



Mystery of Numbers and the Epistemic Gaps within the Borana(a) Tradition

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Abstract: This article discusses the Borana concept of numbers, issues inherent to lived actualities and felt realities. Through the use of primary and secondary sources, it revisits the Borana ritual events in which secrete of numbers are pervasive. Hermeneutically it provokes reflections on the mystery of numbers within this tradition and thereby explores existing epistemic gaps. The finding upholds that the Borana system of numeration is as complex as human cell that cannot be put in a single word. It vibrantly adds that the Borana ways of relating things (situations) to numbers are embedded in socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual schemes drawn from comprehensive conception of life. Many numerable things are ethically forbidden to be counted mathematically or computed arithmetically. Beings such as animals and things such as plants/stones or conceptual entities like time/space, and spiritual imagination like God/Truth are considered variously. Numerical things are reflected in the concept 'Henna' and correlated terminologies. The article uncovers how the Borana use number Three and Nine as sacred entities for multifaceted veracities tied to objective/subjective realities. It explains how these numbers play significant roles in events ranging from birth, child naming, and marriage to funeral system. In doing so, the article captures triple-decker epistemic gaps within this tradition: Firstly, the conception of numbers is highly esoteric which makes access to originality and validity a daunting task. Secondly, their numeration system isn't fairly addressed by the existing studies. Thirdly, their conception of issues such as life, death and truth is uncovered by the hitherto research. Finally, the article calls for further epistemic and hermeneutic investigation so as to toughen wisdom generating system with principles clear enough to produce justifiable and demonstrable knowledge.

Keywords: Henna, Secrete, Numbers, Ayyaana, Epistemic gap

Introduction

The roles of numbers in human life exist even before the concept of number and its mathematical figures came into its modern forms. In the course of time, civilization developed concept of numbers and symbolic representations so as to put the manifold manifestations of being in space and time into abstract decimal system. The Borana Civilization/tradition promotes a belief that numbers have values in things/phenomenon to be numbered beyond symbolic representation. This belief relates 'numbers' to values of things in accordance with the thing's/ being's or phenomena's own right. The way, for instance, human beings are supposed to be counted is very different from that of other animals. The conception of number and what is to be numbered are perceived in one. It's like other tradition that the Borana tradition of numbers covers secret ranging from Life Path, Expression, and Soul Urge, Birthday. They refer to these numbers in selecting names of events and number of a day that



will harmonize with the vibrations that tend towards success, happiness, and health. It is through the numbering of Ayyaana that they identify the fortunate years for an individual, birth, naming, marriage, death, and the unfortunate years are those that are not so advisable. Events or situations that exert an unpleasant or unfavourable influence (since anticipated possibilities are supposed to be feared as per the prior experiences) are avoided in accordance with the numbering and indications of Ayyaana. However, the Borana apply secret of this inherited principles to events that are past, Present and even to the future through esoteric practices governed by the circumstances that are unchangeable. Accordingly, we usually face a paradox in that it is difficult to fathom the apparent mystery that is so often manifested in the operations of Borana ritual events through number 3 and 9 divine law, but of one fact we may be certain throughout their life path. Apart from agreed cultural practices governed by these numbers, there is no principle formally taught in the life system of the Borana. Thus, they know, by reference to their own experiences, that some fortunes are done or otherwise. Since people leave collective commitment of practices to chances, such constant practices on levity contributed to the gaps.

Method

The study reviewed available documents, research related and relevant to the area. A qualitative research method was employed to examine indigenous elders' perspectives on secrets of numbers and knowledge of numbers. It involved discussion with customary leaders, and knowledgeable elders. Selective observations were carried out on various ritual ceremonies in which the community exercise sacred practices and secrets of numbers. The data were thematically analyzed and hermeneutically interpreted.

A Comprehensive Concept with many Terminologies: Henna

The Borana have indigenous concept known as 'Henna' out of which many other concepts related to numbering developed. Despite some, critical secrets relative to nature of thing/being/situation in focus, the Borana use the concept "Henna" for the general conception of numeration. Leus and Salvador (2006) defined the concept Henna as counting, account; number. However, the Borana concept of Henna goes beyond this to wider conceptual space. It's from this concept that people draw other terminologies which make concepts such as counting, measuring, calculating and auditing useable. Most of the time, the Borana connects Henna to other accompanying term called 'Hedanaa' and thereby read as 'Hennaa-Hedanaa.'

Hennaa-Hedanaa makes Borana concept of numbers and numeration more comprehensive. Although it is included in the concept Henna, Hedanaa consists of many sub-concepts that may be grouped under the Henna. Because of this, the Borana sometimes use the two concepts interchangeably. Ton Leus put the concept Henna (Hedda) as; to measure to count, etc. And Leus put its noun heduu as enumeration (Leus, 2006). However, Leus definition is too narrow. The concept Hedana can be defined as a process of numbering, calculating, auditing, etc. It is right from such a conception that the Borana use the concept of Hedana and Henna interchangeably.

In the Borana, it is hardly acceptable to count people in the formal sense of counting. It is considered taboo to count human beings. In their conception, human beings have values and whatever has such values should not be counted. If anyone tries to do otherwise, the Borana tradition warns; 'naa hin hedinii mataa bofaa hedi,' (Meaning; do not count me, and instead



count the head of snake.’ It has been due to this that the Borana resists census counts. It often happened that the Borana are criticized for not giving accurate information to the others during national census. Although official enumerators mistakenly construed this as if the Borana purposively hide accurate information, the main reason is likely different. The same thing prevails among the Guji Oromo that has many things to do with the Borana. Tadesse has indicted this point in his study of the riddle of numbers among the Guji Oromo where he argued; “The indirect counting of human beings may have created confusion to official enumerators and contributed to the underestimation of the Guji population during census counts (2013, p.56). The Borana similarly extend moral consideration to their livestock and hence does not like them to be counted. Accordingly, it is taboo among the Borana to count their livestock. There is a belief among them that the counting of human beings and domestic animals will lead to their destruction. They usually use a saying that ‘nama sa’allee hin too’atan malee hin hedan (it is not permitted to count human persons and livestock’). Ton Leus and Cynthia wrote that ‘To’adha’ is to count, enumerate verify by counting one’s own cattle or other property only for government business such as taxation” (Leus 2006, p.618). To’adha comes from root term ‘Too’ata,’ which preferably makes formal counting of things with moral values. Thus, the term Too’ata may be used for both human being and livestock with the intension of verifying through meticulous observation and thoroughly account for what was observed by (Asmarom, 1973, p.281), about the Borana may attest to this very reality. According to him, each animal is a unique creature with a different color, shape, pedigree, name, and life history (Bariso 2013, p.57).

