

Introduction to Part 3

In this third section, the focus shifts from the local context of the Borana to the broader Oromo and Ethiopian perspectives. The first essay was written for a workshop on Oromo nationalism in Gothenburg in 1994, organised by Paul Baxter, Jan Hultin and Alessandro Triulzi. In Chapter 8, I explore the theme already raised in the introduction to this volume: the symbolic value of *gadaa* for the ethno-national struggle of the Oromo, key to the process of revitalising this institution after the fall of the Derg regime in 1991. This publication perhaps most clearly expresses a difference from the perspective of the Oromo insiders. In terms of the essential characteristics of the Borana political system, I highlight some differences from the mainstream view that sees the *gadaa* institution as a system of government rather than a complex mode of governance. Secondly, I draw a clear distinction between *gadaa* as an institution practised by the Borana, and by extension other Oromo pastoralist groups, and *gadaa* as a political symbol in the realm of Oromo nationalism. I suspect that it is because of the positions expressed in this essay that, in the debate between Baxter and Legesse over the political significance of the *gadaa* institution, some Oromo and Ethiopian colleagues have tended to place me in Baxter's field. Many years later, it seems particularly useful to re-present the text published in 1996 in its original form, especially for the benefit of the emerging generation of Oromo scholars.

The second essay presented here (Bassi 2019b) reflects a very different style from all the others, as it consists of policy recommendations. I developed it for the 2019 annual conference of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), which took place in Ethiopia. This essay builds on the critique made in Part 2 of this volume and extends the discussion to the issue of Ethiopian minorities, both national and ethnic minorities within newly demarcated administrative spaces, and occupational groups comprising pastoral and smallholder agricultural communities. The development policies of the Ethiopian state are depriving these communities of access to basic resources, leading to a significant increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). About the *gadaa* institution in Oromia Regional State, it is suggested that the co-option of customary leaders cannot be considered as an alternative to the full implementation of internationally defined human and political rights. Moreover, international best practices applied to indigenous and tribal peoples can serve as an effective model for incorporating this important institution into contemporary governance, especially to secure basic common resources, especially land, water and air.