LIT

AD. E. JENSEN

THE GEDEO

EDITED BY SOPHIA THUBAUVILLE

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SOUTHERN ETHIOPIAN STUDIES
AT THE FROBENIUS INSTITUTE

Adolf Ellegard Jensen

The Gedeo

Southern Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute

edited by

Sophia Thubauville

Volume 1

LIT

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With a preface by Getachew Senishaw

Edited by Sophia Thubauville

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Cover Photo: Raba aspirants on the way to the buffalo hunt, 1955
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Acknowledgements

Ever since I began working as a research associate at the Frobenius Institute in 2010, I have been fascinated by the Institute's archives, especially the materials relating to the expeditions to Ethiopia in the 1930s and 50s. In particular, four unpublished manuscripts by Adolf Ellegard Jensen and Eike Haberland left me no peace. Unpublished and unnoticed, they had been lying in the archives for several decades. Unfortunately, I had to realize, it was not easy to find funds for their translation and publication. So, my first and greatest thanks must go to the Hahn-Hissinksche Frobenius Foundation, for granting me the money to finally undertake this long-anticipated project.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Getachew Senishaw, who – as accurate and reliable as always – supported me in reviewing the manuscript and was an invaluable help in checking the Gedeo words and names. In addition, Susanne Epple has given me valuable advice about the preface and the editing of the manuscript.

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Frankfurt am Main, June 2020

Sophia Thubauville

Preface

by Getachew Senishaw[1]

Anthropology as a discipline emerged in about 1900 in the United States and in late 1920s in Great Britain. It was introduced to Ethiopia after the Second World War, when American and European anthropologists recognized the rich cultural diversity of the country. Among the first American anthropologists was Simon D. Messing, who started fieldwork in 1953–54 and was followed by Donald N. Levine in 1957–60, Harold Fleming in 1957, William Shack in 1957–59, and Herbert S. Lewis in 1958–60. In 1960 Asmerom Legesse, the first American trained Ethiopian anthropologist, started his fieldwork on the Gada system of the Oromo. Then Alen Hoben, Christopher Hallpike, Katsuyoshi Fukui, and a number of French, German and American anthropologists did field research in the 1960s and 1970s in different parts of the country (Lewis 2017:27, 38–39).

Several researchers have conducted their studies among the Gedeo in southern Ethiopia. McClellan (1988) studied the history of Gedeo in 1974/75, Tadesse Kippie (2002) enset cultivation, Bogale Teferi (2007) agroforestry practices, Asebe Regassa (2007) conflict resolution, Solomon Hailu (2009) the history of Gedeo, and myself (Getachew 2014) indigenous ecological knowledge and livelihoods. Of these, only Asseba and myself have undertaken social anthropological research.

Yet, before all these studies, Adolf Ellegard Jensen and his team from the German Frobenius Institute conducted two periods of field research in the land of Gedeo, in 1934/35 and 1955. These studies are the earliest anthropological studies in the country, as well as the earliest in southern Ethiopia, and in the Gedeo land in particular.

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[1] Getachew Senishaw is Assistant Professor of Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University and a member of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Evaluative Body. He earned his PhD in Social Anthropology from Addis Ababa University. He conducted extensive fieldwork in Gedeo, southern Ethiopia. Before he became Assistant Professor at Addis Ababa University in 2015, he was working at the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage as senior researcher and director in various departments. In addition, he has done various consultancy works on cultures and social issues for various organizations including UNESCO. He has published several articles and book chapters. His current fields of interest are: indigenous knowledge, environment, livelihoods and heritage management.

The aim of Jensen's 1934/35 research was to study monolithic sites and the Gedeo age grade (*baalle*) system (Jensen 1936); while, as Jensen states in this publication, the aim of the fieldwork in 1955 was to complement the results of the 1934/35 research. In this, Jensen and his team met their objective: they were able to describe the changes and continuities in the Gedeo land in the two decades since their first visit. As an example, Jensen states that Wonago market had opened and developed as one of the important market centres in the area, Yirga Cheffe developed as a town after the cultivation of commercial coffee, and Dilla, which was a small town during the first field research, developed and became the political and economic centre of the Gedeo (Getachew 2017:266).

Methodologically, the research team used a qualitative approach that fitted with the aims of the fieldwork. As Abbink (2017:115) states, from the 1930s, researchers at the Frobenius Institute had a strong interest in history and applied a teamwork approach, and this was true in the case of the Gedeo research. The duration of the field research in Gedeo in 1955 was, however, too short (only covering May and June) to give us thick description of Gedeo culture. Instead, the researchers conducted a survey study that focused on certain aspects. Kohl (2017:9) states that, as Jensen was a child of the time, he used the term 'tribe' and some names now acknowledged as derogatory. Still, the multi-disciplinary team members collected a considerable amount of ethnographic data within a limited time. One of the interesting methodological aspects of the study is its comparative nature. As the team members travelled from one ethnic group to the next, and at times split up to be able to cover more places, Jensen was able to compare various issues among the Gedeo with those of the neighbouring Guji Oromo and Sidama, as well as with the Konso.

The two periods of fieldwork (1934/35 and 1955) were very important for the study of the Gedeo. The 1930s was a period when Ethiopia became engaged in the international coffee market, and this led to the commercial cultivation of coffee that boosted the importance of the area for the national economy. Land in the Gedeo area became a very important economic resource (McClellan 1988). This development had implications for the Gedeo production system, livelihoods and the value of coffee-producing land. The 1950s was a period when Protestant Christianity, which was introduced in 1948 by the Sudan Interior Mission, expanded and impacted the Gedeo belief system, rituals and ceremonies. In addition, it was a period when resistance to the feudal administration began to develop in the area (Getachew 2014:72, 2018). Thus, the records of Gedeo culture from these periods are significant for researchers trying to understand the situation at the time as well as changes and continuities in the area. The large number of photographs and short films (Thubauville 2017:18) that were collected and documented during the field research are today important historical sources.

These facts make Jensen's 1955 study significant from several perspectives. The German researchers at the time wanted to come up with comparative data in

Image 1: The core of the 1955 team in southern Ethiopia. From left to right: Eike Haberland, Adolf Ellegard Jensen, Elisabeth Pauli

their fields of interest and produce an ethnographic survey of southern Ethiopia, then still a terra incognita for anthropologists. In addition, like other European anthropologists, they were continuing the study of African societies undertaken from the end of the Second World War (Lewis 2017:28). For Ethiopian researchers, the study provides a benchmark with which to understand the culture of the Gedeo people and to understand changes and continuities in the last six decades. It is also important in helping the local community, especially the younger generation, understand their history, culture and belief system. Finally, both the 1934/35 study and that of 1955 are important efforts to safeguard and revitalize important traditions, such as the age grade (*baalle*) system, which are considered as symbols of Gedeo identity.

When I accessed Jensen's manuscript at the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt in 2016, I was inspired to write an article to make the information accessible for readers (Getachew 2017). However, the article is merely a review of the whole manuscript and could never replace it. I therefore wished to make the manuscript available in the fullest way. This wish has now become a reality and the manuscript is presented here in English for a wide audience of readers and researchers.

Jensen's ethnography of the Gedeo is divided into four major sections: the country and its people, social life, religion and spiritual life, and miscellaneous data. In the first section, country and people, Jensen briefly describes the land and

people of Gedeo. He explains about the aims and duration of the field research, as well as giving a description of the fieldwork site and geographical location of Gedeo and some other places. He also notes some observations on the changes in urban centres, especially the emergence and development of towns like Dilla, Yirgalem and Wonago, which are important political and economic centres for the Gedeo. Interestingly, at the time, the Gedeo land was smaller than that of the neighbouring Sidama. The Gedeo area was more densely populated than the Sidama's, while according to Jensen the Gedeo made better use of cultivable land. Furthermore, the first section shows the relations of the Gedeo with neighbouring Guji Oromo and Sidama as well as with the feudal administrators. A brief but important description about the age grade (*baalle*) system and the traditional administration structure of the Gedeo with their administrative centres gives an insight into traditional administration in the area. In general, despite its briefness, the first section gives us a good description of the Gedeo people and land, along with historical, economic, political and social changes and continuities.

The second section, social life, is the largest, covering more than half of the manuscript. It deals with clans, the age grade system and craftsmen. The first part of the section explores the two moieties or houses (*schole bate* and *sasse bate*, as the Gedeo call them), the seven major clans, the sub-clans of Gedeo and their relationships. The number of clans in Gedeo is compared with the number of clans among the Guji Oromo, Sidama and Konso.

The major part of the second section deals with the Gedeo age grade system (*baalle*), especially its history and origins, and discusses its relationship with the Guji Oromo age grade (*gada*) system. The seven age groups of the Gedeo are shown, and their dual division (Bilbanna and Dalanna) is explained. Jensen and his field research team members were lucky to observe the hunting expedition and ritual conducted in June 1955 for the Raba age grade. This was the Gedeo's last hunting expedition and age grade initiation, and the description is relatively detailed in comparison with descriptions found in other sections. The pictorial documentation in the section is important for both researchers and the local community. I thus consider this section to be the heart of Jensen's ethnographic account. Alongside the description of the expedition of the Raba, descriptions of the transition to the Luba, Juba and Gudurro stages and associated rituals give insights into the Gedeo age grade system. Most of these rituals are no longer practised because of the expansion of Christianity in the area: such rituals are deemed to be against the principles of Protestant Christianity.

Though the feudal administration had been established in the area since the end of the nineteenth century (Getachew 2014:64), Jensen explains that the traditional political order, especially at the lowest (*songo)* level, was still intact during his fieldwork. He explains that the age grade system was surviving side by side with the feudal administration system. However, the Gedeo age grade system seriously weakened after Jensen's fieldwork. The election of the traditional leader

(*abba gada)* was interrupted after Abba Gada Mego Tenllu came to power in 1954 and was only reinstated in 1993 (Getachew 2014:79).

The second section of the manuscript also gives insights into the status of craftsmen and their relations with the Gedeo, and how they were marginalized socially, politically, economically and spatially. Jensen explains that the importance of leather workers declined after the Amhara and other outsiders introduced weaving to the area and cotton cloth came to replace leather cloth. The late development of weaving and its introduction from outside resulted in weavers being relatively less marginalized than other craftsmen like potters, hide and iron workers.

The last section, religion and spiritual life, covers a considerable part of the manuscript. In the first part of the section, concepts of God and the Gedeo world view are presented. The heavenly God Magenno is described as male and creator of everything. The descriptions of the concept of death and rituals related to death give important information about the funeral ceremonies and associated rituals of the time, most of which were abandoned shortly after the research due to the introduction and expansion of Protestant Christianity. Other ceremonies and rituals, relating to many things from cattle to humans, from fertility to killings, and from rain shortages to protecting fields from locusts and theft are also discussed in the manuscript. Like the death rituals, most of these rituals are no longer practised, for various reasons. Afterwards, Jensen briefly introduces various practitioners of healing and explains how these traditional ways of healing existed side by side with the newly introduced Christianity. Healing is still a research issue that has not been well addressed in Gedeo.

The last part of the manuscript gives us bits and pieces of information about the Gedeo calendar, cardinal points, myths, purity and marriage. These are important issues that need further research.

Despite the shortness of the field research period behind it and the fact that the study provides a survey rather than in-depth study, the manuscript is irreplaceable in the history of Gedeo cultural study. The publication of Jensen's manuscript in English is both timely and immensely helpful to our understanding of Gedeo history, culture, economy and social life at that time and over time. Hence, the Frobenius Institute and Sophia Thubauville should be applauded for the publication of the manuscript in English for a wider readership.

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Editor's preface

by Sophia Thubauville

Frobenius expeditions to Gedeo

Researchers from the Frobenius Institute, under the lead of Adolf Ellegard Jensen,[2] visited the Gedeo area in southern Ethiopia three times in the 1930s and 1950s. Their first stay was from 5 December 1934 to 10 January 1935. During their next expedition, they only passed through Gedeo on 17 November 1950, as the main focus of the research trip was on the peoples of South Omo. Their third, and longest, visit lasted from 3 May to the end of June 1955.

During their earlier visits, the area was still very remote and disconnected from the centre. In 1955, however, the researchers observed that the town of Dilla had developed enormously and become the main coffee-trading hub in the area. There was also now a regular bus connection with Addis Ababa, and Yirga Cheffe, a small settlement in the making five years earlier, had become a large village, teeming with merchants.[3]

From their first expedition onwards, the mission station of the Sudan Interior Mission in Midjija was the principal point of contact for researchers in the Gedeo region. In 1934, missionaries from New Zealand, who had only been running the station for two years, were living there and had constructed a hospital. The three expedition members, the head of the expedition and social anthropologist A. E.

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2 Adolf Ellegard Jensen (1899–1965) studied mathematics, natural sciences and philosophy in Kiel and Bonn. He became an assistant to the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius at the Institute for Cultural Morphology in 1923. Before World War I, he participated in many of the Frobenius Institute's expeditions to South Africa, Libya, southern Ethiopia and Ceram (Indonesia). After Frobenius's death in 1938, Jensen was supposed to be his successor as the director of both the Institute and the Anthropological Museum in Frankfurt. But his appointment was blocked because he refused to collaborate with the Nazi regime and was married to a Jewish woman. After the war ended, he became the director of the Anthropological Museum and finally took up a full professorship at the Institute for Social Anthropology and the directorship of the Frobenius Institute. For his research trips to Ethiopia and his important contributions to the Ethiopian Studies see Thubauville (2020).

3 This information is taken from the unpublished expedition report, which can be found in the archives of the Frobenius Institute under the signature EH 60.