Herrega is another critical term used in the conception of Henna. The Borana use this term when they think and discuss issues of herding and watering livestock. The conception of Henna, which involves the connotation of Herrega, is about consideration of values of things that they don’t detach from the number. In this case, the concept, Herrega may be defined as to think, to ponder, to contemplate, to philosophize, to consider etc. This could be understood from some of the Borana sayings such as *‘Herrega mataa badee*(to mean thought of the mislead/wrong minded) or *yaada-mataa refee*(when they define Dream/Oobjuu as thought of the sleeping mind). The Borana also use some expressions of numeration for different purpose; *Henna ayyaanaa*/The knowledge of celestial observation and skill to calculate a horoscope in terms of this knowledge. *Henna guyyaa*/following the calendar of days/months. *Henna mataa namaa*/The counting of people (This English may not be the correct translations since the Borana don’t like to count human being in the formal context of counting). Rather they use this when referring to issues such as philosophizing, pondering, contemplating, etc.- *Herrega mataa namaa*/Thought of a person). *Henna-Qeenca horii*/The counting of livestock (Here, the intension is not to say counting in the formal context of English, rather the intension is to say Borana’s *To’achuu*). Moreover, the Borana use another term called **Qorqortii** when they mean to query in two different ways. Firstly, it can be positively defined as to oversee, guard, assist, check on, etc. Secondly, it can be defined negatively, as audit investigation. The Borana used to have a negative attitude towards the concept of auditing. They have a customary belief that a truth watches over one’s own deeds. This common belief goes in that auditing is an act of a person who is always checking and interfering with unnecessary things at home. They also have a term called **Dhundhuma** which they use for material objects and plots of earth. *Dhundhumaa* is an act of measuring physical things by using human bodies such as *Ciqilee* (from elbow to fist), *Taakkuu*, *ejata* (one-foot step). These are sometimes used to measure



height. However, the Borana do not measure height of a living person. It is considered taboo to measure the height of living person. They only measure height of the dead person in order to dig the grave hole accordingly.

Conceptualizing Numbers with Livelihood in the Borana Tradition

Tradition/Culture is the way of life of every people. There is no culture without language and there is no language without number. In the Borana culture, there are many number-related beliefs, rules, and values, which are critical so as to maintain order, 'balance,' survival, and continuity within the society. For example, the saying '*kophaan udaan qofaaf tolti*' (Aloneness suits only for a man go out for excretion) which means that one person cannot survive alone or do all things alone) is intended to foster the spirit of unity. Or the saying that "Harkii tokkochii kophaa bisaan hindhiqu (a single hand cannot wash us water) calls for the importance of union and togetherness. In the Shona culture, the number, unless it represents God indicates sorrow when related to human. Similar to the Borana's above number related sayings, the Shona people believe that the number 1 is a 'sorrowful' number since one who stays or lives alone has no one to share jokes or share information with. They do have another saying which directly related to the Borana saying '*chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda*' (one thumb alone cannot kill a louse) meaning that a person cannot do anything (fruitful) if he/she is one or alone; he/she would need someone to help him/her. The number 'Three' also stands for the degree to which one will endure pain, humiliation or suffering inflicted upon by another person without revenging; thus, the saying, "*potsi haarwirwi, piri haarwirwi asi tatu torwa*" which means that the first mistake is not punishable, the second same mistake is also not punishable and one is given another chance while the third same mistake is punitive (Chirume, 2017). Exactly the Borana have the same saying; "Nama tokko jigged eegadhu jedhan, nama lama jigged beekkadhu jedhan, nama sadii jigeen amala isaa jedhan" which exactly carry the same message to the Shona case.

Furthermore, this tradition shares many things with many great cultures when it comes to secret of numbers. Like many societies, the Borana believe in one God and one Truth. In the kernel of the Borana belief "Dhugaan Ilmee Waaqaati. Waaqinuu Dhugaa, Dhugaanuu Waaquma (Truth is God's offspring. God himself is Truth and the Truth itself is God. It's truly surprising that the Borana ontological and existential maxim "Dhugaan Ilmee Waaqaa, Waaqinuu Dhugaa and Dhugaanuu Waaqaa" strictly relate to the doctrine of the Trinity which preach the Three in One (God, Son and the Holy spirit). They have also the concept of Ayyaana which they believe is still from God. Thus, Truth is God's offspring and God itself and Ayyaana is from God, we can say these traditions are similar. Both agree that one is the symbol of the primordial One, the divine without a second, the non-polarized existence. What was said in John 1:1; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," was also said by the Borana though in different expressions. Similarly, the Islamic profession of faith claims that "There is no deity save God," and "deity" (Idol Worship) can be interpreted as anything that diverts humanity from the absolute surrender to Alah (*islam*) to this one creator, sustainer, and judge. Such mystical thoughts were well known in the ancient Indian tradition, which claims that, the primordial and all- pervasive principle is the One without a second. Likewise, Ancient Chinese religion has expressed similar ideas about one which represents the All, the Perfect, and the Absolute beyond all polarity. More importantly, the Borana expression of Waaqaa/God; "Gurraacha Garaa Garbaa Tokkocha Maqaa Dhibba/The unseen



or dark/the murky with infinite embodiment the only One with hundreds encodement” serves all to show the importance of the One in religious traditions.

Universal Participation of Particularities and Similarities: Number Game

It is undisputed that numbers are the language of our universe. Numbers fulfil many roles in the explanation of the universe. In numerology, we study the meaning and effect of numbers on our surroundings and how numbers in everyday life are spiritual mysticism masquerading as human rationality. We are barely aware of how many aspects of our daily routine or language are formed by a numerical rhythm in which the numbers play predominant role. The quantity of number games is almost without end, and many of them are very amusing, but the majority are purely arithmetic and never applied to mystical or magical use. Many of these games can reveal their beauty only through the use of numbers. In such games, a very special place belongs to the 9. At an early point, for example, mathematicians discovered that all multiples of 9 also have 9 as the sum of their digits: $4 \times 9 = 36$, sum of the digits 9; $7 \times 9 = 63$, sum of the digits again 9, and so on” (A. Schimmel, 1993, p. 28). The author presented Basic religious knowledge a series of numbers the recitation from the Jewish Passover Haggadah; who knows thirteen? 1, saith Israel, know thirteen: there are thirteen divine attributes, twelve tribes, eleven stars, ten commandments, nine months preceding childbirth, eight days preceding circumcision, seven days in the week, six book of the Mishnah, five books of the Law, four matrons, three patriarchs, two tables of the covenant, but one is the Eternal who is above heaven and earth. Some numerologists argue that the counting process in Africa is connected to the body, as numbers are communicated by hand gestures and measurements related to particular body parts. The Borana do have children game of number which is amazingly similar to this Jewish game, associates counting with bodies of various things. Now this is where it gets awesome when we see how this game is played among the Borana children “10n Gomboo Sadeeqaa, 9n Yaa’a Booranaa, 8n dhala saraa, 7n Naannoo Sabbath, 6n Yabbi Qaraxaa, 5n Shanii Harkaa, 4n Mucha Saayyaa, 3n Sunsuma Aa’aya, 2n Mucha Re’ee, Tokkochii Molu Saanqaa” What is very much amazing in this similarity is that both game ends bearing the same message in the value of ‘one.’ The Borana believe that number one is only an attribute of God. Like many religious creeds, they believe in one God and one Truth. In their religious maxim, “Dhugaan Ilmee Waaqaati. Waaqinuu Dhugaa, Dhugaanuu Waaquma (Truth is God’s offspring. God himself if Truth and the Truth itself if God. Precisely, the Borana expression “Dhugaan warrumaa ittuma galan/Truth is an inescapable and final destiny” can be seen in how the number game, descending from 10, 9, 8...rest in one (Tokkochii moluu Saanqaa), i.e. “one is the Eternal, who is above heaven and earth” in the case of the Jewish game. Furthermore, in the Jewish case, the number ‘13’ is associated with their tribe’s multiplicity (i.e. 12 is the Tribe of Israel). Likewise, in the Borana game, the number 9 represents the 9th categories of the Borana general assembly. The Borana ontological and organization of the community revolves around the number and the conception of Truth and God embedded in the number one.

