

## **Indigenous Leadership Styles and Contemporary Governance in Africa: A Case of the Ethiopian Gada System**

Robiel Gebrehiwet Kassa<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Philosophy Department, Nairobi, Kenya

robiel@cuea.edu

A number of literatures depict Africa as a 'Dark Continent'. They label traditional cultural norms and moral codes primitive. Due to these labels most indigenous societal values were replaced by western ideas. African political structures became more Eurocentric than Afrocentric. Most of the political practices in Africa today draw on the western principles of government. African politicians find no contradiction in copying the western political models without critically evaluation and this is a sign of intellectual passivity and ignorance. In spite of the harm that colonialism and African political leaders have done to Africa's capacity for holistic development; the continent can re-invent itself through Afrocentric leadership. This paper argues that it is high time for Africa to base its politics on culturally relevance institutions. These need to be inspired and informed by collective African cultural heritage. Revitalisation of positive cultural attributes can lead to self appreciation among Africans to facilitate their potential to transcend the current situation of underdevelopment associated with poor governance. This paper demonstrates the philosophical basis of moral responsibility in rule of law within African indigenous political leadership. The Gada system of the Oromo community of Ethiopia is used as the exemplar in discussing the role of moral responsibility and rule of law in indigenous African political systems. This will be shown as a replicable foundation of good governance in the present African political arena. The indigenous political leadership of Gada system gives a strong emphasis on the rule of law that can shape moral responsibility among leaders in Eastern Africa. The paper will further demonstrate the relevance of moral responsibility in indigenous African political leadership, and give insight and recommendations for development of accountability among African political leaders.