Jensen, the painter Alf Bayrle, and the teacher Hellmut Wohlenberg,[4] initially camped on the grounds of the mission station. Later, they had three huts with canopies built on a neighbouring property.

In 1954/55, the expedition team was larger, it included three social anthropologists, Adolf Ellegard Jensen, Eike Haberland and Helmut Straube, the painter Elisabeth Pauli, and the cultural geographer Wolfgang Kuls. However, only Jensen and Pauli[5] remained in Gedeo for research. Eike Haberland and Wolfgang Kuls had already gone ahead to explore the south of Ethiopia and suggested that Jensen and Pauli stay in the district of the *balabat*[6] of the province Banko, 25 km south of Dilla. Pauli enthused in the expedition's report that, immediately after their arrival in Banko, they were able to move into a large, completely newly built hut, directly on the road. The men's house (*songo*) directly opposite, usually used, for example, for administering justice and court hearings, was made available for their translators and cooks. Pauli described the location of the hut as ideal, as it was located directly on a busy road.[7] This was important because most Gedeo still lived in scattered settlements that would have made it hard for the researchers to find informants.

While many of the research results from the expeditions to Ethiopia in the 1930s and 1950s were published,[8] others remained unfinished in the archives of the Frobenius Institute. Alongside numerous scientific articles, four major ethnographies were published: *Im Lande des Gada* (1936), *Altvölker Süd-Äthiopiens* (1959), *Westkuschitische Völker Süd-Äthiopiens* (1963) and *Galla Süd-Äthiopiens* (1963). More ethnographies had been planned and prepared but were not published for reasons we can only speculate on today. Jensen suffered severe health problems after his final Ethiopia expedition; at the same time, the survey-like style and content of the unpublished ethnographies produced from the Frobenius expeditions to southern Ethiopia became more and more outdated with each passing year. Those four unpublished manuscripts comprised ethnographies of the Gedeo, Sidama and Konso written by Jensen and based on the expeditions to Ethiopia in the 1930s and 1950s, and an ethnography of the Wolaita drafted by Haberland

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4 For more information about the expedition participants see https://frobenius-institut.de/collections-and-archives/databases/ethiopia-database/researchers.

5 Elisabeth Pauli had joined the Frobenius Institute in 1933 as a painter. During the Second World War, she prepared the post-war expeditions to Ethiopia through literature research. She played a central role in each of these and wrote, among other things, the unpublished expedition reports, from which we learn a lot about the expedition circumstances and methods of the anthropologists. In 1952 Elisabeth Pauli married Adolf Ellegard Jensen after a previous joint expedition to Ethiopia.

6 *Balabat* was a military title used for the elite among the native inhabitants of the conquered area.

7 Unpublished expedition report EH 60.

8 For a complete list of publications see https://www.frobenius-institut.de/images/Digitalisierungsprojekt/researcher/Bibliographie.pdf.

Image 1: Village of Dokeno. In front of the expedition house. In the background is the men's house, which served as the expedition's kitchen

following his research trips in 1954/56, 1967, 1970/71 and 1972/74. These ethnographies – all written in German – have so far only been accessible via the archives of the Frobenius Institute. To make them available to a wider circle, they are now being translated into English and published in the *Southern Ethiopian Studies at the Frobenius Institute* series. The Gedeo Ethnography presented here is the first publication in this series.

Research interests: From heroism to cultural layers

The Frobenius Institute's interest in research in southern Ethiopia began in the 1930s. At that time the Institute was not only concerned with social anthropology, but also with pre- and early history. Its researchers were aware of the descriptions made by the French archaeologists Francois Azaïs and Roger Chambard of the large number of monoliths to be found in southern Ethiopia (Azaïs and Chambard 1931). Between the 1930s and 1960s, megalithic monuments such as these were eagerly investigated all over the world and fitted into one of the major paradigms of anthropologists focussing on culture history (Braukämper 2015:210).

Stirred by the French researchers' discovery of prehistoric steles, the first Frobenius expedition left Frankfurt for Ethiopia in October 1934. The research team, under the lead of Adolf Ellegard Jensen, appears to have had the aim of

making similar discoveries. During their trip south, they travelled along the lakes of the Rift Valley until finally, on a small hill (locally called Tutto Fela) in the Gedeo area, they found what they were searching for: around 100 phallus-shaped stone steles incised with faces and geometrical patterns (Thubauville 2018:5).

Image 2: Phallic stele on Tutto Fela, 1934/35

Such anthropomorphic steles exist in many parts of Ethiopia and mark the graves of dead heroes. They are one element of the 'meritorious complex' (*Verdienstwesen*) that fascinated the researchers at the Frobenius Institute and became one of their main research focuses. According to their findings, the 'meritorius complex' consisted of three elements: honorary rewards for the killing of wild game or enemies, feasts of merit associated with such honorary positions, and lavish funeral ceremonies during which memorial monuments were erected (Braukämper 2015:205). This complex, which can be found around the whole world (Haberland 1957), was also found in other parts of southern Ethiopia, especially among the Oromo, the Highland East Cushitic-speaking and the Omotic-speaking peoples. In comparison with other places, in southern Ethiopia the act of killing wild game or enemies was particularly important (Haberland 1957:331). While, shortly after the Frobenius Institute's first expeditions to southern Ethiopia, game hunting and traditional warfare were banned and increasingly controlled by the government, and the number of cattle needed for big feasts was dramatically reduced, during

the expeditions in the 1930s and 1950s, the described cultural complex was still in full bloom. Behind the complex of heroism and killing, the researchers saw the inseparable unity between the destruction and re-creation of life (Braukämper 2015:206).

While their first trip to Gedeo in 1934/35 was clearly focused on locating and documenting the stone steles in the region, their expedition in 1954/55 aimed to explore another of the Institute's research interests: Jensen and his team tried to reconstruct the cultural history of the ethnic groups of southern Ethiopia, as they understood them to be 'fragments' of more ancient cultures (*Altvölker*) that represented different epochs of cultural development (Bustorf 2015:185–186). Jensen himself (this volume, p. 33) justified the research interest behind the renewed stay in Gedeo as follows:

> The renewed work with the Gedeo seemed to be necessary mainly because of some indications that we could find an older layer of the old tuber farmers in the Gedeo culture almost without any influence from the cattle breeding, more clearly than in the cultures of all other peoples we visited. This assumption has not been confirmed, as all the characteristics of the cultural layer with livestock breeding, which is widespread in southern Ethiopia, can also be found in them [the Gedeo]. In this respect, however, the assumption has found support from the clearer signs of ancient plant cultural affiliation in the Gedeo we have found. I have already pointed out such signs (Jensen 1936:104) and will continue to emphasize them explicitly in the future.

With regard to their research interests and methods, the researchers around Jensen have to be seen as children of their time. In contrast to following generations, they followed a fundamental turn to the past and tried to recover of 'what was' while ignoring the presence of and not reporting on the changes that were happening for example, through trade or religious conversion (Abbink 2017:172).

Most of the ethnographies on southern Ethiopia published between the 1930s and 1960s by the Frobenius researchers (Jensen 1936, 1959; Haberland 1963; Straube 1963) reflect their survey-like research style. They rarely spent more than one or two months at one location – still then mostly *terra incognita* – and tried to collect all the information they could find on the history, beliefs and livelihoods of the various ethnic groups. As there exist no other descriptions of this region from that time, their accounts are a cultural archive of great value, even though they contain occasionally superficial and patchy descriptions of the people of southern Ethiopia (Abbink 2017:171–172).

Gedeo in the collections and publications of the Frobenius Institute

The two expeditions to the Gedeo region have left their marks in the archives of the Frobenius Institute: scientific legacies – mainly generated by Jensen – include his field diaries and notebooks, travel reports, letters from, within and to

the field, scripts for lectures, hand-drawn maps, and lists of words and plants from Gedeo. As the Frobenius Institute has always placed great emphasis on visual documentation[9] and the collection of material culture, altogether 575 photographs and sketches, 70 film reels[10] and 39 ethnographic objects, like clothing, spear blades and agricultural tools, from the expeditions to Gedeo can be found in the Institute's various archives. Ethnographic objects from the first expedition to Gedeo in the 1930s, like stone steles from Tutto Fela, can be found today in the *Weltkulturenmuseum* in Frankfurt (Thubauville 2012).

Image 3: Shelf with ethnographic objects in the Ethnographic Collection of the Frobenius Institute

Between 2014 and 2017 the *Indexing and Digitizing of the Archival Material on Ethiopian Studies of the Frobenius Institute* project, financed by the German Research Foundation, indexed and sustainably archived all written documents, selected materials and audio and video material from the Frobenius Institute's expeditions to Ethiopia, with the aim of facilitating public access to them through an open-access database.[11]

9 For more information on the visual documentation of southern Ethiopia by members of the Frobenius Institute, see Thubauville 2019.

10 For a detailed description of the published and unpublished films on southern Ethiopia, see Thubauville 2017.

11 See https://www.frobenius-institut.de/sammlungen/datenbanken/aethiopien-datenbank.

Image 4: 16 mm films in the archives of the Frobenius Institute

A challenging manuscript

The manuscript of the ethnography of the Gedeo presented here belongs to the scientific legacy of Adolf Ellegard Jensen. It was given to the Frobenius Institute immediately after his death in 1965. The script consists of 69 typewritten and 11 handwritten pages. Jensen had already subdivided the book into chapters, which have been retained in this publication. However, there were numerous handwritten crossings out and additions in the text that had to be incorporated in the best possible way. The text also needed editing, as it had many repetitions, and the argumentation was not always straightforward or clear, and some of the information given in the manuscript was fragmentary. Thus, efforts have been made to optimize the order and sequence of the findings without losing or shortening any of the information given (see more on editorial choices below).

As mentioned above, the research trip to Gedeo in 1954/55 was meant to be a continuation of the research trip of 1934/35, and Jensen's Gedeo manuscript was

therefore intended as a supplement to his earlier publication, *Im Lande des Gada* (1936). The main topics that were covered in the publication from 1936 were the Gedeo age grade system, death and burial, and megalithic sites in Gedeo. Some of these topics, Jensen does not cover or only briefly mentions in his manuscript from the 1954/55 expedition. The Frobenius Institute researchers' interest in stone stele, which was decisive in the first expedition to Ethiopia and the Gedeo region, is also absent in Jensen's manuscript. Moreover, Jensen does not mention the oral literature of the Gedeo, a second long-standing research focus of the Frobenius Institute. A collection of Gedeo short tales recorded in 1934/35 can be found in Jensen 1936 (484ff.), including two stories about the legendary female rulership of past times. Unfortunately, the information available on some topics that were not dealt with in *Im Lande des Gada* is also fragmentary in the manuscript. For example, Jensen does not write about the subject of farming practices, although this topic was well documented in his notebooks, photographs and films of the 1954/55 expedition.

In many passages of his Gedeo manuscript, Jensen refers to practices of the Konso or Sidama that are similar or contrary to the Gedeo's described practices. Since the ethnographies on the Konso and Sidama, for which Jensen also collected data during the 1954/55 expedition, will be published after this volume, the references to his Konso and Sidama manuscripts necessarily remain very general, and without details such as page numbers.

Like every ethnography, the present one is very much shaped and determined by the anthropologist's informants and translators. The anthropologists had a very basic command of Amharic and worked mostly with translators who could translate into English or French for them. Because of the linguistic diversity in southern Ethiopia, they often needed two translators, one to translate from the local languages into Amharic, and one to translate from Amharic into English or French. In 1954/55 Jensen's translator was an Oromo man from Shoa called Gulale, who also spoke Gedeo and seemed to translate for Jensen from Gedeo into English. As Gulale's native tongue was Oromo, some words in the text originate from Oromo and not Gedeo language. Translators as well as informants are not acknowledged appropriately, by today's standards, as partners in knowledge production in either Jensen's manuscript or his notebooks. Several reasons may lie behind this shortcoming. First of all, the expeditions followed a very tight research programme with the aim of documenting a then unknown land. Thus, the researchers did not stay for a long time in one place, and this inevitably led to relations with informants remaining superficial. However, given that these were enormous expeditions, covering a large number of ethnic groups and places, the number of informants mentioned is very small (Bustorf 2017:147). Only key informants are mentioned, but again information about what information Jensen received from them is mostly missing.