On the other hands, the Borana number games reflects critical similarities, both in contents and numerical scope with one of the famous number games expressed in the Persian verse; “The *ten* friends from the *nine* spheres and the *eight* paradises and the *seven* stars from the *six* directions have written this letter: Among the *five* senses and *four* elements and *three* souls, God has not created in *both* worlds a *single* idol like you! (Schimmel, 1993, P. 36). In this



verse, the phrases “the ten friends from the nine spheres” carries the similar message to the Borana “Saglan yaa’a Booranaa,” the seven stars from the six directions” resembles the Borana notion of the seven stars”, “the five senses and the four elements” is exactly the same to the Borana “Shanan shanii harkaa and afar mucha Saayyaa” ... We can also see the Lyrics “One for Sorrow,” which goes as “One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl, four for a boy, five for silver, six for gold, seven for a secret, never to be told, eight for a wish, nine for a kiss, ten for a bird You must not miss! Its original Lyrics: One for sorrow, Two for mirth, Three for a wedding, and four for death... “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe” or “1, 2 Buckle My Shoe” is a counting song dating back to late 18th century USA. In this Lyric, according to the culture of Shona people, the number 1 or *motsi* represents or symbolises God because God in Shona is also called *Mutangakugara* (the First to Stay, the First to Be or the First to Exist). Above all, these cross-cultural similarities have a power to unite the humanities and reinforces the contemporary argument of numerologist which argues that the construction of our universe, galaxy, and solar system revolves around the number 9 somehow and this number comes up everywhere just as a woman is pregnant for 9 months displaying the 9 code. 72 is a very special number in astronomy precession used by the ancients and its reverse mirror number 27 and both add up to the number 9.

Furthermore, numbers play vertical and horizontal roles in the Borana customary life. Vertically, the Borana use numbers to define their relationship with God through the conception of Truth. According to the Borana, all other numbers and things in the numerical forms, which we count following number one, are nature’s multiplicity. We can still consider this from their saying; “Waaqii Dhugaa dhalee namnii aadaa dhale/God begotten the Truth and men begotten cultures/Custums/norms/ “They say; “Dhugaan Ta Waaqatii aadan ta namaati/Truth is of God and cultures are of man.” According to this belief, the One God is beyond all forms, because forms always express multiplicity, which one may find in their concept of “Hormaataa Bultuma/Fertility, prosperity and lasting”. Thus, as every multiplicity is a multiplicity of unities, it presupposes unity in itself. Horizontally, the Borana developed a system called Gadaa so as to keep continuity of things of man (Cultures, Customs, laws, rules, politics, Ethics.) in accordance with thing of God (Truth and Ayyaana). Accordingly, the Gadaa system function through what the Boorana called “aadaa-seera Booranaa/Borana Customary Laws).” The aadaa-seera Booranaa prescribes and describes the ways in which people should treat themselves and other nature. Collective moral, social and spiritual codes (be it in the form of numbers or entities or concepts) are implemented by the Aada- seera Borana which ultimately aims at keeping the Boorana harmonious relationship with others, including cosmic world and physical nature. Helland (1997, p.59-61). argued that Aada- Seera Borana is the way the Borana live and it indicates the Borana peace and order and contains moral ideas about good behavior and specific prescriptions about mundanities like dress, grazing practices and water rights. Accordingly, the Borana believe in the harmonious relationship. Tenna (2008, p.144) argued that ‘observations of Oromo ritual and ceremonial activities suggest that peace is the harmony of things or parties involved in certain relations-it is the harmonies relation between the different parts of the human and cosmic order’. Human beings are not to fellow humans but also to nature, even to the spiritual power believed to be super natural (ibid). Similarly, Gufu (1996, p.119) states “Human laws usually enforce and implement all the necessary laws. Most importantly, the maintenance of the common moral order in Borana, that is required to be maintained all the times”.

**Structural and Numerical roles of numbers in the Borana Gadaa System**

The numerical aspect of the Gadaa system can be seen from the very definition of the system. Legesse (2000, p.104) define the Gadaa System as “a system of generation classes that succeed each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities”. One may categorize components of this definition into three main points in which roles and values of numbers come clear. 1) It designates an institution of governance, with a complex set of structures, rules, and regulations, i.e., the Gadaa. Structurally, the Borana has what they call Gadaa Sadeen (the three Gadaa). Its structurally a Triad. The three Gadaa govern the system in the three confederation, i.e. the three in one body ruling system. In their binding maxim, they say, “Waaqii Dhugaan bulchaa Gadaan aadan bulchiti/God govern through Truth and the Gadaa rules through system. Thus, they make the system runs through the three Gadaa confederates. In another expression, they say, “Mataan uummataa Gadaa Mataan Gadaa Waaqa/the head of the community is Gadaa as the head of Gadaa is God” which indicate how they link people to Gadaa and Gadaa to God. Here the proverb says "Good things come in threes," work in this Gadaa confederation. The three also help the system as a mechanism for check and balance. Moreover, the role of number three in Gadaa was built on the psychological thinking that 3 restores the damage 2 has caused by dividing. Shakespeare's "weird sisters" repeat: Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, and thrice again, to make up nine. Peace! The charm's wound up. 2) It refers to one of the Gadaa grades during which a class of people assumes political and ritual leadership. Legesse (2000, p.104) defines the Gadaa System as “a system of generation classes that succeed each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities”. This definition indicates the multi-faceted functions of the institution and its democratic nature of power transfer “every eight years.” In this regards, numbers eight serves as a pillar of age grade and generational demarcation. 3) It is the period or era denoting the duration of time Gadaa leaders are expected to stay in power. The three Gadaa confederates have five parties. Each party rules the society for the period of Eight years. The system runs as $5 \times 8 = 40$. Here 5 is the number of parties in the 3 Gadaa confederations. Arranging the ruling parties into 5 may have crucial meaning as far as the nature of humanities and human interests varies. The Five is the human soul. Just as humankind is comprised of both good and evil, so the five is the first number made up of even and odd. If 5 bread crumbs are cast on the table, for example, and a cross can be formed by moving just one crumb, then it is believed that a question raised while casting the crumbs will be answered affirmatively. Goodwin (1981, p. 38). explain numerical characteristic of number 5 as what indicates a time for expansion, for dealing with change, unexpected happenings. This lesson gives a person an abundance of talents in every direction, the capability of accomplishing almost anything for which an opportunity is presented-and many opportunities *are* presented. The 8 stands for two things: 1) Period of successive generational transformation and Political period of one party stay in office. And along with the 8 paradises, Islamic mythology posits 8 angels engaged in carrying the divine Throne. The number 40 is the period of parties' turn to power and the age of leadership maturity. Each party must wait for 40 years to organize themselves and come to power and no one can be a Gadaa leader before the age of 40, which is the age of maturity. Schimmel argues that mathematically speaking, 40 is a *numerus abundance*, an abundant number" that can be divided by 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 20, the sum of which (50) is larger than the original number (1993, 150). Augustine interprets 40 as the product of 4, which points to time, and 10, which means "knowledge." More generally, 40 is the time of waiting and preparation, as becomes evident from biblical



groups of 40 days or years. Along the same line one can mention Turkish expressions like "to play the lute after 40," which means starting something new and difficult at an advanced age, or "Stupid after 40, always stupid," which again points to 40 as the number of completions. In Islamic lore, the importance of 40 is clear from both the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (who received his first revelation when he was about 40 years old). Hence, these numbers make jointly and interdependently help the Gadaa system functional by letting broad-based participation and intergenerational equity; age-sets based, structured way of training and preparation for leadership roles in the society; and accountability structures and functions rationally workable.

