

# A GENESIS OF CREATION

## THE OROMO STORY

Dhabasa Guyo as quoted by Gammachu Magarsa (Ph.D.) in the Journal of Oromo Studies issue of 2005



*Waaqa creates  
because creating is His job;  
it is because He creates that He  
is recognized as Waaqa.*

THE  
OROMO

**N**ations across the world have differing accounts of how they came to be; For the Greeks, a void was re-made by an egg that birthed Uranus (the sky) and Gaia (the earth), these two would effect into existence children, who also bestowed upon them grandchildren, from which Zeus, in turn, ordered his sons to make mankind, an experience which caused agony and hope to be released into the world as well; The Mayans used to narrate that an empty world was remade with life after the two gods, the sky and sea gods, discussed amongst themselves upon realizing the embryo for greatness, the void held. And the Yoruba of Nigeria mythologize, the chief deity, Oluron reigned with celestial beings called orishas by his side, and amongst those orishas, the curious one, Obatala was delegated to create land, water, and clay life, which eventually became the ancestors.

The above myths and most of their other counterparts share in original a state of nothingness that would become something, with divine intercession. People look to the past for meaning and in search of that 'first past', invoke sagas essentially attempting to answer one of the most, if not the most pressing question(s) of life, 'where did we come from?'. Such mythoi implant an (alleged) comprehension of national genesis for purposes of belongingness and cohesion. For without a beginning, man can not think of a continuance and ultimately an end. In association with such patterns of human understanding,

the Oromo of Ethiopia are also storytellers of their genesis. While much research remains to be done in unraveling Oromo creation mythology and cosmology we can still follow the threads of the story of the Oromo from selected studies conducted to date.

The Oromo were largely believers of the Waaqqeffana faith before the mass conversations to Christianity and Islam. Despite being dwarfed by the modern Abrahamic religions in terms of number of believers, Waaqqeffannaa still holds much significance in the way of language, norms, and ethos. And it is within Waaqqeffana that the Oromo genesis is brought to center-stage. Waaqqeffana essentialized the relationship between Waaqa (Supreme deity) and Waaqqeffata (believer) in conceptualizing creation, life, and death. Yoseph Mulugeta Baba (Ph.D.), published philosopher and historiographer on Oromo studies, theorizes three notions of Uumaa (the universe), Waaqa (the undifferentiated being), and Safuu (privileges and responsibilities of beings) in deciphering what he calls, the 'Dhugaa Ganama' approximated as the primordial truth in English. He recounts that, within Uumma, the totality of the animate, inanimate, and spirits exist. And all such entities were created by Waaqa, also referred to as Waaqa Gurrachaa, approximated as the Mysterious (Black) Creator, denoting the unknown and mysticality, which he distinguishes from waaqa, as the small case denotes the skies. Waaqa is said to be with neither a beginning nor an end and continues in perpetu-

A group of Borana Oromo men walk towards a Baallii celebration in which power is passed on to the next leaders in the Gadaa system

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al quiddity. The important link connecting all creations with Waaqa is the 'Ayyaanaa', a defining, spiritual quintessence of all creations, that determines who one is and how lives are lived. As such, it is Safuu that dictates the relationship between Waaqa's creations on earth, a norm of existing without detriment to the other's existence.

These building blocks are major tenets of Oromo theological rationale and worldview, fundamentally so for creational comprehension, Waaqa is causation for all life. Dereje Hinew of Wallagaa University elucidates on how Waaqa affected the origin of life as per the Oromo worldview view:



*Water holds an essential place in the oral tradition of Oromo origination, water is said to be the source from which all life came out. The name, 'Walaabuu' infers the primordial water of which Waaqa created all forms of life, including human beings. Dereje Hinew incites a local saying amidst the Oromo that goes, 'Umeen Walaabuu Baate' meaning life came from Walaabuu. And as such, it is from Walaabuu that*

*Waaqa created the first Oromo, 'Horro'. Horro is the primeval ancestor of all Oromos, his priorship in terms of creation also names him 'Gurraacha Yaayyaa', connoting mysterious purity. Horro was upon neither male nor female until Waaqa's gaze made him into two: Horro becomes the first male and Hawwaan the first female. And so stipulates, the creation myth of the Oromo.*



From such a mythical interpretation, Oromos define most things in the world. Walaabuu seems to bestow divine and universal explanation, in contrast to the oft-done practice of affiliating it to a specific locality within Oromia. Walaabuu is an abstract of significance for the Oromo worldview. Creation is accorded in such a manner and life continues accordingly. The Oromo is a product of Waaqa's work and possesses Ayyaanaa, a manifestation of Waaqa in all creatures, and must abide by Safuu as long as he or she lives. The Oromo supplicates to Waaqa in time of needs with the opening 'Yaa Waaqa Gurraachaa...' and Waaqa does for thee, as he is giving. And finally, death calls upon the living, it serves as a passage to where it is called, 'Iddo Dhugaa' or place of truth to rejoin all those who departed before.

Concluded is the story of life, or as the Oromo would say, Kanuma.

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