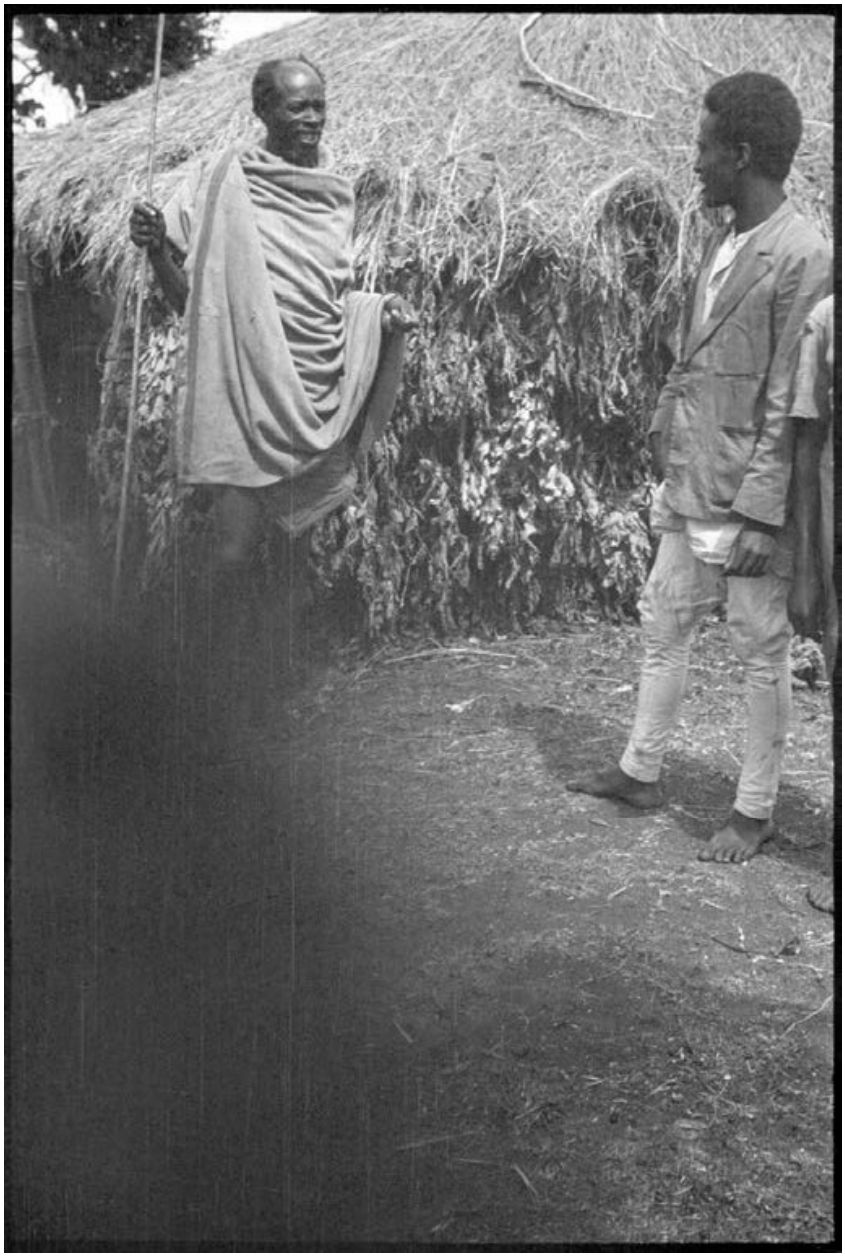

Image 5: Hayu Danke Bikka, main informant 1934/35

The two key informants of Jensen in Gedeo depicted above, Hayu Danke Bikka and Harro Midju, are typical of his way of working and thinking: they were 'wise old men' (Dinslage and Thubauville 2017). Most of Jensen's informants had ritual or political offices, very few were ordinary people, and he mentions no female informants at all. These old men were seen by Jensen as carriers of an older knowledge, and therefore not as individuals but as representatives of their culture (Bustorf 2017:147), which might again explain – but not justify – why their individual names are only rarely mentioned. Since Jensen's notebooks also give hardly any information about the informants, I could find little to add on them in the ethnography.

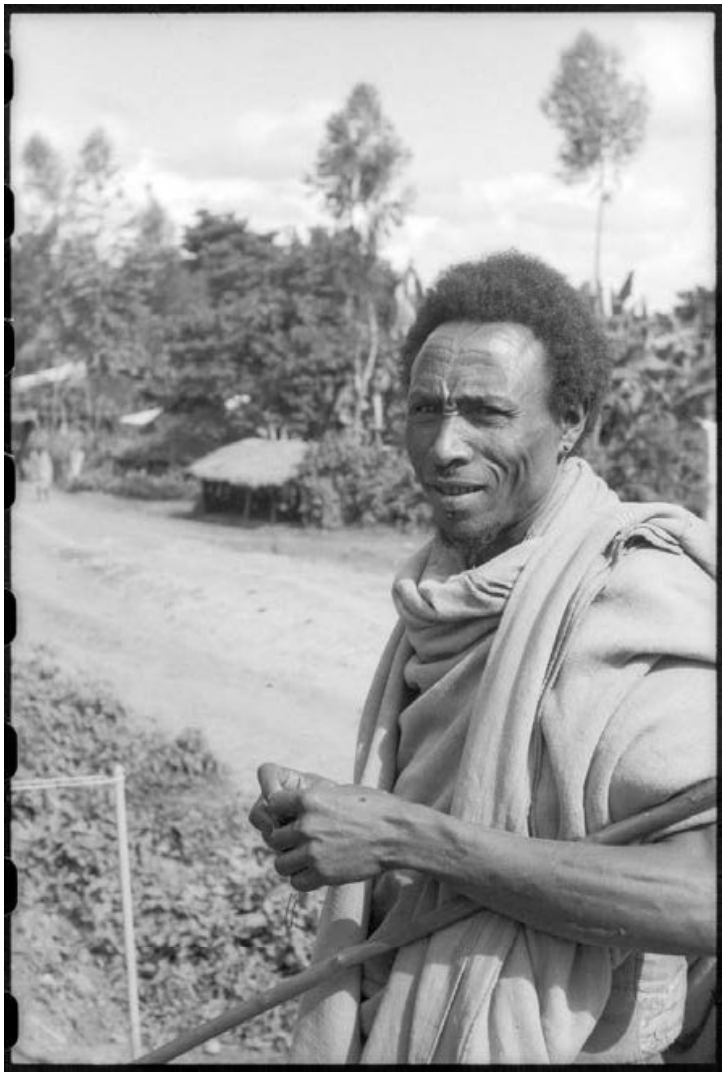

Image 6: Harro Midju, main informant 1955

Notes on the editorial process

Several changes had to be made in editing the unpublished manuscript. First of all, the language was changed from German into English. Some repetitions were omitted, cumbersome sentences were simplified, and some obsolete expressions reformulated. Nevertheless, I have stayed as close as possible to the text and have not changed, for example, Jensen's frequent use of subjective expressions, such as 'strange custom'. Due to the limited changes to the text, the ethnography is also a historical document showing how German anthropologists of the first half of the twentieth century worked, thought and wrote.

Since the manuscript was in an uncorrected raw form, spellings had to be standardized. In doing so, I have adhered to the current spellings given by the Ethiopian government. Some of the terms used for the various ethnic groups at that time, such as Sidamo, are today considered derogatory and no longer used. They have been replaced by the terms commonly used today. At the time of

Jensen's research, the term Darassa was still regularly used for the Gedeo. Though Jensen understood that their self-designation was Gedeo, he nonetheless used the term Darassa, which according to him had been derived from the name of the Gedeo's founding father, Derasso, and was used by outsiders to refer to the group (Getachew 2017:268). Some names and Gedeo words could not be identified by Getachew Senishaw and myself, in spite of Getachew's regional knowledge and the available literature. For example, we could not identify the place where Jensen's team worked for a while that he calls Midjidja and whose location he describes as being in the west of Gedeo.

I have not changed outdated or inappropriate theoretical terms such as 'caste', which were used by Jensen and his successor Haberland to describe the social stratification in many southern Ethiopian societies. Nor have I added references to more current debates on such topics. In addition, adding references to more current research among the Gedeo would have been beyond the scope of this project. Even though much research has been done in Gedeo since the Frobenius expeditions by international (Cerulli 1956; McClellan 2005) and Ethiopian (Asebe 2007; Getachew 2014, 2017, 2018; Solomon 2009; Tadesse 2002) researchers, I have to leave it up to others to compare all of these findings with the ones in Jensen's manuscript.[12]

Value has been added to the manuscript by providing translations of local terms in brackets and including some of the photos taken by the researchers. The subtitles of the pictures are the original ones given by the researchers, if needed corrected and/or amended by me.

A gap in the report of Ethiopian history

Finally, one might ask, why are we publishing Jensen's ethnographic account of the Gedeo now, 55 years after his death and 65 years after his last visit to Gedeo. Jensen's ethnographic accounts from the 1930s and 1950s offered the first extensive ethnographic descriptions of the Gedeo, even though, at only one or two months' duration, his visits to Gedeo seem rather short by today's standards. The 20-year gap between Jensen's first and last visit also provides interesting insights, for example, into the age grade system in a society that was already undergoing major changes. On his second visit, Jensen was able to verify some of the information from his first visit and to better understand the sequence of age grades.

Since Jensen's visits to the area, many other researchers have studied the Gedeo, with more and more Ethiopians among them in the last decades, especially since the expansion in the number of universities in Ethiopia since the turn

[12] The first short reviews of Jensen's manuscript were done by Getachew in 2017 and 2018. He visited the Frobenius Institute in November 2015 and, at that time, the manuscript was orally translated to him from German into English.

of the millennium. Many of the places where Frobenius Institute researchers did their fieldwork now have their own universities, including Gedeo, whose university is in Dilla. Most studies today in the Gedeo region are therefore conducted by Ethiopian researchers, for whom historical data stored abroad, such as that presented here, should be translated into English and made available. This translation and edition of Jensen's ethnographic account of Gedeo can therefore be considered a small contribution toward returning to the peoples of southern Ethiopia elements of their identity and history that are not part of public accounts of Ethiopian history (Abbink 2017:172–173).

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The Gedeo

by Adolf Ellegard Jensen

Country and its people

The southern neighbours of the Sidama call themselves Gedeo, but are called Darassa[13] by all others, probably after the oldest clan, Derasha. The retention of the name Darassa in the literature is particularly justified by the fact that the Gedeo today mostly call themselves Darassa.

I have already reported about the culture of this people once, on the basis of a visit at the turn of the year 1934/35 (Jensen 1936). However, I gladly took the opportunity to visit them again in May and June 1955 to make corrections and additions to the results of that time. At that time we had our camp in Midjija on the old caravan road, which led the traders, who at that time still travelled mainly by mule, to the south. It was on the western border of the Gedeo country. The drop of the mountains to the lake level was already inhabited by Guji. Today's highway leads about 4–5 kilometres further east through the province of Banko, where we made camp in one of the nascent coffee places, called Dokeno.

A lot has changed in the Gedeo country since our last stay. Thus, the quite remarkable Wenago marketplace has been created at the place where only a huge sycamore marked the border between Guji and Gedeo (Jensen 1936:91–92). Today the Wenago market is held around this tree. Dilla, at that time already known as a small village, has meanwhile become a small town whose size has grown remarkably even in the time between the 1950/52 and the 1954/55 expedition. In general, new places are emerging everywhere, the largest and most important of which is Yirga Cheffe, which was founded only after Wenago.

This is all due to the boom in the coffee trade since 1935. At that time, coffee was only planted occasionally and grew wild. It played a certain role in indigenous trade. It was not drunk by the Gedeo as coffee. The fruit of the coffee tree, about the size of a hazelnut, was roasted and chewed together with butter. Only the leaves were used to make an infusion and drunk. This is exactly the way it was used by the surrounding peoples, who purchased this luxury food from the Gedeo. Since Ethiopia joined the world market, however, the area under coffee cultivation has increased to such an extent that one can speak of extensive coffee forests, in-

[13] At the time of Jensen's research, the term Darassa was still regularly used for the Gedeo. The term is no longer used and is considered to be derogatory today.

Image 1: View of Lake Abaya from Midjija

terrupted only by ensete (*Ensete ventricosum*),[14] which takes up by far the smaller part of the cultivated area, and occasionally small pieces of land cultivated with barley, corn and beans.

The land of the Gedeo, at least in the northern parts between Yirga Cheffe and Dilla, belongs among the most densely populated areas of Ethiopia. According to our observations (official information was unfortunately not available), it is even more densely populated than Sidama. The cultivated area is much better used than in Sidama, as there is no undeveloped land. Even the pasturelands that are so typical of Sidama are almost completely abandoned here; only the small plain of Domarso, which extends north of the village of the same name, is pastureland. Thus, livestock is also largely absent. Those Gedeo, who keep cattle, usually keep them in the Guji area, guarded either by one of their sons or by the western Guji, the so-called Alabdu, with whom they have a very old, close friendship. Only a few sheep are kept in the highlands, but no goats, because according to the Gedeo these are the worst enemies of the ensete plantation. Due to the lack

[14] The ensete, from which the pseudostem is processed and consumed, is an important staple food in southern Ethiopia. For the Gedeo ensete was and still is important as a staple crop that is central to ensure food security, but also plays a central role in myths and rituals, as will be shown below. Jensen and his team documented the cultivation and processing of ensete in many photographs and in a film (Pauli and Haberland 1964). Unfortunately, Jensen did not include the cultivation and processing of ensete in his manuscript.