In the Gadaa system, however, the number 3 and 9 are used as basic keys and codes, which hide and reveal many things. In the book entitled as the ancient secret of numbers, Luo precisely put similar ritual characteristic of number 3 in that because "3", is a scattering number it does not lend itself readily to work of accumulation; because it is a spiritual number which is not in harmony with material things. Being a universal number, however, it is ...usually requires several outlets for its energies, or as many as three "strings to its bow." (Luo, p. 63). "We must consider the influence of the 8 in reading a 2 or a 4, and of the 9 in reading a 3 or a 6. For example, in the Triad of 3-6-9, the 9 will invariably intensify the spirituality of the 3, and will add to the steadfastness of the 6, unless its beneficent effect is sadly neutralized by a most inharmonious (Clement, 1993, p.96). Among many expressions runs through the 3, the Borana use expressions such as "Gadaa sadeen(the 3 Gadaa), Malkaa sadeen(the 3 Malkaa, i.e. life sustainers), Baddaa sadeen(the 3 baddaa, i.e. forests), Sunsuma sadeen(the 3 sunsuma), Ruurrii sadeen(the 3 Ruurrii, i.e. immature mother and father in closely related age), Karaa korma sadeenii(the 3 counting routes), Sadden aanan miyaa'an(the 3 animals with drinkable milk, Cows, Goats, and Camels), Qullulluu sadeen(the 3 shaved groups), Jaarsa sadeen (the 3 wise men, i.e. young with wise heart, elders with grey hair, he who travel lots) etc. On the other hands, many literatures dealing with numbers' mysticism underlines that the number 9 is center to the story of how many ancient civilizations survived as their agriculture depended on understanding when to plant and harvest according to the 9 planets using the 9 code. They believed this to be wisdom and truth. In this regards, Borana have several expressions and idioms that roll around the number 9: Ibidda 9 bobeessite(to show how someone has cumulative experiences of dishonest, she/he has married and divorced 9 times).

Idioms

"to go the whole nine yards-"

"A cat-o'-nine-tails suggests perfect punishment and atonement." – Robert Ripley.

"A cat has nine lives"

"to be on cloud nine"

"A stitch in time saves nine"

"found true 9 out of 10 times"

"possession is nine tenths of the law"

The word "K-9" pronounces the same as canine and is used in many US police departments to denote the police dog unit. Despite not sounding like the translation of the word canine in other languages, many police and military units around the world use the same designation.

Someone dressed "to the nines" is dressed up as much as they can be.



In North American urban culture, "nine" is a slang word for a 9mm pistol or homicide, the latter from the Illinois Criminal Code for homicide Somaa 9 cabse(to witness some is hero enough killed nine enemies), Karra 9 bobbaase(to mean someone is weathy/reach enough), Adunyaan 9 (the world is 9). Sidii sagal(the nine adversaries), Du'ee 9 gubadha malee tan hintolchu(to mean I will die rather than doing this). Saglan Seera Abbaay Baabboo(the 9 laws told by Abbaay Baabboo), saglan barbaada nama badee(to show the limit of searching for the lost person), Raglan yaa'a Booranaa(the nine Gadaa congregation), Saglii(a group of 9 people selected to scout enemy's direction or defense against intruders) etc. Now this is where it gets awesome when we see facts from other cultures. Thus, like many cultures, the Borana tradition reveals that 9 (nine) is everywhere and has been specifically placed in our lives inside architecture, special dates, books, music, and many scientific discoveries. It conforms to basic human civilization in that, in the base 10 system, where all numbers are represented by ten distinct forms (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9), nine is the final number. The **number 9** is the last number in a base 10 systems which is the last and limit of all that is. Nine is a number which has many interesting qualities that other numbers do not have and has been used to hold a hidden code that affects every person on earth. The **9 code** is everywhere for us to see if we are willing to search for it. For those who have come to understand the code have become the masters of wisdom seen as men holding keys in ancient artwork. Understand this and free thou shalt be. King Solomon did not pray for wealth, instead, he asked God for wisdom and it was granted to him. The code was revealed unto him and he used it to build a temple for God, which was considered magical.

Universality Realities and Cultural Similarity: the secrete of Three/Nine

Three can depict several people joining together to achieve a common goal, whether through a social or professional affiliation. Commencing with its biblical doctrine of the Trinity, Christianity involves various role of the three in biblical stories in expressions like Jesus prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest, Jesus's crucifixion at the 3rd hour and died at the 9th hour; $3 \times 3 = 9$, Jesus's crucifixion with two personalities and then they were three(Mark 15:27), resurrected after three days, the 3 hours of darkness that covered the land while Jesus was dying, from the 6th hour to the 9th hour, the 27 books in the New Testament, which is $3 \times 3 \times 3$ — or completeness to the third power (33), the three times is the blessing given in Numbers 6:23, 24:-"The LORD blesses thee and keeps thee (the Father); The LORD make His face shine upon thee; and be gracious unto thee (the Son); The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace", the three day's search for Elijah was conclusive testimony that he could not be found (2Kings 2:17), How is God's temple marked by the number three? The three people to whom did God give this command? To Solomon (1Kings 3:5), To Ahaz (Isaiah 7:11) and to the Messiah (Psalm 2:9), the three precious gifts given to Israel: The Law, The Land, The World to come (i.e., the Heavenly Calling) Or Jesus's saying to his disciples that one of them (Peter) will betray him thrice before cockcrow (Mathew 26:75), etc. "There are three things," writes Saint Thomas, "which lead us to the faith of Christ: natural reason, the testimony of the Law and the Prophets, the preaching of the Apostles and their successors (Jacques Maritain, 2005, p.160). Furthermore, classical traditions of academy reflect similar experiences. Western traditions, for instance, has systems and trends of thought which many of their thinkers considered as the foundation and the beginning of all thinking systems. Perceiving his classical view of thought as the law of thought and the rock-bottom principles of all thoughts and discourses, Aristotle categorized system and laws of thoughts



into three (Hurley). Physics usually teach us the concept of three-dimensional spaces (see Ernst G. Straus's translation of Albert Einstein 2003, p.13). Furthermore, it is usual that we see psychologist categorize basic sections of human mind into three (Ego, ID and Super Ego), Biologists divide into three (Cerebrum, Cerebellum and Medulla oblongata), philosophers like those that Plato divides into three (Rationale, Auxiliary and Appetitive).

One may find the above-mentioned pervasive roles of number three in the Borana Ayyaana in which the number nine plays secrete roles. The Borana have 27 Ayyaana in a month namely, Bitaa Qaraa, Bitaa Lama, Gardaaduma, Sonsa, Sorsa, Rurruma, Algaajima, Lumaasa, Arbaa, Gidaadaa, Walla, Ruuda, Basa Duraa, Basa Balloo, Areeri Duraa, Areerii Balloo, Carraa, Adulaa Duraa, Adulaa Balloo, Maganattii Jaarraa, Maganattii Biriitii, Garba Duraa, Garba Ballaa, Garba Dullacha, Salbaana Duraa, Salbaana Ballaa, Slabaana Dullaacha.

