parties need to adopt the Oromo indigenous social structure in their party formation. This means all the party and community organizational structures should consist of Birmajjim, Melba, Muudana, Roobale and Duuloo. The leadership of the organization should shift accordingly.

There are several challenges in adopting the Oromo indigenous organizational structure. The challenges include how can the Oromo people make consensus decision making fit into this fast paced world? The Qaalu leaders were instrumental in challenging egocentric arguments – what is required to rebuild this very important institution?

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