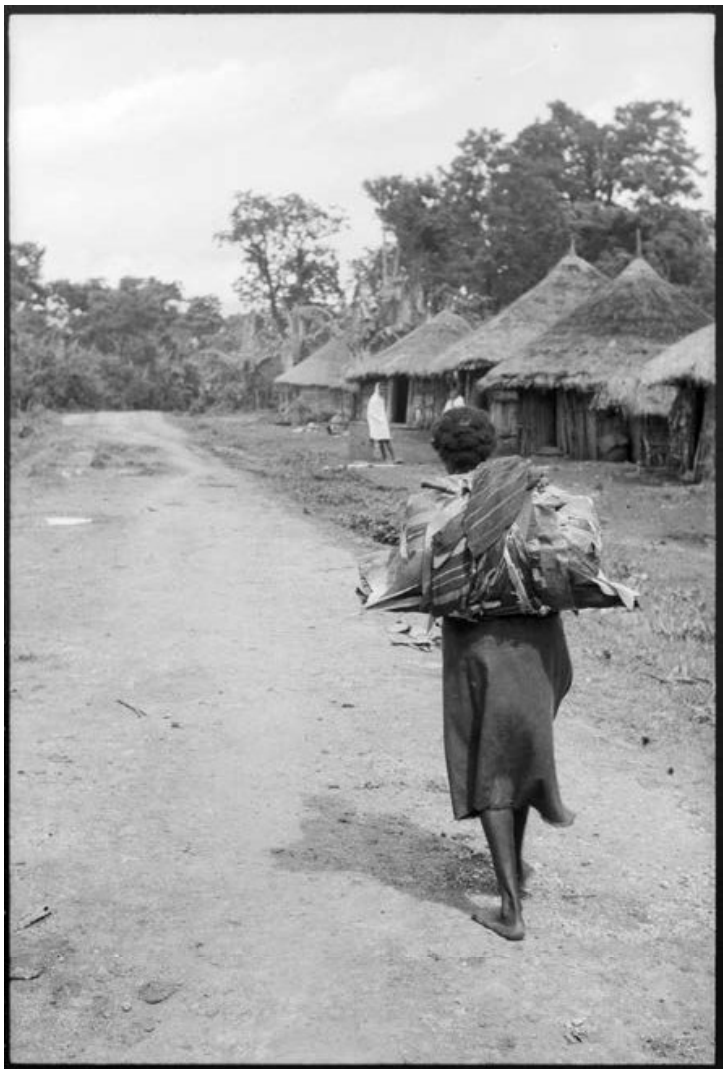
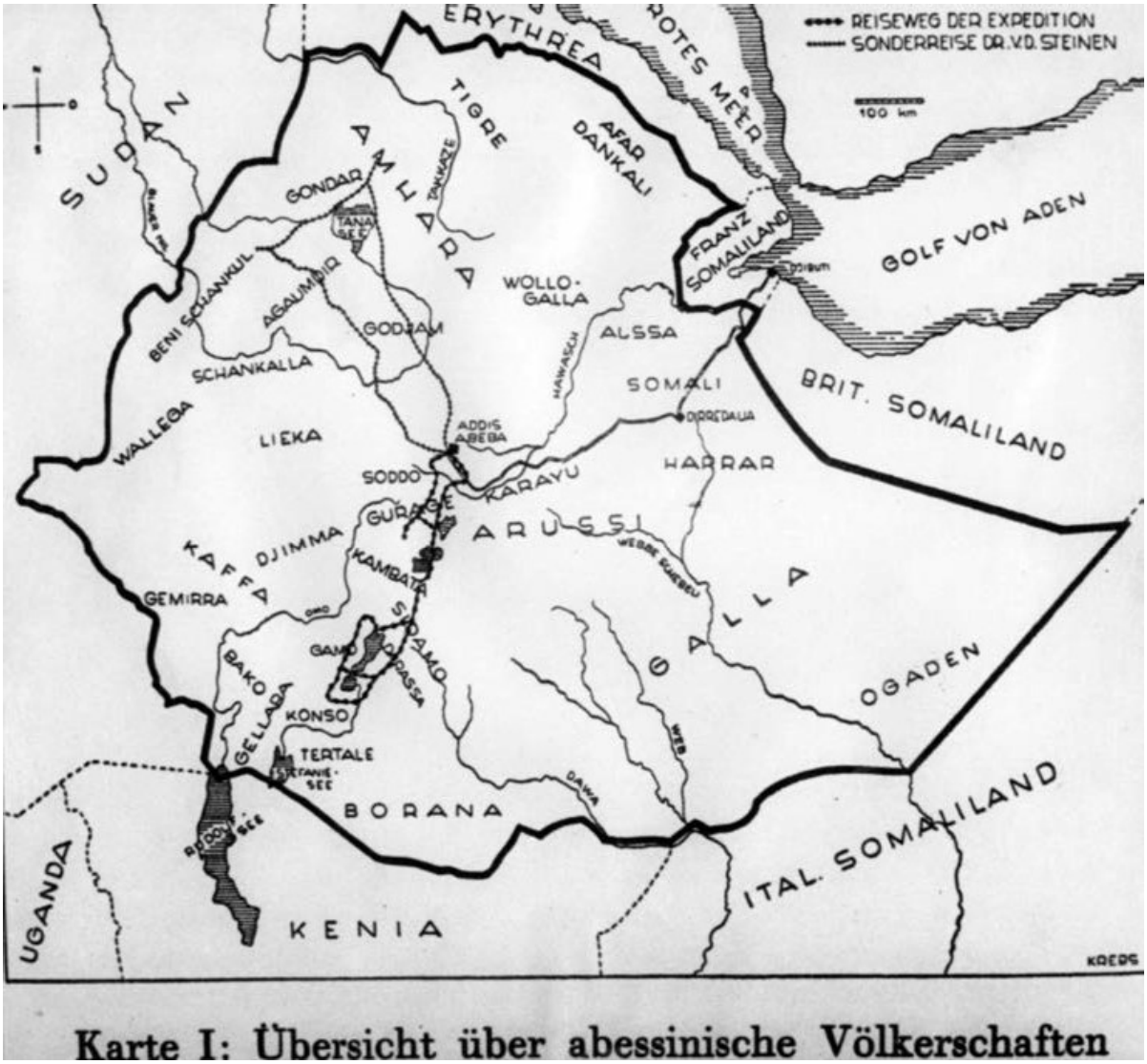


Image 2: Dokeno. Houses at the road

of cattle breeding in the highlands, the fencing of individual fields, which is so typical among Sidama – mostly through the use of candelabra trees (*Euphorbia candelabrum*) – is also completely missing. This, probably old, relationship with cattle breeding is a symptom of an age classification in Gedeo culture different to that we have to apply to all the surrounding peoples. They are also the only people that I know of in southern Ethiopia who do not include lowlands in their settlement area, but only live in highlands.

The Gedeo area is much smaller than the Sidama area. Along the highway from north to south, its extent is 50 kilometres, from east to west an average of 25 kilometres. Dilla, on the northern edge of the Gedeo region, is the Amhara-dominated capital of the district. The lowlands to the south, west and north of the Gedeo land and the highlands to the east are occupied by the Guji, an Oromo subgroup. The Guji who live to the west of them are called Aladu, Alabdu or Alaba by the Gedeo. It is only with them that they are linked by a friendship and close economic cooperation. The groups of the Uraga and Jemjem or Mati, which follow in



Karte I: Übersicht über abessinische Völkerschaften

Image 3: Travel route of the Frobenius expedition 1934/35[15]

the south and east, are treated as enemies by the Gedeo, who also used to kill them and celebrate the slayers as heroes. Almost all adult male Gedeo speak the Oromo language in addition to their own language. This may have led to extensive word adoptions. In any case, my interpreter assured me that he could understand most of what was said in Gedeo, whereas he did not want to succeed with the Sidama [i.e. when Jensen moved to Sidama, his interpreter chose not to continue translating]. The Amhara administration has appointed chiefs like everywhere else. In Sidama, with its clear influence of an African royal culture, it was obvious [whom to appoint]. As we will see, the old Gedeo order, which was based exclusively on the age grade system, had to be largely rebuilt. Ultimately, the assertion I made in the past against the Amhara, that they distributed the offices only according to the

[15] This map contains the designations for ethnic groups used by social anthropologists in the 1950s. The spelling is no longer common today, and some of the terms are pejorative and are no longer used.

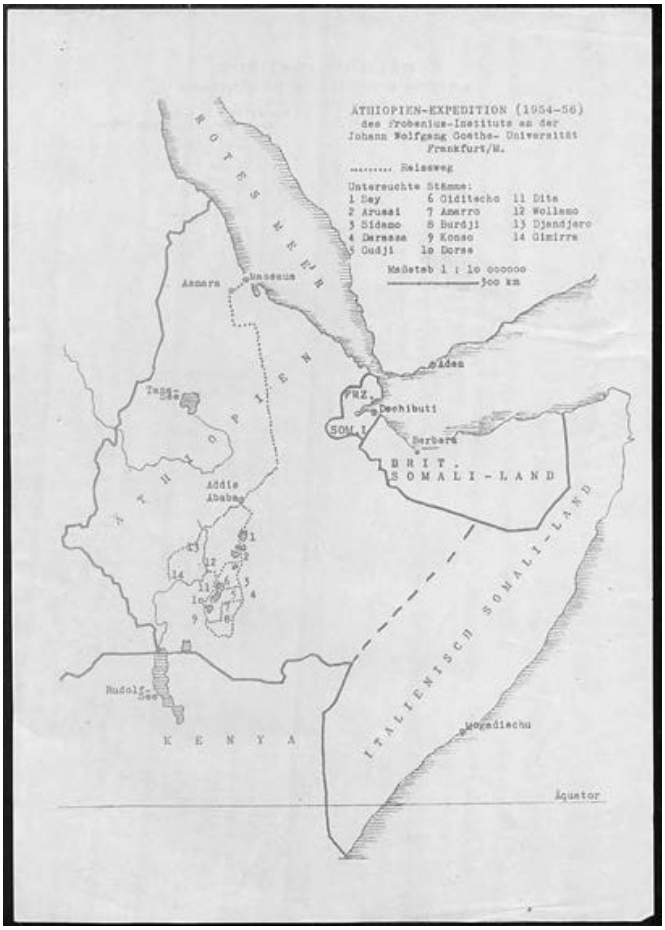


Image 4: Travel route of the Frobenius expedition 1954–56[16]

obedience to them (Jensen 1936:96), is unjustified: they almost always kept to the distribution of offices to the preferred persons according to the native tradition. So, they appointed in Gedeo as chief and under this so-called *roga* (district head) such men as had had the title *burqi anna* (father of the well) or *caffe anna* (father of the pasture). This title was only given to a man who had first settled in a district. The title was hereditary from father to eldest son. However, in the past it was only an honorary title without political power that emanated solely from the age grade system. Since the beginning of Amharic influence, the situation has been exactly the opposite. The chieftain order has prevailed, although the older age grade order still exists beside it, but without political power. The province of Banko, for example, where our camp was located, was mainly inhabited by the clan Hanuma. However, a man from the Gorgorsha clan named Halchaije Latta was appointed as chief, apparently only because he was approved of by the Amhara. The father

[16] This map contains the designations for ethnic groups used by social anthropologists in the 1950s. The spelling is no longer common today, and some of the terms are pejorative and are no longer used.

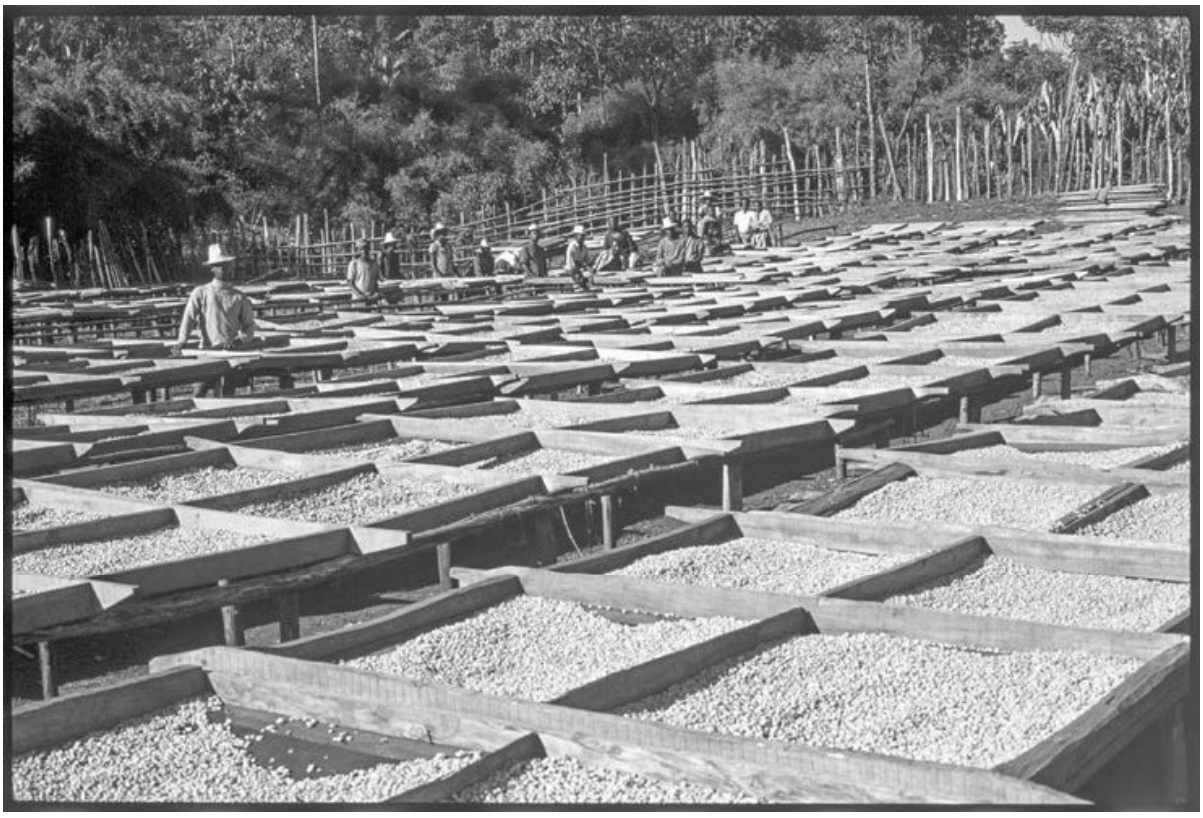


Image 5: Drying plant for coffee

of the current chief, *grazmach*[17] Godana, filed a lawsuit against Halchaije and was finally proved right in Addis Ababa. He was given the dignity of a chief because he was the only surviving son of a *burqi anna*.

In the times of the grandfathers of the present chief, some brothers who lived in Galalcho, further east, decided to migrate to this area. They negotiated with the previous owners of the land, the Guji, for the transfer of the district. The chief of the Guji had only wanted to keep that piece of land where he himself lived. Thus, the oldest of the migrant brothers had become *burqi anna*. Godana was the youngest in the next generation, but all the older brothers and cousins had died, leaving behind children. So, he bore the title *burqi anna*. In the next generation, however, the title should have passed to the oldest son of Godana's eldest brother. But the family council had decided to leave the dignity of chief with the lineage of Godana.