In this system, we can find several ways in which number 3 and 9 play secret roles. Firstly, according to the ancient secret of number, 27 as the number equals to 9, i.e. $2+7$. Months normally have 30 day each which equals to 3 in accordance with the same laws prescribed in the secret of numbers ($3+0$). Besides, in the Borana Ayyaana counting and interpreting system, the remaining 3 days remain undefined. The undefined 3 defines the rest 27 ayyaana in a month. Secondly, 27th's being defined by the undefined 3 makes it dividable to the undefined 3 which result 9 and thereby makes the secret role of number 3 in 9 becomes real. Thirdly, among the 27 Ayyaana presented above, 5 of them appear twice, i.e. $2 \times 5 = 10$. Number 10 equals to 1 i.e. $1+0$. In addition, the 2 of them come three times, i.e. 2×3 which is 6. The repeating Ayyaana are 16. The rest 11 Ayyaana comes once each, which result 2. Finally, the sum total of the Ayyaana that appear twice, trice and once are 9.

A positive number is divisible by nine **if and only if** its **digital root** is nine.^[7] That is, if any **natural number** is multiplied by 9, and the digits of the answer are repeatedly added until it is just one digit, the sum will be nine:

- $2 \times 9 = 18$ ($1 + 8 = 9$)
- $3 \times 9 = 27$ ($2 + 7 = 9$)
- $9 \times 9 = 81$ ($8 + 1 = 9$)
- $121 \times 9 = 1089$ ($1 + 0 + 8 + 9 = 18$; $1 + 8 = 9$)
- $234 \times 9 = 2106$ ($2 + 1 + 0 + 6 = 9$)
- $578329 \times 9 = 5204961$ ($5 + 2 + 0 + 4 + 9 + 6 + 1 = 27$; $2 + 7 = 9$)
- $482729235601 \times 9 = 4344563120409$ ($4 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 0 + 4 + 0 + 9 = 45$; $4 + 5 = 9$)

There are other interesting patterns involving multiples of nine:

- $12345679 \times 9 = 111111111$
- $12345679 \times 18 = 222222222$
- $12345679 \times 81 = 999999999$

Many people have discerned numerical patterns in the Bible. The phrase *Old Testament* consists of two words, one with three letters, and the other with nine. Concatenate the two digits to get 39, the number of Old Testament books. *New* also has three letters, and $3 \times 9 = 27$, the number of New Testament books. According to Doyle, the Namoratunga of the Borana has 19 pillars each with astronomical values. The number 19 is $1+0$, which equals to 1. Likewise, Pythagorean philosophy was built and highly emphases on the role of number 1, the



number he considered as the unit of the universe. Furthermore, the Borana have 27-day names (i.e. $2+7=9$), and 12 (lunar) month names (i.e. $1+2=3$). The first day of the New Year starts on the day name "Bittoteessa" on the month "Bitaa qaraa." Accordingly, the months, each with its own symbolizing stars are; Bitoteessa (Lamii) Triangulum, Caamsaa (Busan) Pleiades, Buufaa (Bakkalcha) Aldebaran, Waccabajjii (Algajima) Belatrix, Oboraa-Guddaa (Arba-Gaddu) Central-Orion, Oboraa Diqqaa (Basa) Sirius, Birraa (addeessa-goobana), Ciqqaa (addeessa-walakkaa-caalu), Sadaasa (addeessa wallakkaa), Abraasaa (baatii guddaa), Ammajjii (baatii giddu-galeessa), Guraandhala (baatii xiqqoo).

Here the month of Oboraa appear twice which is $2 \times 1 = 2$ and each of the remaining 10 months come once which is 10, i.e. $1+0=1$ and thereby, $(2+1)$ resulted 3 in similar way discussed so far. Similarly, the indicator stars, two of them appear 3 times.

The role of number three and Nine in the Marriage ceremony

Leus explains the Borana concept for marriage 'fuudha,' as a customary process of taking (of a girl) which undergoes many steps (2006, p.228). The customary steps involve several stages in which the secret role of the number three commence from the second step of Daraaraa (small gift). The Daraaraa is a step followed from the first step known as laallatto (lit. mean viewing). The Daraaraa, which is the second step, is a process in which the suitor come with little gift. The gift is small amount of coffee and tobacco tied up in the corner of white cloth (andaara) with ergamsa (asparagus Africanus). Here three things are of a paramount cultural significance; i.e. coffee, tobacco and ergamsa.

The Borana consider number three as auspicious entity. For one thing, they referred to it as an indication for perfect ontology of complex socio-cultural and political realities. They conceive the three as the heart of the house, i.e. the three is believed to represents father-mother-off springs images. The Borana Concept of "daaraa dabarfachuu" which implies one's own fulfillment of the family formation attests to this basic role of the three. Such social realities revealed via the three does not cease on such primary (ontological reality) of the family formation. The Borana tradition develops socially established ontology via the three into their complex political system of "Gadaa," in which the Borana overall life experience is reflected. Gadaa system is a Borana generational class system through se to have which they perpetually engage in cultural, social and political performances (Asmarom Legess 2003). They use to have three higher Gadaa leaders along with their three Yaa'a in each Gadaa periods. Despite some slight differences, some of the surviving Oromo with Gadaa system use similar role of the three. For instance, the Guji Oromo Gadaa confederation, the concept of Haagana sadiin (i.e. a federal systems of administration in three regional states), which is based on three tribes indicates this (Jamjam 2006, p.15). Accordingly, the three and its pervasive secret and ceremonial roles remain a cornerstone to understand the Borana life-dialogue. Hence, the number three is taken as auspicious when it is meticulously viewed from the Borana lives experiences

This begins with the initial step of the marriage known as daraaraa where the suitor must take the already mentioned three gifts. Accordingly, the three offers are customary welcomed with critical social and moral values. Hence, the three items are of no economic value but cultural.



Accordingly, during the stage of daraaraa, the suitor offers the items by sitting on the gulantaa (pole laid on the floor to divide the two parts of a house, i.e. the private called 'dinqa' and the public known as 'badaa' He gives the items to girl's parents in critically involving the role of number three. That is, he gives the items with a double handful in thrice saying; hoo daraaraa (receive/welcome tobacco) and thrice again say hoo kuma (receive/welcome coffee). And the receiver takes it in thrice responding daraari (be flourish) and kuma nama sa'aa hori (be prosperous in both cattle and human).

On the day of formal request, the suitor starts with afro-mentioned sayings that must be said thrice which oft done in the evening, the time that in the Borana context known with elemaa (cow milking time). Following this, the mother milks the sooressa (leading cow) and gives the milk to the suitor and his companions to sip. After sipping, they start formal process of request whereby the suitor thrice says; Aaba intala naa kenni (i.e. sir give me the girl). The father thrice replies dhageettii (understanding). Then the suitor thrice says the same thing to the mother where she thrice replies the something that the father said before. Finally, the suitor thrice repeats the same thing to the siblings where still they thrice respond the something that both the father and the mother said. Thus, each of the three parents thrice responds the same thing, i.e. *dhageettii*. Here the role of number three ends in the number nine, i.e. $3 \times 3 = 9$ and the nine is the limit of the Borana conception of numbers. On the day of wedding (usually during the evening), the Borana practice another ceremony known as *hayyuma* (last instructions given to the couples). Here the instructions are mainly given to the girl by her father while mother and others may participate. Accordingly, in the following morning, the newly wedded couple will leave for her husband's home accompanied by one of the family members and hence they are still three. The couple will stay there for three days and return back to her parents for the ceremony called meedhicha (a strip of skin cut from a just sacrificed animal). The couple who returned back to daughter's family after three days are supposed to return back to their own home early in the morning which however obliges them to stay for three extra days otherwise.

The Role of three in the Borana Name giving Ceremony

Name giving ceremony is one of the critical ritual activities in which the Borana families offer names to their children. The name giving ceremonies include Gubbisaa, Moggaatii and Moggaatii korma. Each aims at maq-baasa (name giving), ceremonies are done variously. Gubbisaa is a name giving ceremony for the first-born son and more complex than other name giving ceremonies. The ceremony of giving name has so many socio-cultural values rooted in the belief of this community. For one thing, if a baby died unnamed, then his/her body would have to be buried inside the house. This act is considered awkward both for the deceased and family of the deceased. According to Leus, children who die before they have their official name giving are buried inside the house, hence they are known as *ijjoollee huuraa*, children of the dust (Leus 2006, p.345). Secondly, it is after the name giving ceremony that one's family is said to be 'daaraa dabarfatee (transplanting their likes). The Borana belief daaraan nama ilmee (human's ashes are offspring).

The names are the living memory of fathers and grandfathers. If for instance, one wants to ask name of one Borana person who is in the adult age, then he/she would never simply say, what is your name? Instead, one must say whose father are you? (Atin Abbaa eennuu?) And the person who is asked this would never tell his personal name, rather he calls the name of his



first-born son. The Borana often use the name of the first-born daughter if she was born and had her name giving ceremony before the brother that followed her.

Identifying similar reason, Tadesse (2013, p.59) argued that Couples with children are considered fortunate, and blessed, while the opposite holds true for childless couples, the desire to have children after marriage is so strong that childless couples try all sorts of fertility rituals to get children. The ceremony of Gubbisaa undergoes various secrets of the number three. This begins with the very ceremony of gubbisaa which lasts three days although some ritual activities stretch out over five days. This role of the three is followed by the act of '**Foduu haruu**' (mound of fresh cow dung constructed close to the karraa gate way for the various heads having ceremonies). These foduu are made by women. They are always made with three double handfuls of fresh cow dung. This secret role of foduu which starts in foduu goes into bigger process of building ceremonial house (i.e. Galma). Firstly, such a building process lasts for three days and hence the three remain dominant. Secondly, the three participates in the seven. A group of seven men "Torbaan Jilaa" (The seventh of ceremony) take ritual responsibility in which the three-play critical role. That is, of the seven people, three must be from the same moiety as the abbaa jilaa (owner of the ceremony) and three from the other moiety. Thus, in the group of seven, the three is formed from each of the two Borana moieties) and become seven plus the abbaa jilaa. The process of building starts when such an arrangement of the three in seven takes place. It is started by one of the seven "qadadduu" who takes a dongoraa and thrice pretends as to beat the ground which however he actually does at the fourth. The building process which begins with the secret of the three ends in the same secret. That is when the building process is done, and women install three hearthstones where the father kindles a new fire. It is on the third day that the name giving process takes place which still indicates role of the three in days. Following several ritual performances, the group of seven people goes out for the qootii branches. They bring these branches and place them at some ritual places. This group again brings a madaala full of curds into the house in rehearsing "**Teessiissi teesooon roobaa nagayaa**" three times before they put the madaalaa on the ground.

The number three/Nine in the Concept and Categories of Death

In the Borana, although 'death' which is natural (in happening) and social in conception prevails, 'death' as a word is not often used. Instead the Borana use other expressions when they talk about it. They often use expressions such as Karaa deebi'e (returned from the way), Jaare (to become old), Fulaa dhugaatti gale (went to the place of the truth), Warra ofiitti gale (returned to his/her own people), Gaangee yaaabbate (mount the mule) etc. Although these expressions entail the death of persons, each of them has various messages beside mere obituary, i.e. the normal meaning that indicates that somebody is dead. Accordingly, depending on the above expressions, the Borana have three conceptions of death drawn from age categories, i.e. categorical views and aged based conception of death. The first category of death is the death of babies. The Borana conceive death of babies differently. The Borana do not categorically call this a death and instead they use another expression; Karaa deebi'e/te. Thus, the tradition discourages death expressions such as wailing, long time mourning, etc. They have a belief that even mother of the returned back child should not lament much about it. Besides, the Borana refer neither to children's dead bodies as reefa(corpse), and nor call their burial system a 'Funeral'. Instead they refer to the process as huura (unkempt) and burial



as huura haran, i.e. sweeping the unkempt. The Second category of death is the death of teenager and unmarried person.

The Borana considers this death a bad death. They use expressions such as bade/dde, caphee/xee etc. to show how bad this death is thought to be. For one thing, the Borana strongly believe that a person should get married as soon as he/she reached appropriate age of marriage so as to escape death. If a person dies without having fathered a son, or if the son predeceased him, then he will not receive proper burial (Leus 2006, p.154). Secondly, the death of teenager is considered to be death of productive force and hence considered to be dheedhii caphe, i.e. broken unripe'. It is therefore, this death that the Borana bear so painfully. It is usually at such a death that the people wail and lament seriously. The third category of death is the death of those who fathered children. The Borana saying that Namii waa dhalee hin badu, i.e. the one who gave birth to something (offspring) would never be lost indicates this message. The Borana have a common belief that woman is a fire and offspring are ashes. Thus, death of who got fire and ashes, i.e. who fathered offspring is not considered to be death. It is the only death that the Borana traditions welcome positively. This very act keeps the people from hysterical outburst of sorrow. Above all, the Borana tradition does not allow one to cry too much. Furthermore, the Borana have a belief that such a normal death happened to a person at some proper (expectable) times for death. That is when such a person gets sick and come nearby death, the Borana expect him/her die at one of the three proper times of death that the Borana traditions highly acknowledged, i.e. Afternoon-Saafaa, Down- Barraaqa and mid-night-Waarii.

The secret of the three which starts with type and time of the acknowledged death continues to prevail in the Borana burial system. When a person dies, his/her fellow villages in the vicinity are called with the cry and all villages are notified. All of the people in the village come together and assign some personalities who notify the death to all other villages. These people who go out for the obituary, do not enter the villages but stand at the thorn fence where they call three times; Ollaa kana namii du'ee awwaalaa deemaa (This village! someone is dead and go out to the funeral). When the people come for the burial, then the work of digging the grave is started. The work of digging is started by the first-born son of the deceased. If the deceased had no son, or the son cannot be present, then some one of the same clans will do this. Thus, this son or person from the same clan take a konfii stick and point three times to the selected spot before he digs it in a bit at 4th time. It is therefore, following that person that people start and continue act of digging the grave with whatever tools are at hand. Hence when the grave is dug enough then the corpse is carried from the house to the grave in an itillee which is thrown aside after the body is put in the grave. Men are placed in lying on their side, facing east; women on their left, facing west. The face is first covered but as soon as the corpse is put in the grave, it is uncovered a bit (Leus 2006, p.33). Following this then process of filling the grave is started. To do this however, the secret of the three would be engaged by the first-born son of the deceased (this can be done by whoever is acting for him like I have discussed before). Thus, this person three times pretends to throw soil into the grave and the fourth times he actually put some soil back. This would be then followed by everybody filling the grave with soil that was dug out.