Dilla is the seat of the governor of the Gedeo, Guji and Amarro areas. In our time it was *dejazmach*[18] Gobenna. The districts of Gedeo and Guji were adminis-

[17] *Grazmach* was a military title used by district administrators and the like during the imperial regime.

[18] *Dejazmach* was a military title used by district administrators and the like during the imperial regime.

tered from Wenago, in our time by *fitawrari*[19] Demessi. For Gedeo in particular, there are five administrative centres: Kavado, Gwangwa, Bule, Domarso and Fisseha Gennat (see map below). The incumbents in these five administrative centres are mainly Amhara.

In addition, the Gedeo territory is divided among 18 chiefs, mainly from the above-mentioned *burqi anna*. One of these persons under Asaffa Tshumburro in the northeast of Subo administratively belongs to the Sidama administrative district and is subordinate to Kavado. The following districts belong to Gwangwa: Banko (Barkalle Godana), Kombolcha (Gadeco Shoba), Janjamo (Horro Gobo), Kallacha I (Ilma Dingu), Kallacha II (Darro Lumasa). To Bule belong Anshimalcho (Adala Aräre), Okolo (Dulo Shondo), Blaiya (Badaso Gurro), Dibetu (Kursse Abatuto), Galalcho (Boneya Bose), Charbanta (Miteko Oda), Kocherre (Gada Tenjeshi). To Domarso belong Aramo (Udo Barre), Dirretto near Garbota (Woldesembat Ware), Garbota (Dyyilicha Abba Djilo). To Fisseha Gennat (amh: Happy Paradise) belong Godo (Gadecho Daiyo), Sade (Mamo Komolcha).

Scenically, the Gedeo country is very reminiscent of the park landscape of Sidama. Only the *Podocarpus* tree, which dominates the landscape in Sidama, is rarely seen in Gedeo.

Unlike Sidama, the whole Gedeo area is under a single administration. At the head of the people is the *abba gada* (traditional leader) or two *abba gada*, who alternate with each other. They both live in Subo, in the east of the country, which is the oldest of the three districts and therefore of outstanding importance. The other two districts are Dibatta and Rigatta. Each district is presided over by one or two *roga* (district heads), who also take turns, so that in the whole country there are six people of this rank: three from one moiety, called Bilbanna, and one from the other moiety, called Dalanna. But all three districts do the decisive age grade ceremonies together, so that there are no differences between the districts. Thus, at the time of our presence, the decisive step in the promotion of the Raba class to Luba and thus to power took place. This step, which moves all age grade members one level higher, begins with a ceremonial hunt in which the Raba have to kill a buffalo. For this purpose, all the Raba – estimated to be about 8–10,000 men – gathered in a makeshift camp west of Dilla on the day of the hunt to comb the mouth of the Gidabo River in a long line from the lake halfway to Dilla for game. A great deal of game was killed, among it several buffaloes – and only one needed to be – lions, antelopes and – this was particularly emphasized – also wild boars; for the Gedeo, unlike all the neighbouring peoples, very much like to eat wild boar and still do so secretly today, when they are of course forbidden to do so as Ethiopian Christians. This is another symptom (the other is their relationship to cattle breeding) that classifies the Gedeo culture as older than that of the

[19] *Fitawrari* was a military title used by district administrators and the like during the imperial regime.

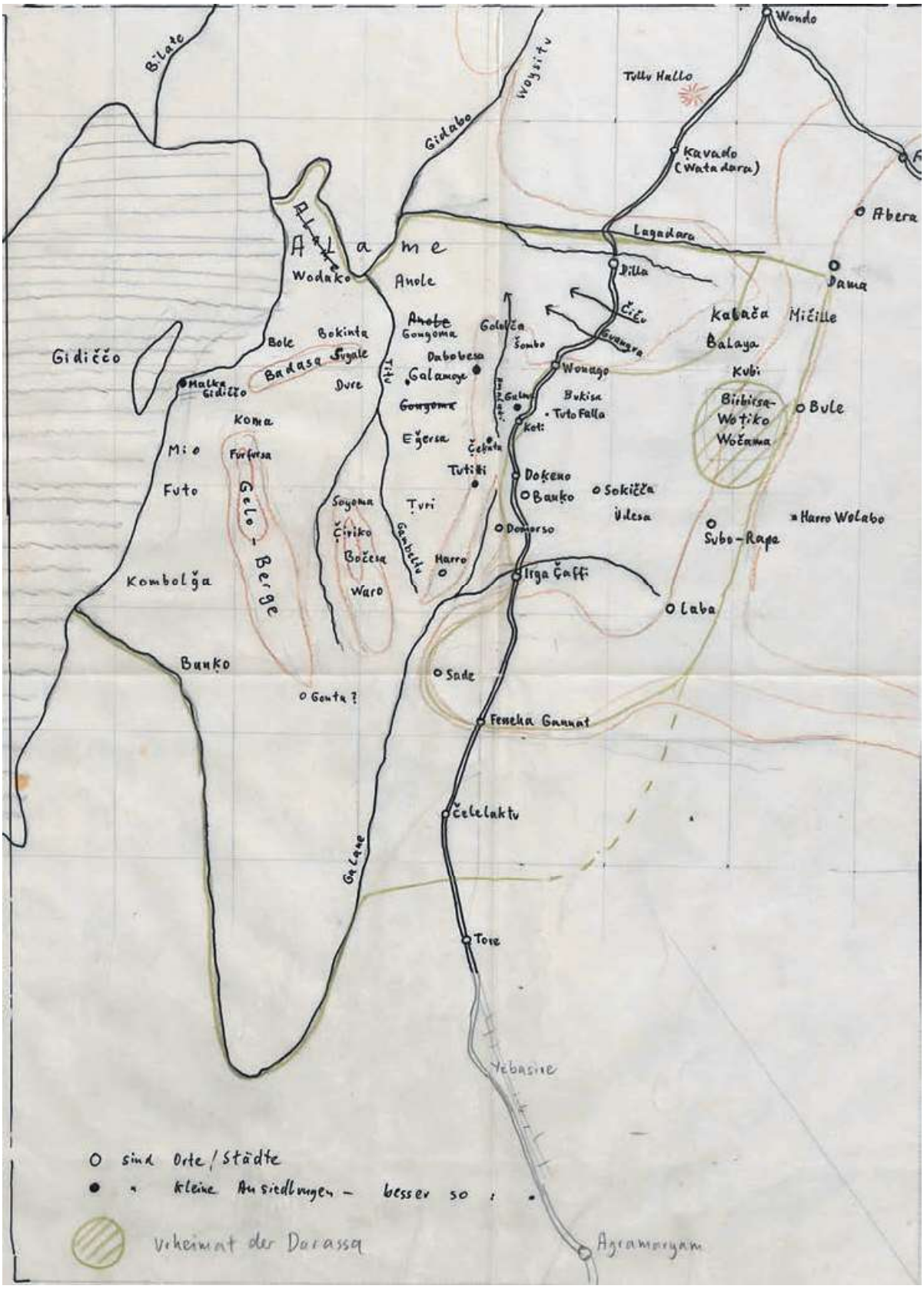


Image 6: Area map, hand-drawn by Jensen

neighbouring peoples.[20] On the other hand, they do not eat hippopotamus meat, which is said by their neighbours to be particularly contemptuous.

The Amharization process, which is advancing unstoppably throughout the southern provinces, especially since the emperor's victorious return, is finding a willing element in the Gedeo, although we have seen rather bleak examples of ruthlessness on the part of the Amharic authorities and the police, especially in Gedeo. They are all, even if only nominally, Orthodox Christians for the time being, and as a result they no longer wear their old jewellery, which is very cheap, and try to imitate the Amhara in clothing and customs, depending on their wealth.

My interlocutors were all very clever people. They could mostly still indicate what had been introduced since the Amhara time and how it had been before. But they were all people whose interest in the factual aspects of their culture was mainly exhausted. Whether there were other interlocutors who had better knowledge in the field of origin mythology, I cannot know, although I think it likely, because the Gedeo are so particularly reserved and almost hostile towards Europeans. My main interlocutors were almost all *haiyu* (legal experts at the *songo*): Harro Midju (see picture, p. 18), who was undoubtedly the best; Shido Dadu, Deyarso Kenco, both cousins of the chief; Kurse Oda, and Burssa Tondi, a very high-ranking *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*), who unfortunately was only a rare guest with me. Also, Oda Dube, Shete Darassica, from a district further east, Badaso Dama from Banko, Darro Dube and Dube Loko. Almost all of them were from the clan Hanuma, in whose residential area we had our camp. Since they could only indicate the sub-groups from their own clan, I was dependent on occasional passing interlocutors or occasional visits outside the Hanuma area with regard to the other clans. It is indicative of the state of mind of the Gedeo that most of the occasional informants claimed not to know the sub-groups; no doubt for fear that harm might befall them after the names were revealed.

The renewed work with the Gedeo seemed to be necessary mainly because of some indications that we could find an older layer of the old tuber farmers in the Gedeo culture almost without any influence from the cattle breeding, more clearly than in the cultures of all other peoples we visited. This assumption has not been confirmed, as all the characteristics of the cultural layer with livestock breeding, which is widespread in southern Ethiopia, can also be found in them [the Gedeo]. In this respect, however, the assumption has been supported by some clearer signs of ancient plant cultural affiliation in the Gedeo that we found. I have already pointed out such signs (Jensen 1936:104) and will continue to emphasize them explicitly in the future.

[20] Jensen tried to reconstruct the cultural history of the ethnic groups of southern Ethiopia, as he understood them as 'fragments' of more ancient cultures (*Altvölker*) that represented different epochs of cultural development.

Social life

The clans and the dual order

The Gedeo have seven clans (*gossa*), which still today settle in closed areas. The clans fall into two moieties, one of which, *shole bate* (four houses), with four clans lives in the north of the country; the other, *sasse bate* (three houses), with three clans, lives in the south. Both classes used to be strictly separated by the Rassa River, but today the different clans often live in disarray. The two classes were exogamous in earlier times, about which the following is told:

In the beginning, there was only one man and one woman, who had seven sons and an even greater number of daughters. The sons married their sisters. Four of the sons were especially fond of each other and built their houses together to form a hamlet to the north; the other three sons were also especially fond of each other and built their village to the south of a river. Then the four sons agreed with the three sons that their sons should henceforth each take their wives from the other village, because the men of their own farms were too friendly.

How often have we heard in southern Ethiopia a horrified exclamation of "No, we cannot marry them, we are friends with them"? And here in the story we find the same justification for the exogamy. The seven sons and, thus, clans that founded them were called: Derasha, Dobba'a, Hanuma, Gorgorsha (these four founded the moiety *shole bate)* and Hemba, Logoda, Bakarro (these three founded the moiety *sasse bate*). The class exogamy then seems to have been replaced by clan exogamy even before the arrival of the Amhara. Today only the sub-groups of the clans or *mina* (house) are exogamous.

The exogamy of the two groups meant that, in general, the woman had to be taken from very far away, a form of marriage that is still common today, even among the Sidama. A man of the group of four had married his sisters in the group of three. When this man's son matured into marriage, the father's sisters acted as intermediaries and procured for the young nephew a wife from the distant area. It is supposed to be advantageous for a marriage that it is a long way for the woman to reach her relatives and that she will therefore think twice before running away from her husband, compared to a woman who has her relatives in the neighbourhood.

If someone gives a festival with representatives of all seven clans present, it is imperative that one from the clan Derasha, the group of four be served first, if present, because Derasha was the name of the eldest son. The same quantity is then served to the group of three. Then, when the allotment is repeated, the group of four must again receive first, even if their pay is proportionally less than the other group's. Only then can this second allocation ensure fair compensation based on the number of participants.

The primacy granted to the group of four here is certainly not only due to the fact that Derasha has the right of first birth, although it would suffice in itself. It is certainly also due to the fact that with the Gedeo (as with the Sidama) the four always has the advantage over the three. The first of the two numbers [four] is male, the second [three] female, i.e. the reverse of the general practice in Ethiopia, which is probably also an indication of the different nature of the Gedeo culture.

Strangely enough, both representatives of the highest office in the age grade institution belong to the class of three. So, if they are present at festivities, they will not receive the money until the second distribution. Only at those festivals which belong to *djila*,[21] the *abba gada* (traditional leader) first receives a single ration as an individual, but at all other festivals which, in the opinion of the Gedeo, do not belong to *djila*, the *abba gada* cannot avoid receiving a second treatment.

Of the seven clan names, meanings in Oromo language can be given for two: Dobba'a means 'grey mottled' as a designation for a colour of cattle both in the Oromo and Gedeo language. Hemba is, only in the Oromo language, the bleating sound that a cow emits. For the other clan names no meaning could be determined.

The today still almost closed settlement of the clans, the meaning of the two clan names and the following information let me suppose that this clan division has only recently taken place and has covered up an older clan division.