Ton Lues (2006) put that the angafa goes with an axe to an anthill. Anthills are believed to be the graves of people who died long ago; doing this ensures that the new grave will become an anthill too. Thrice he makes as if he chops it; and the fourth times he actually does so. And each person takes three chunks to throw on the grave, doing these three times. Here there is secret of the three which even goes through the nine. It is believed that each person must take three chunks which however continue till the process of building a tomb begins. Nobody is allowed to take either less or more than three chunks at one time. If unfortunately, one commit mistake or chunk is finished and he took only two, then he must take nine at the next turn. Furthermore, following this chunk of anthill, then the tomb is built using the sizeable stones. Each person must carry three pieces of stones which however they do for several times till the tomb is filled. However, it is highly taboo for anyone to carry less than three or more than it. But in case, he broke this rule, i.e. he carried, for instance, 2, 1 or more than three, and then at the next times, he must carry nine pieces of stones. It seems that mistake or error committed at three is corrected by nine. It seems that the construction of our universe, galaxy, and solar system revolves around the number 9 somehow and this number comes up everywhere just as a woman is pregnant for 9 months displaying the 9 code. 72 is a very special number in astronomy precession used by the ancients and its reverse mirror number 27 and both add up to the number 9.

Although it remains highly secret, the Borana believe that it would be not good for a person to commit such a mistake however, he would be cleansed immediately by appealing to nine. In the Borana conception, nine is considered as bad and the only inauspicious number. Asmarom's (1973), the Borana dislike everything that happened in nines. In the Borana expression, *salliin falfala*, *faro hamtuu* (nine is bad luck). According to Leus, the Boorana believe that when a person has been sick for a long time, he/she may die on a ninth day of a month (2006, p.571).

The secret of three/nine goes throughout the process of burial. At the end of process of building tomb by stones, the men sprinkle themselves with water. This water is fetched by a woman of the family who is neither pregnant nor breastfeeding. The Angafa pours this water in the Muralle, which is for a man placed at the head of the grave (east) and for the woman at the foot (the west) (Leus 2006, p.33). He play-acts to dip his hands in the water three times, the fourth he actually does so, and sprinkles a bit of water on his feet and on the tools (ibid.) All the others do likewise, to purify themselves from the soil of the burial. In the Borana expression; *dhiqaansa biyyee irreessaa sun ofirraa qulqullessaniin*. The last and closing burial ceremony is *Hamtuu baasuu*, i.e. is taking off the bad. The recommendable date to perform this is proposed by the elders. These elders decide not only the appropriate date of taking off the bad, but also, they recommend a woman called *hamtuu baaftuu* .i.e. remover of the bad in order to perform act of ending the event. It's on the evening of the recommended day that this woman called to start the process. Thus, she heralds this by preparing a new **gulantaa pole**, anew **Dongoraa** and a new **Hearthstone**. These are, therefore, the three basic things through which the secret of the three continues till the post burial performance halts. After collecting the three things, *hamtuu baaftuu* places three things outside her Kraal over the Butumee. It would be in the next morning that she carries (with the help of other women) to the house of the widow and places them at the recommended place. And the *Hamtuu Baaftuu* continues engaging in what replicates the secret of the three. Here comes Leus expression of this situation; "The Hamtuu



Baauftuu cuts off the widow's old dress and belt with knife, and unravels her complaints with the awl. (If the husband of the widow was a Hayyyuu she does not cut the belt but just points at it three times with the knife and similarly trice points the awl at the widow's complaints. And with that the ceremony is finished (Leus 2006).

Finally, all of these ritual performances are done in the post death and during the post burial ends in resulting the Borana spiritual and moral allocation of where the dead person most likely goes after the ending ceremony of hamtuu baasuu. It is here that the Borana are known for their different conception about the idea or the fate of humanity life after death. But the Borana keep all those rules of burial not for the future hope of life after death but rather the case of them seems that they rather have a conception that the rules have important psychological, sociological, and symbolic functions for the survivors. The Borana have a concept of Fulaa Dhugaa (place of truth) when they talk about the person died and undergone the above burial process. Fulaa means place where dhugaa is a truth. Thus, the Borana concept of dhugaa indicates truth, justice, fairness etc. They have also a saying which shed light on the idea that a person goes to such a place of truth, i.e. is dhugaan warraa ittii galan(truth is like a parent lineage and hence the entry(inescapable). It seems that this concept is applicable only for those die at what I have discussed as normal and natural death that the Borana tradition welcomes. It does not for instance refer to the situation of child and unmarried young since the Borana consider them as returning back from the way and the lost, respectively.

In the Borana view, a dead person goes to fulaa dhugaa (went to the place of truth). Here they do not clearly talk of 'the soul or spirit' since their tradition does not consist view about separation of soul and body that we know in the conceptions of others traditions. Hence, unlike traditions such as Pythagorean and Christianity, the Borana tradition does not talk about the separate journey of the human body and soul. Rather the Borana talk about the concept of "Ekeraa" which their tradition does not clearly put whether it has flesh or not. Here, despite the fact that some people consider Ekeraa as spirit, I'm not confident enough to translate the concept in this way. The Borana tradition talks about a situation in which people physically encounter the Ekeraa and Ekeraa talks to them. They basically believe that "Namaaf Horiilleen Ekeraa qaban", i.e. both humans and animals have Ekeraa after death. According to the Pythagorean theory of **Metempsychosis**, our soul goes to the paradise depending on our deeds on the earth and hence this tradition human body as a place where soul is jailed. Here Pythagorean talked about two synonymous concepts, i.e. Transmigration and reincarnation which is passing of the soul at death into a new body or new form of being or the rebirth of a soul in a new body (especially in a new human body). It views that the soul survives bodily death, being immortal and merely confined to the body. After a series of rebirths in other bodies, each rebirth following a period of purification in the underworld, the soul becomes free eternally from the cycle of reincarnations. Likewise, Christianity preaches about the post life journey of human soul either to the hell or to the heaven depending on a person's deeds when alive.

Herein lays therefore basic deference the Borana conception of human fate and other traditions. Firstly, the only thing that the Borana tradition put is that "*Cubbichaaf laftii hin qotamtuu*" (usually said when the soils is hard or at a certain point rock is hit while digging burial place) and hence they don't talk about what would happen to the soul of a person after death or future



impact of our present deeds. Our lives, health, wealth or lack of them are controlled by God the Creator. Our ancestors are our intermediaries or 'go between'. Therefore, when we appease our ancestors, we have appeased God. Our lives are affected by the good or bad things we do or the good or bad sayings we utter. Our lives, health, wealth or lack of them are controlled by God the Creator. Our ancestors are our intermediaries or 'go between'. Therefore, when we appease our ancestors, we have appeased God. Our lives are affected by the good or bad things we do or the good or bad sayings we utter. We should thus be very careful of them. You children of today may ignore what we teach you at your peril. We should thus be very careful of them. Your children of today may ignore what we teach you at your peril. In this tradition, Fulaa dhugaa is the last place of human journey which one may understand from one of their expressions of dead, i.e. warra ofitti galuu (returning back to one's own origin). However, in different context, this very belief sounds like Christian conception that man came from the soil and return back to the soil at death.