Totemistic relationships of the clans are very poor [i.e. not actively practised or remembered]. Without exception, they [these relationships] belong to the old clan classification, because the descendants who still maintain this totemic relationship no longer belong to one of the seven clans but represent individual families that occur in all seven clans. So, one of my interlocutors (Shete Darassica) of the clan Hemba had a lightening as his totem. Every man knows whether his totem is a lightening, whatever clan he otherwise belongs to. The totemistic relationship itself is very similar to Sidama. Banqandjo is a man who came from heaven; beyond that they [Jensen's interlocutors] know nothing to indicate. Banko also means lightning here, as among the Sidama. That the capital and province where we camped was called Banko would suggest that it was the place where the founder of the clan came from heaven. But the interlocutors knew nothing to say to explain the name. Banqandjo only had many daughters and no son. Therefore,

[21] *Djila* is used as a general term for everything sacred to the Gedeo, especially for everything related to the age grade institution. On page 43ff, we will see that most festivals are included.

clan membership was inherited through the daughters. Even today, all the children of a Banqandjo woman belong to the Banqano clan, both sons and daughters. Sons are often struck by lightning, but a daughter never. When someone is struck by lightning, such a Banqandjo man must be brought and he must undress the dead man and all the money and things he had with him belong to the Banqandjo. If the relatives were to keep some of it, they would be struck down by lightning, only the Banqandjo is secured against it. Whoever is struck down by lightning is not loved by God, and under no circumstances is there a feast of the dead for him – possibly a reminder of ideas of 'bad death'.

If a used tree on a property is struck by lightning, the owner must invite a Banqandjo man and go with him in complete silence in the very early morning to the place, where the man takes some honey water in his mouth and puffs it on the spot by walking around the impact of the lightning. We will come back to the ability of the Banqandjo people to protect the fields against theft later.

Very similar are totemistic relationships with the dog (*wolchoke*) and the donkey (*hare*). The descendants of the dog-humans, the Sarritu (*sarre* = dog in Oromo language), and the donkey-humans, the Harimo, are now spread over all seven clans. In contrast to the Banqano, no one today professes this clan affiliation, although those concerned are supposed to know it. The story that belongs to it [the Sarritu], which was told with a lot of secrecy, is as follows:

A man only had one daughter. He promised her to a man who he was friends with. Soon after that, another man asked him for the hand of his daughter. He also promised her to him. His wife scolded him and asked if he wanted to cut his daughter in two. Then he pointed to a bitch and said he had two daughters. On the appointed day he first adorned his daughter and handed her over to the one man's suitors. Then he adorned the dog and prayed to God to give him a second daughter. Under his hands, the bitch transformed into a beautiful girl who resembled his daughter in everything. He gave her to the bride applicants of the second man and the members of the dog clan descend from her.

They tell the same story about the donkey people. This information leads me to suspect that the Gedeo have lost their former totemistic division, only three names remain to remember: Banqano, Sarritu and Harimo. These totems no longer appear among the seven clans of today, although every family should know about its membership. Presumably, this older totemistic clan division was matrilineal, as it is expressly said by the Banqano clan, but as can be concluded also with the other two from the fact that the bitch and the donkey respectively appear as the female founder of the clan. Only recently, under the influence or invasion of the Guji or a related people, has there been a complete reorganization into seven clans.

In southern Ethiopia we find a strictly limited number of clans only among the Oromo sub-groups of the Borana and Guji: Borana nine and Guji seven. It seems to have been under the influence of the Borana that the nine clans also came to the Konso, as the Konso themselves state (see Jensen 1936:348–49). Probably the

seven clans of the Gedeo are also due to the influence, or more likely to a warlike or peaceful immigration, of the Guji, for which I will give more reasons later. A relatively recent introduction of the number seven is suggested by the still largely closed residential area of the clans, which at that time (1935) had led me to think of seven provinces of the Gedeo country.

The totemistic relationship to lightning was so important in the old clan division, especially because it had provided the clan members with some income, that the members of this clan kept the names while they were assigned to one of the new seven clans, depending on the area they lived in. Other totemistic relationships could be more easily forgotten, as can be seen from the example of the dog and donkey people, who are kept secret almost fearfully – a claim that can be justified by tactful questions towards those people.

Finally, the meaning of the two clan names, Dobba'a and Hemba, their relationship to livestock breeding and the fact that they are both Oromo words, also speak in favour of the assumption put forward here.

Whether the older clans were inherited in a matrilineal manner can no longer be decided with certainty. The statement that Bakandjo only had daughters, and that even today membership of this group still extends to the daughters, and apparently particularly effectively to the daughters, speaks for this. The fact that it was a bitch and a donkey, and not a dog and a donkey, also speaks for this. However, since nobody wants to profess these clan affiliations anymore, it was not possible to determine what it is like today.

Of a very different kind and undoubtedly belonging to the present-day clan division is a story of the sub-group Olo of the clan Derasha:

A Derasha man had only one son, whom he loved very much. When the boy died, he was inconsolable and lamented and wept over this loss. So one day he came to a cousin who had not yet heard of the boy's death. The cousin bent down to the earth and took up a ball of earth and formed it into a doll (olo). When he gave it to the unhappy father, he pressed the doll to his body and the doll began to breathe. From this olo descend all people who belong to the sub clan of the same name of Derasha.

The Gedeo probably have no special clan names for the female clan members, unlike the Sidama or Male (Jensen 1959:276ff).

Our camp was in the district of the clan Hanuma. Therefore, I have the subdivision reliably only from this clan. It is split into Gurra and Waju, who were brothers, with Gurra being the older. The Gurra clan part was divided into Digibba, Ononcho, Lakitu and Sambittu; and Waju into Kulittu, Hademo, Gorso, Mocholito, Eballa, Sokitto and Odittu. When asked about the *mina* (house), a Hanuma man can answer with Gurra or Waju as well as with one of the other sub-groups.

They tell the following story about the Lakitu sub-group of the Hanuma:

Once a widow, whose husband belonged to the group of the Gurra in the clan Hanuma went to collect wood and came to a dry tree stump. When she hit her axe into this tree stump, he suddenly spoke and said: "boom!" The widow was astonished and said to the tree, "Why are you making that noise? I want you to share." Then the tree split in half and out came a living man. The widow took the man in as the son of her deceased husband. He is the ancestor of the Lakitu people. To honour him, he was given a position in the age grade institution.

My interlocutor Burssa is the direct descendant of this man and also holds high office in the age grade institution.

The other clans should also have a first subdivision named after three brothers. For the reasons given above, however, I have not been informed of their subdivisions. I have not heard of any sub-groups from the clan Bakarro.

With the Gedeo, the art of enumerating lineages is far less developed than with the Sidama. Nevertheless, they can occasionally enumerate 12–14 generations, but most of them only 6–7, usually starting with the founder of the house, who is known to all.

There is another division among the Gedeo in *akaku* (grandfather) and *dalatta* (the one who is born). The contrast to *dalatta* would suggest that the members of the other group [*akaku*] or their ancestors were not born but were created in the country. But the Gedeo knew nothing about this. They only said that the *akaku* were the old-established and the *dalatta* the newcomers. The *dalatta* would have originated from all the neighbouring peoples of the Gedeo. However, they would have come as families and been very kindly received by the Gedeo. Above all, many Guji, Hoku and even their enemies, the Uraga, had come because cattle epidemics had destroyed the cattle and famine resulted. According to the Gedeo, one could recognize *dalatta* by the fact that they could not trace their lineage back further than 6–7 generations. This has indeed often been the case, but I am inclined to believe that there has been a lack of interest. Under the seal of secrecy, for example, an informant told me that the whole chieftain clan belonged to the *dalatta*. But he listed 9–10 generations. Among the *dalatta* there were also those who descended from the man-eaters (*bulgo*) and who wore a tail as a sign of this. They had cut off their tails when they were admitted to the Gedeo and had also given up their habit [eating men] since then. There are descendants of them in the clans Bakarro and Logoda and in the house Gurra of the clan Hanuma, to which the chief family belongs.

There was a strict prohibition on marriage between the two groups, which was only lifted at the time of the fathers or grandfathers of the generation living today. The prohibition on marriage makes one think of a similar relationship as the *ullawicho* and *hadicho* of the Sidama, where the inferior position of the *hadicho* is mainly due to their eating wild boar meat. In Gedeo, however, both groups eat wild boar, whereby one can probably assume that the *dalatta* have taken it over from the *akaku*.

On the other hand, there are many indications that it must have been a peaceful penetration. According to the Gedeo, it was *dalatta* who had brought the age grade system from the Guji. The *akaku* would have voluntarily conceded all ranks and the greater number of *haiyu* (legal experts at the *songo*) to *dalatta*, because it could not have been avoided that they would have looked down contemptuously on *dalatta* if the *akaku* had taken the ranks as they should have. But it was very important to the *akaku* at that time that *dalatta* stay in the country, because this would have enabled them to increase their numbers enormously and fight their enemies better. The *akaku* would have had to swear at that time that *dalatta* should not suffer any disadvantage from the fact that they had not been resident in the country for very long. The *akaku* would have laid down their spears and sworn.

This is today's version, where no one wants to confess to belong to *dalatta*. All the people I spoke to were, according to them, *akaku* or did not know which group they belonged to. My interlocutors explicitly said that many *dalatta* claimed to be *akaku*.

Another possible, but by nature quite hypothetical, consideration could be as follows: the *dalatta* came into the country as winners, brought the age grade order with them and of course reserved all ranks in the same [i.e. for themselves] as the winners. They established a marriage prohibition between themselves and the defeated, which could continue to exist as a despised caste.[22] They brought with them the division into seven clans, and without regard to the existing clan division they redivided the whole people. Gradually the oppressed caste has come back to the top, so that the marriage barrier was lifted in the time of the grandfathers of the generation living today. However, this thesis is contradicted by the fact that the *dalatta* today do not want to admit to their former status as winners. The *akaku*, on the other hand, say that the marriage prohibition would have come from them, because even if the *dalatta* would have been very welcome to them for the increase in people, one could not have expected an *akaku* man to marry a stranger whose origin he did not know. This fear is connected with the generally widespread view in Ethiopia that leprosy and other diseases were transmitted from forefathers to descendants and that one must therefore know the forefathers for at least seven generations to be sure. With mothers, this fear does not seem to exist. Later, i.e. in the times of the grandfathers of this living generation, the *akaku* would have liked to marry the daughters of the *dalatta* because the *dalatta* women had a better character than the *akaku* women.

[22] The term 'caste' used to be commonly employed in the literature on Ethiopia. Today authors opt for more neutral terms, such as '(hereditary) status groups' or 'cultural strata' (Epple 2018).

The age grade system[23]

According to the Gedeo, they received the age grade system from the Guji, when they migrated to the Gedeo area as *dalata* (see previous chapter). They tell the following story about it (compare Jensen 1936:500ff):

In Jemjem there used to live a king called Uraga. He was the first one, and only after him came the King of the Guji and the chiefs of the Gedeo.

The Gedeo hated him because he was very strict and relentlessly demanded tribute. The Gedeo had no money and no livestock. Each year they paid one young man and one young girl from each family who still had the Gedeo hairstyle (i.e. were unmarried). If they did not pay, Uraga threatened them with robbery. Out of fear, the Gedeo lived in the trees, and they came down to fetch water only at night.

At that time, Gadjo and Fifo were the abba gada (traditional leaders) in Gedeo. They were wise and wanted to fight the war against Uraga. Their adversary was Batshe. He did not want the war. He also no longer wanted to give the sons and daughters from Gedeo to Jemjem, but he warned against a war with Uraga. He advised that the Gedeo should leave. But Gadjo and Fifo triumphed with their view; for the people loved the land, and they were sick of life in the trees. Uraga came to Gedeo with many warriors. He asked: "Why don't you pay tribute like in years past?" The Gedeo said: "We love you, but Gedeo got a big horn and we no longer want to give our sons and daughters out of the country. You may do what you want, and we want to do what we love."

Then the battle began in which Gedeo led by Gadjo and Fifo won. Now the Gedeo were the first, and after them came the Jemjem and the Guji.

Among the Gedeo, however, there lived many Jemjem who were now very badly off. When Gadjo travelled across the country, he saw a lot of blood. He asked: "Whose blood is it?" People said: "It's the blood of Uraga."

The Jemjem people who lived among the Gedeo asked Fifo to arrange for them to meet with Gadjo. So, it was done. The Jemjem said: "You have triumphed. We had triumphed before. That's how war works: soon is one on top, soon the other. Let us forget and live peacefully together. Let us marry among ourselves and forget about war."

So, things became peaceful for a while in Gedeo. But soon Gadjo heard the Jemjem advising that they would restore their former rule. So, he killed many of them and chased the others away to the south of the country. There they live now and call themselves Uraga. But they are Jemjem who used to live in Gedeo. Only then did they make peace among themselves and set up a border between them that no one was supposed to cross.

There is another story about the king of the Uraga who demanded tribute from the Gedeo. The Gedeo were convinced that the *kalacha* (phallic headband) worn by

[23] Jensen consistently calls the Gedeo age grade system in his manuscript the *gada* system, as it is called among the Oromo, instead of using the Gedeo term *baalle*. This may have been due to his translator, who did not translate from/to the Gedeo language into English, but from/to Oromo into English. The results of the Frobenius Institute's first expedition of to the Gedeo area in 1934/35 concerning the age grade system can be found in Jensen (1936:315–334).

the chief of the Uraga gave him power over them. The Gedeo are one of the few peoples who explicitly say that the *kalacha* has the shape of a penis (with some peoples this original context has long been forgotten):

In this hopeless situation, two men, Datsho and Kifo, decided to steal the kalacha from the Uraga. They dressed exactly like the Uraga women, put on women's jewellery, had their hair done like the Uraga women and spoke in a high voice. Then they went to the home of the kallu, as the Uraga call their chief, where they arrived at nightfall. They asked the kallu for night quarters in his house, their house was far away, and they were helpless women. The kallu is considered to be the protector of women and he took the two in a friendly manner. When he lay down to sleep at night, he untied the kalacha from his forehead and laid it by his side. Datsho and Kifo saw that. In the night, when everything was fast asleep, they stole the kalacha and opened the door as if they wanted to get out. As soon as they were outside, they ran as fast as they could into the Gedeo land.