Epistemic Gaps within the Borana Inherited Experiences

The Borana concept of 'Beekuma' reflect comprehensive conception of knowledge. It grips many epistemic notions such as understanding, knowledge and consciousness. From the Belief that Beekuma guide human actions, the Borana rely on common sayings that 'haga beeka keennaa dubbanna (meaning; one's talks goes up to level of his/her knowledge or to the extent of what he/she knows), and 'haga beekan mana haadhaa eegan (meaning; one's capacity to take care of house depends on the limit of that which he/she knows), etc. Thus, the Borana conception of Beekuma is inferred from two important things which reflect theory of knowledge, i.e. sources of knowledge and its extent. Firstly, the Borana view of the source of knowledge demonstrates features of empiricism. Although they basically believe that a person may be knowledgeable by learning and having wisdom, they usually accredit knowledge to the three kind of persons: 1) Jaarsa Mataa Harrii (old man with grey hair), who is believed to be knower due to long years of experiences. They believe that life spans teach person through various ups and downs. Thus, Jaarsa mataa Harrii is believed to be knower for his accumulation of considerable experiences over long period of times. They sometimes refer to this person as nama lafa bule, Okkotee dhaabaa irraa haftee i.e. the one who stayed long and a cooking pot survived from cooking respectively.

Accordingly, they follow the assumption that collective socio-cultural issues must be dealt and discussed by the elders who are known for offering critical advices such as 'Oolaan durattii, gala bitadhaa, Dhukkubaan duratti, Hoolaa bitadhaa, Dubbiin duratti, jaarsa bitadhaa (mean: prior to drought, get a camel, prior to sickness get a sheep and prior to case, get friendly with a wise elder, respectively); 2) Jaarsa Garaa Harrii (A man with grey heart). The Borana have a common saying that Barnotillen beeka beeka irrattii daratan, i.e. education is a kind of knowledge that one adds over the already existing knowledge. This view indicates that a very young person can be knower due to his innate quality of possessing and reflecting knowledge. They express this through their concept Qafa, i.e. wise or clever which some body possesses right from a childhood. They believe that a person of younger age can be like an elder; 3) Jaarsa Miila Harrii (A man with grey legs). It is also a person who acquired knowledge through experiences of travelling various places. The Borana usually say nama deemeefi nama deegeetti waa arge (meaning; the one who travelled much and face many poverty that have much experiences).



Accordingly, the three categories of knowledge indicate that the Borana have largely a conception of knowledge that comes through experience. Secondly the Borana conception of Beekuma indicates the extent and limits of knowledge which one may understand from their axiom; “wantii namii hin beekne nama hin beektu (meaning; what a person does not know never knows the person). However, in this case, they usually refer to customary knowledge since they consider any thing that is strange to their culture as something unknown and hence, they never acknowledge. When they come across such a thing then they refer to it as ‘Takkingarreef takkindhageennee’, (Meaning; the ever unseen and unheard is all untoward. Here they refer to their customs when they consider other things unknown as strange. In case such a thing contradicts with the custom, then they consider as a unusual and untowards which sounds like what Wiredu presented in his theory of knowledge, i.e. to be is to be known. Like the Wiredu’s view, the Borana conception of knowledge also identify what cannot be considered as knowledge, Wiredu talked about. He used example like the student who argued for the idea that $1+2=4$. The Borana also have a concept that “Beeka lameessoo” in which they usually say Daalleen gara badde warra seeti.”

However, the Borana view of knowledge contains many epistemic gaps and systematic limits. They acknowledge views, contents and conception of knowledge that does not contradict with customs and moral guideline. According to them, the one who knows know according to the Borana customary views. They do not appreciate knowledge that deviates from their customary views. For them, the one who knows know according to the aadaa waaqaa lafaa or aadaa dhugaa which extremely restrict views and practice of knowledge to their moral references. Moreover, the Borana views of knowledge contains secret, forbidden and above all esoteric aspects. They put customs beyond knowledge and hence barely encourage individualistic aspect of knowledge production which one may understand from their saying that ‘Taa Aadaa fi Dhugaa dubbanna malee taa Qarummaa hin dubbannuu (meaning; we talk of the customs and truth rather than that of intelligence. Herein lies the question of true knowledge and its epistemic utility. The Borana epistemic consistence remains doubtful. If we are concerned with the future of civilization, we must be concerned primarily with a genuine understanding of what knowledge is, its value, its degrees, and how it can foster the inner unity of the human being (Maritain, 2005). If revisited from such an approach, then the intrinsic consistence of Borana knowledge, and its inner value or epistemic utility is questionable.

The greater part of Borana knowledge and belief involving epistemic claims are taken without verification from their parents, while parental knowledge is highly esoteric. Their esoteric approach of dealing with knowledge fails to produce consistent and demonstrable knowledge. The problem within the Borana esoteric wisdom is, therefore, to find wisdom sustaining, principles clear enough to permit and transplant valid and justifiable knowledge. The nature of Borana knowledge production, Communication and dissemination involves customary practice. They believe that customs guide knowledge and any knowledge contravening customs is invalid and unacceptable. Although I cannot deny power of such a customary wisdom creating order and unity in a living peace of their intelligence in knowable world, it is unpalatable to rely on custom in itself and limited to it as if it is enough to live in. The Borana saying that taa aadaa fi dhugaa dubbanna malee taa qarummaa hin dubbannuu (we talk of the customs and truth rather than that of intelligence) hinders possibility of consistent wisdom. Knowledge involves consistent and coherent process which must be critical to itself and the



process too. Ethologically, restricted and essentially esoteric knowledge of the Borana attest to this very limitation. Beyond creating gaps, such a problem cast doubt over the genuine utility of customary wisdom. It undermines individuals' and above all, intellectual love for contemplative wisdom. Thus, such an esoteric approach within the Borana tradition fails to create epistemic space, knowledge possibilities and generational advancement.

Conclusion

Many of the African sacred languages are written and embedded in numbers. These numbers should not be forgotten or brushed off as being ordinary. Through all eras of history, African societies have developed numerical concepts that correspond to their needs and interests. According to their tradition, the number three (3) represents man and number four (4) represents woman; therefore, number seven (7) represents perfection. This is true for alchemical symbolism as well. This symbolism is used in Dogon customs every day. In this regard, knowledge related to the significance of numbers is important as it is tied to the Borana people's cultural way of life, to their survival, happiness and prosperity. Despite this, however, the Borana tradition is customarily dedicated to the ethical aspect of keeping wisdoms alive, their traditional approach involves many epistemic gaps since it highly involves esoteric manner of dealing with their life systems. Wisdoms guiding the secret roles of numbers do not indicate clear and consistent epistemic process. This end leaving critical epistemic questions unanswered; the question of why a number, the most abstract of human concepts, has such an emotional association. Why it is that number three, among all other numbers, is considered as a special number among the Borana? Rather they consider it as custom-given true wisdoms. Their empirical knowledge of the number three, pervasive to ritual activities such marriage practice, funeral system, name giving ceremonies and etc. is largely custom guided beliefs. This relapsed in the paradox of inherited experiences where practical wisdom of their people remains intrinsically and essentially bound and dependent upon for granted collective conception. Furthermore, the problem herein is that many Borana youth who attain modern education or converted to foreign religions have shown ignorance of number symbolism or its uses. And therefore, this knowledge is likely to be lost or create what I call gaps. In sum, the gap entails that such an inherited and controlled experience may blind the people to the limitations of esoteric wisdom. In this regard, the Borana customary confident of their controlled experience has unparalleled impact to deflect the people from various knowable realities. Above all, their esoteric trend led them to the paradox where they remain reluctant to engage in further soul-searching epistemic endeavor that might yield possible realm of knowledge with more massive capacity for connectivity and consistence. Accordingly, the paradox of inherited experience continued rejuvenating pseudo foundation for the learnt trend of memorizing events and learning customary routines that are of little apparent relevance to public life.

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