The Gedeo were very happy about this deed and honored Datsho and Kifo very much. However, both belonged to the akaku and therefore one did not want to make them abba gada (traditional leaders). For the reasons given, this [*the abba gada*] *should be a dalatta man, who was found in a man named Gacho from the clan Hemba and they decorated him with the kalacha. Gacho immediately went to war and defeated the Uraga. Since then the Gedeo live again on the ground and do not need to give their children to the Uraga.*

After 10 years Gacho, who called his group Bilbanna, gave the kalacha to Orame of the clan Logoda. But he was also akaku and therefore did not want to have such high dignity, for the reason explained above. He gave the kalacha to a clan comrade who was dalatta. This man was called Aga and called his group Dalanna. Bilbanna are therefore the older and Dalanna the younger ones. Since that time the age grade order has been in existence among the Gedeo.

The fact that the names of the *akaku* men are known, and that they should actually hold the highest dignity in the age grade system, suggests that the age grade system among the Gedeo is older than the arrival of *dalatta*, that the offices were in fact previously occupied by the *akaku* and that the handover to the *dalatta* was the violent action of a victorious people.

All kinds of miracle stories are still told about Gacho. When he came to the river once and had no vessel with him, he simply scooped water with a cotton cloth and it did not let any water through. Another time he fetched water in a sieve and the sieve held the water. An *akaku* man in his neighbourhood was competing ambitiously with Gacho. Gacho eliminated him as a rival by the following miracle:

Once beer was brewed in both houses to celebrate the ceremony for the central pole of the house. The guests came to Gacho's house and drank and drank beer until they were drunk. But Gacho had only had a small pot of beer prepared. When the guests came to the akaku man the next day, his large pot was immediately empty without the guests showing even a trace of drunkenness. When the akaku man came to Gacho and said: "I don't want to compete with you in the future, but just tell me how you managed the miracle with the beer." Gacho answered him: "If you don't want to compete anymore, that's fine. Just go

home and continue to offer beer to your guests." When the akaku man came home, he found his pot full of beer. He could now also offer his guests beer until they were drunk.

The age groups and the dual division

In the age grade system of the Gedeo, the men pass through different age groups, whose names are the following:

Lumasa	Luba	Gudurru	Chewajji	:Bilbanna
Raba	Juba	Kolulu		:Dalanna

The son follows the father at intervals of two age grades. For example, if the father belongs to the Bilbanna group and is Luba, the son is Lumasa, the grandfather of the son is Gudurru and the great-grandfather – if he is still alive – is Chewajji. At the same time if a young man from Dalanna (the other group of the people) is Raba, his father is Juba, his grandfather Kolulu. At the end of an age grade period, the Bilbanna group moves to the position previously held by the Dalanna group, and the Dalanna moves to that of the Bilbanna.

Otherwise, I have not experienced any further differences between the two groups of people. They are also not marked by clothing or by jewellery. Not even like in Konso, where the two groups are called Galgussa and Hirba, and where the Galgussa stomp with their right foot while dancing, the Hirba with their left. According to the myth of the origin, it only says that Bilbanna includes the older ones, Dalanna the younger ones.

When tracing their lineage I noticed that men from Bilbanna and men from Dalanna traced back to one and the same clan founder, e.g. Gurra in the clan Hanuma. Since this is not possible, because group membership is strictly inherited from father to son, I thought I had caught them in an inaccuracy. I have been enlightened by various sources that in the time of Gurra there was no age grade system at all. Unfortunately, it is not possible to conclude from this that the age grade institution of the Gedeo is old, because it is not known when Gurra lived. When tracing lineages, it is rather the case that everyone enumerates as many generations as are traditionally kept in his family and then puts Gurra as the founder of the clan in front of it. So Gurra sometimes lies 6–7 generations back, another time 13–14 generations. But it is also quite possible that Gurra has to be passed back many more generations. Secondly, they say that when the age grade system was first established, it was expressly stated that each clan and house should be represented in both groups, Bilbanna and Dalanna. They again gave the prevention of too much clan concentration as a reason for this. For example, if a clan had only had Bilbanna people, the members of the clan would have been tempted to suppress other clans if Bilbanna had the power to do so. This reasoning is not

plausible, however, since two age groups have all the power in their hands at the same time, and these – Luba and Juba – in any case belong to different groups – namely Bilbanna and Dalanna – at the time when Dalanna was Luba, they would certainly have been oppressed by the other clans and clan groups.

The view of the Gedeo that they have taken over the system from the Guji encounters a great difficulty: the Guji retain the system in the form of most Oromo sub-groups, in which five classes take over from each other. The Gedeo, like the Konso, have a system in which two classes always replace each other. So they cannot have it from today's Guji. I am inclined to believe that the Guji and Borana also used to have a two-tier system, which is what the two *kallu* speak for among the Borana in particular; they are linked to the age grade system and replace each other in power.

As early as 1934, I was particularly interested in the question of the generation gap between father and son. Then as now, they [Jensen's interlocutors] stated that it was usually 20 years. At that time, I reported that Kanke from the clan Hemba was *abba gada* (traditional leader) from the Luba (Jensen 1936:327). I could now easily see that Kanke belonged to the Bilbanna group and that, according to the findings at the time, he had already been in office for four years. Kanke died soon after our departure and a brother of his, Birratu, took over the office and was given the name Heso as *abba gada*. When he advanced to the next age grade and became a Juba, he passed the *kalacha* to his opponent from Dalanna, Mego, of the clan Logoda. At the time of our presence in 1955, the first of the steps was being taken which brought a period of age grade to a close, with a change of office imminent or each man moving into a new age group.

If the statement from 1934 that Kanke had already been in office for 4 years is correct, then it was 25 years that were taken up by these last two periods. The Gedeo explained that although 10 years was the rule, 1–2 did not matter. After that the eldest son of Kanke would have to move up to the *abba gada,* because generally all offices are hereditary to the eldest son, but only if this son is of the right age to take over such a high office, would he have the prospect of being elected. Apparently, this is not the case, because my interlocutors claimed they did not know who would become *abba gada*. In principle, the *abba gada*, who of course consults with the leaders of the people beforehand, determines who will be his successor. One of the sons, even one of the nephews, or one of the even further relatives of the *abba gada* can be taken if he is from the next generation of the present Juba age grade.

The Gedeo do not have the same tools as the Konso to count the years but have to keep the number of years in mind. My repeated questions, whether they could remember that in the past another number had been the rule, were again answered in the negative. It is evident that the system could not possibly have always been like this. It is true that it corresponds to the small generation gap that many sons are already Luba or Juba in childhood, which is actually supposed to

happen frequently. But it is just as common that relatively old people are only Raba and that is, according to this information, not possible. So, my interlocutor Sido was at the age of about 55–60 years, and yet was only at the end of his Raba period. But the strangest thing is that the system needs these old Raba, because adult and married sons of the Raba have to help the Luba with circumcision, as we will see later (p. 51). I even met a man who was himself a grandfather and yet only the son of a Raba. None of the Gedeo men I questioned were aware of a marriage provision in connection with the age grade system which – as with the Konso (Jensen 1936:337) – would have eliminated these difficulties and must undoubtedly have been part of it at some point.

The very different biological ages of one and the same age grade bring certain curious phenomena with them. For example, a Juba who is still a child must be honoured on ceremonial occasions by a Raba who is an old man. This is very peculiar for a culture in which age, even over two generations, plays an important role. If, for example, we had three representatives (A, B and C) from the chief's family, whose fathers had all been brothers, and a man (D) appeared whose father had been the eldest of the brothers, although he himself was undoubtedly younger than A, B and C, A, B and C would regularly rise to honour this man D. However, it may be that this case was particular. Perhaps it has to do with the fact, which I reported earlier (p. 30), that the chieftain's dignity was to remain with the lineage Godana and that this man D was the real *burqi anna* and was therefore honoured by the rising of his cousins. However, I have failed to find this out.

In everyday life, where the biological age of a man is more prominent, it does not matter whether a child is already Juba. But in ceremonial acts – at weddings and other celebrations – the child must be served first to honour the age grade. On yet another occasion, the age grade is taken into account: when two men approach a river from two different sides, they must stop and ask each other which feather (*baalle*) (an expression for the degree of age grade of the addressed person) they have, regardless of their actual age. If the much younger man then says he is Luba and the much older man says he is Raba, the young man must cross the river first.

At the end of an age grade period, when offices change and each man moves up to a new age grade, there are various ceremonies called *dida*, of which the following have been described to me.

The Raba

On 3 and 4 June 1955, in the middle of the rainy season, the Raba, who in this case were Bilbanna, set out from all over Gedeo country to gather in the north of the country west of Dilla for a hunting expedition. On this ceremonial hunt, called *dida dula* (*dula* = war), a buffalo must be killed. The *murticha* (leader of the Raba class) had summoned all the lower leaders of the Raba for a consultation and had informed them of the result of a previous inquiry to the Guji that buffalo

could be found at the Gidabo River. It was then decided that the *murticha* would leave for there on 2 June. In larger and smaller groups the Raba passed our camp, with one or two spears, only a few still armed with a shield and even fewer with rifles. Some troops were 100–200 men strong and announced themselves already from far away by strong singing; sometimes there were also only 15–20 men who formed a troop. Whoever owned a horse or mule rode by. Many had painted their faces red with red *sorsa* soil, which is always used as a hero's award during hunting campaigns or wars. Those who had already had success in killing, called *edjäsu*, wore white feathers in their hair and had white paint on their faces in addition to the red *sorsa* colour.

Image 7: Raba aspirants on the way to the buffalo hunt

The outgoing Raba reviled in speeches those Raba who did not want to go hunting and stayed at home. These were said to have focused their attention on the area between the thighs of the women, so from now on they should be counted with the women. The whole chieftain clan, most of whom were Raba, could not be seen in the village on those three days because they did not go out hunting. Otherwise they would have been showered with ridicule too. The masses of the Raba interrupted this chant with the cry "*dori!*", which is supposed to be a name for the Raba. These constant shouts "*dori*!", which were sometimes shouted in unison by everyone at the same time with a pithy voice, sounded like a wild war cry. The *edjäsu*, i.e. the men who have already had success in killing, proclaimed their deeds in a loud chant and listed what they had killed in the form of short poems. A Raba passed by

Image 8: Leader of a group with spear and leopard skin

with loud chanting, which was translated to me as a two-line rhyming ending with the words *eräsa* and *chidäsa*. The rhyme was: "A human being can move from place to place, but he ends up on a graveyard (*eräsa*); a buffalo, when wounded, also moves from place to place, but he does not find a healer (*chidäsa*)."

Arriving at the agreed place, they erected temporary huts. Slightly better huts were built for the officials. Among the officials were, apart from the *murticha* and his representative *fatitsha*, also the so-called *bobasa* (literally 'grazer', probably in the sense of 'shepherd'), who stands above the *fatitsha* during the hunting expedition. There are three *bobasa*, one from each district of the country. Their function is limited to being the leaders of the *dida dula*. The office is hereditary in three families for Bilbanna and of course in three families for Dalanna. For these officials, piles of branches about 1-metre high were erected on which they sat.

Some days the Raba spent in the camp dancing and singing. It was especially popular that the men with killing successes, the so-called *edjäsu*, outdo each other in bragging. During these days, the officials try to move two families to send one young girl each with food for the leaders, as the hunt cannot start before that. The girls refuse. Now the Raba must pay money, until the girls are finally ready. They must be virgins and are called sisters of the Raba. The task of sending these virgin girls is also hereditary in two families, who are only allowed to live in one district of Subo around the east of the country, which according to tradition was the first

inhabited district of the Gedeo country. When the Raba returned from their hunt, they assured us that the girls had now become very rich.

The sisters of the Raba stopped their refusal to bring food for the leaders of the hunting company and arrived on 5 June. Whether their role was limited to this bringing of food was not known. It seems to me that this role is portrayed too harmlessly, since the beginning of the hunt depends on it. In any case, the hunt took place the following day, on 6 June.

It was, of course, a drifting hunt, given the number of people, which I estimated to be 8–10,000 from those marching through our village. In a long chain the Raba formed and drove the game towards the Gidabo River. They killed all the animals they could get their hands on, including several buffaloes. But only one buffalo counted, and the *murticha* was present at its killing. When the Raba pushed their spear into the buffalo, they shouted their war cry once more "*dori*!" From that moment on the *murticha* was an ordinary man. In the days before, however, he was highly honoured and among other things received a lot of money from the Raba as a gift of honour. According to the Raba, he too returned home as a wealthy man. Those who lived in his neighbourhood guided him and ate the meat of the buffalo at his farmstead. With the killing of the buffalo still another peculiarity exists. The Raba have wounded him, but he may only be killed by the so-called *kadadu* (see p. 51f) of the Raba, i.e. the grandchildren of the present Luba, who naturally belonged to the other half of the people, in the case of the Dalanna hunting. They were also invited to hunt, as long as they were already adults. They [the *kadadu*] are said to make up 20–25 per cent of the total amount of the Raba and walked in a second row directly behind them.

On 7 June 1955, the masses of the Raba returned home directly. They marched by clan-wise at a distance of about half an hour with loud and booming singing. Once at home, they were not allowed to sleep with their wives for the first two nights. Only after they had shaved their head, torn out their pubic hair and cut their nails, could they move their bed back to the back of the house to their wives. Men are not allowed to remove the pubic hair during their Raba time and can only chew the nails and not cut them, women are never allowed to remove the pubic hair.

This ceremony described here ends the Raba time. Soon after, when a new age grade is introduced, each Raba receives a feather from the *warraiye* (partridge) and is thus promoted to Luba. At the beginning of this Raba period, there is a real bush camp where the young men, as they are actually thought to be, are secluded. One year after the *dida dula* hunt, the sons of the former Luba go to the place Balaya in the northeast of the country (see image 6). They build very huge huts there, but they seem to be provisional, because they call them *foqo*, as all provisional huts are called. It was not possible to get an exact measurement of the size of the round huts, but according to the information, the diameter is 30–60 metres. Contrary to the previous statement (Jensen 1936:316), the huts are built in

Image 9: Returning Raba rest at the tejj (mead) house in Dokeno

the Balaya square, which is about one hour away from Mount Kubi. On the square on Mount Kubi, it is forbidden to build huts, there is only a round fence for the slaughter of the sacrificial animals. Both places are in Subo, the eastern district. On Balaya square, the new Raba stay for a year with interruptions during which they go back home. By the way, they do not use buzz sticks, as I reported at the time (Jensen 1936:321). Buzzing woods are only used as toys for children. Food is brought to the Raba by the mothers, sisters or women who place it near the camp. However, under no circumstances may it include meat, beer or liquor, just as there is no sacrifice during the bush camp. The end of the bush period is determined by cutting the so-called *babe* sticks, which are different for Bilbanna and Dalanna. Bilbanna go to Rape in the south of the country and cut 4–5 metre-long bamboo (*lema*) sticks. Dalanna go to the mouth of the Gidabo River and cut *loko* sticks of the same length. They walk, 50–100 men together, and each Raba cuts 1–4 sticks so that the other Raba, who are either very old or still small children, also get a stick.

The leader of the Raba class is the *murticha*, who is for Bilbanna, from the clan Derasha, and for Dalanna, from the clan Logoda. His deputy, *fatitsha*, is for Bilbanna from Hemba, for Dalanna from Logoda. There is also the office of *bobasa* for all three districts. All these offices are hereditary in certain families and exist independently of the offices of the *roga* (district head) and *jalqaba*, i.e. they are only valid for the Raba period. The office of *abba gada* (traditional leader) and

his deputy, the *jallaba*, exist only for the Luba and Juba periods. The office of the district leader, the *roga*, and his deputy, the *jalqaba*, is already elected during the Raba period from specific families. When these officials are spoken of, they are called *dabballe roga* and *dabballe jalqaba*, a sign that the *dabballe*, as it is called in other Oromo sub-groups, is equated with the Raba.

After returning from the expedition to cut the *babe* sticks, the *babe* sticks are leaned against coffee trees and ensete plants in the garden. The fruits of these trees are not sold at the market but must be consumed at home. From this moment on, the ban on nail-cutting applies until after the buffalo hunt.

About three to five years later, the *murticha* makes a celebration, to which he invites the highest officials and many more Raba, who appear with the *babe* sticks. This is the sign that from now on all other Raba must also celebrate the feast, following the order from top to bottom. It is essential that bulls are slaughtered at this feast and the Raba must appear with their *babe* sticks. The hide of the bull is cut up and rings are made of it, which the Raba wear around their necks. This custom of cutting the hide into rings that are worn around the neck, arms and fingers is called *chenyicha*. When everyone until the last *haiyu* (legal experts at the *songo*) has made the feast, the ceremony of making piles (*tuladne*) takes place, i.e. all the Raba go back to Balaya Square in one day and deliver the *babe* sticks there, leaning them against a sacred *mukanesa* tree (*croton macrostachyuss*) and never touching them again. This marks the end of the so-called *olka* period for the Raba (*olka* is what the Gedeo call the period of festivals and ceremonies belonging to the age grade system), which lasted from the return from the bush camp to this ceremony. Now the Raba get their hair cut once more; this will not be touched again until the buffalo hunt.

After the return from the buffalo hunt, which we have already described, and while the previous Luba are having the circumcision operation done, the *abba gada* (traditional leader) and his deputies, the *jallaba*, must be reappointed. Many Raba gather for this purpose at another place in Balaya. The Juba age grade announces which of his sons or nephews is to take over the new Luba *abba gada* office. This new *abba gada* did not take part in the buffalo hunt, because it is not good if he has a small wound somewhere on his body during this time. This is followed by lengthy negotiations with the circumcised Luba age grade as to how much it should cost to give the feathers to the new *abba gada.* The Raba have to pay this sum to come into power. Then they accompany the new *abba gada* from his home to the house of the former Luba age grade. There the newly appointed man receives two feathers from his predecessor, which the latter must fasten on his headscarf. The new *abba gada* is carried by two Raba on the arms, so that he drags just above the earth. The same ceremony is held the next day with the *jallaba*.

On the following day the Raba and their respective *roga* (district heads) – who are already appointed at Raba age – go to their districts to the houses of the newly

circumcised *roga*. As soon as the *roga* here have received the feathers from their predecessors, the sign is given for the whole people to receive the feathers as well. A *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*) gives two feathers to his successor in office, to all other Raba one feather, as long as his supply lasts. The acceptance of the feather is the sign that a new generation has taken over the power of Luba among the people. From now on, the previous Raba will be called Luba.

The Luba

On the news that the *murticha* would set off for the hunt, the circumcision of the Luba – who thus moved up to the Juba – began. No *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*) can be circumcised until the high officials have done so. Therefore, the dates for when the *abba gada* (traditional leader) and the other ranks will be circumcised are precisely determined. Only then can the *haiyu*, and subsequently the ordinary people as far as they are Luba, have the operation performed on themselves.

On the same day that the circumcision of a man takes place, his wives are also circumcised, provided that they are infertile. Otherwise, the woman is only given a cross incision on the thigh, and the circumcision is performed later. Also, the woman is never circumcised if she is the only one who can provide for her husband; then her circumcision takes place at a later date. An unmarried man or a boy who is already Luba will not be circumcised either. For him, circumcision will be made up for when he marries. A cross incision on the thigh is also performed on Luba who no longer have a foreskin. It is said to happen frequently that the foreskin is removed in boyhood with the white milk of a small plant *gure* (*gonofita* in Oromo language), allegedly out of fear of the operation of circumcision.

The friend (*jala*) who assists a Luba in circumcision must be in the so-called *kadadu* relationship with him, i.e. he must be chosen from the sons of the Raba. This Raba-son calls the Luba *kadadu,* and vice versa. This cannot be a misunderstanding, because I have been assured of it again and again. Nevertheless, I am convinced that, at least originally, the *jala* of the Luba were the Raba i.e. the sons of the Juba. In our case, the Luba belonged to the Dalanna group; the sons of the Raba (and of course the Raba themselves) then automatically belong to the other Bilbanna group. It is one of the few cases in which the groups have to assist each other and reminds us of the well-documented custom that the burial of a deceased person must be carried out by the members of the other moiety. But something else is striking about this *kadadu* relationship. If, as I suppose and as I have often explained, this system actually includes a marriage regulation to keep it in order, as we still find among the Konso today, then in the old days, when the system was still in order, there could have been no sons of the Raba. *Kadadu* in Oromo language means “the one who covers”; nothing can be deduced from the meaning of the word as well. There is no question that a relationship for which there

is a separate word is real and old. So, if in fact the *kadadu* relationship denoted the distance of 1 1/2 generations and was not subsequently transferred to this distance, but previously denoted the distance of 1/2 generation or something else, it is impossible that the system was kept in order by a marriage regulation. Already the regulation that the *jala*, who is always a *kadadu*, must be married, makes the assumption I made unlikely. But there are, as the Gedeo explicitly assure, even very old people among the *kadadu* of a Luba.

The Luba say that the *jala* are their wives because they sit behind them during circumcision and support them. The circumcised call the *jala* women who take action to support their wives *hato*. These circumcised Luba women, however, call the *jala* son (*ilmo*) and his wives *djalo*.

The circumcision doctor of the Gedeo is called *chidäsa* (from *chidan,* testicles in Oromo language) and in this respect is similar to the circumcised man in Sidama. In Gedeo the circumcised man is called *mate. Chidäsa* is a large group of different doctors. To prevent confusion, this special circumcision doctor can be called *wogesa* (doctor in Oromo language). He is in any case a Gedeo and must only not be of the age of the father of the circumcised man. Circumcision is called *mindo muranne* (cutting the penis), but it is usually described as (*djila*) *ofoldäni* (he sat down). It is performed for both men and women in the ensete garden. Circumcision is performed on women by women who know how to do it. Then the Luba is led by the *jala* into the house, where he spends two to three weeks in the back of the house. One who cannot be circumcised out of fear is called *gonadde*. All descendants of a *gonadde* are not accepted into the *djila*.

On the whole, circumcision is surrounded by much less fuss than in Sidama. It also applies here that the sons-in-law and brothers-in-law must bring a sheep or a goat as a gift if possible. According to some sources, the Amhara first introduced these customs, just as the slaughtering of cattle in the context of death ceremonies is said to go back to the Amhara.

Meanwhile, while the men convalesce, the feathers of the *warraiye* bird (the same one that is called *wollima* in Sidamo) are handed over, moving each man a degree higher in the age grade system. The feathers are from the Luba. They collected them as Raba and now hand them over to the [new] Raba. If they do not have enough feathers, another bird must be killed.

The Luba time finishes with the execution of the circumcision. At its beginning – about a year after the receipt of the feather but, in any case, before the Raba's departure for the bush camp – stands the opening of the *olka* festival time for the Luba. All Luba men must cut short (approximately 25-cm-long) sticks from the *edjirsa* (olive) tree, which they call *bokku*. The time lasts about three weeks, with many mutual celebrations. The sticks are carved in the shape of a penis and resemble extraordinarily the sticks that are used beyond the Woito River to castrate bulls. The men dance at the celebrations with these sticks and clamp

Image 10: Ensete garden near Midjija

them between their legs. To make it even clearer, they sing the song: "The Luba cuts *bokku*, the Juba falls asleep later!"

The *olka* period ends with all the men going to Mount Kubi, where, inside the fence surrounding the holy of holies, a bull is slaughtered whose stomach fat (*mora*) is worn around the neck by the most important officials. All Luba dip their *bokku* sticks into the blood of the killed animal, or at least try to do so. At the entrance to this fence there is a tremendous crowd, because everyone tries to reach the goal with his *bokku* stick. They keep the *bokku* staff at the back of the house; when a Luba dies, the staff is kept in the widow's new house closer to the door.

The Juba

After a Juba has recovered from the circumcision he underwent at the end of the Luba period, his relatives and neighbours gather for a strange ceremony. The Juba must kill a rat or mouse. Usually the animal is tracked down by the others and brought to him, but he must then kill it himself with a sharpened stick. Then all the people go to a meadow and he has to kill a butterfly. With singing and dancing everyone then retreats. This involves singing highly offensive songs and naming the genitals of the women, even in the women's presence, with names that are otherwise never allowed to be mentioned (similar to Konso and Burji).

The songs are called "you put it in" (*shai matitchau*) or another one "the Luba cuts the *bokku* stick, the Juba falls asleep later" (*luba wotti bokku juba worri doko*). What triggers this outbreak of indecency on this particular occasion of the practice of circumcision is very difficult to say. Whether the killing of mouse or rat and butterfly should ridicule the Juba and show that he is no longer capable of killing anything else seems very doubtful to me, since in Konso a young team hunts rabbits, moles and other small animals and hangs their skulls on the age grade masts. This ceremonial hunt is important for the rain. In Burji, boys must hunt rats and mice after circumcision. Among the Borana, they also hunt for butterflies (Haberland 1963:394). This is undoubtedly a recent development, since the late circumcision was also formerly used by the Burji. I dare not explain this strange custom.

The Juba is highly honoured, but he has no more power; this is connected exclusively with the new Luba. The Juba is recognizable by his hairstyle, which is applied immediately after recovery from circumcision. The head is shorn bald, except at the vertebra, where a circular piece remains. This hairstyle is called *guta*. Two to three years after the Raba's buffalo hunt, the Juba cut themselves new sticks from the *wuadässa* tree at the behest of their *abba gada* (traditional leader). This marks the beginning of the *olka* festival for the Juba, which lasts only a few weeks, during which the Juba cut sticks one after the other. A *dambi* branch is attached to the top of the *wudässa*, which is supposed to represent the *guta* hairstyle. This is followed by a period of mutual invitations and celebrations, which ends with the departure of the Juba to Mount Kubi, in the northeast of the country (see image 6), where the sticks are beautifully smoothed and rubbed with butter. An old cow is sacrificed at the farm of the Juba *abba gada* (traditional leader) and the Juba dip their sticks into the blood of the sacrificial animal.

The tailoring of the new *wuadässa* sticks is also a festive season for the wives of Juba. If a man has not yet had any killing success, he is called *monesa* and pierced only through the left ear or not at all. Now both he and his wife have to have both ears pierced. If he is a *edjäsu*, i.e. killer, both his ears are already pierced. Then the ear jewellery is only replaced by new so-called, *maldea* jewellery, which the man has to buy for his wife. This new jewellery must first be put into her left ear by her brother. When he is about to start, she refuses. Then he pays her 5–10 thalers[24] according to her fortune, and finally she lets him go on. The same game is repeated with her husband in the right ear. Finally, she must

[24] The Maria Theresa dollar, also known as the thaler, was the only foreign currency to obtain extensive circulation in pre-war Ethiopia. It is not known when the thaler first arrived in Ethiopia. During the expeditions of the Frobenius Institute in 1950/52 and 1954/56, the Maria Theresa Thaler had already been officially confiscated as a means of payment in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian dollar was already in existence. In the south of Ethiopia, however, thalers continued to be used for payment.

receive a stick shaped like an arch, to which a strip of the bark of the *dambi* tree is attached, called *kadjuma*. It is kept in the house together with the *wuadässa* staff.

I had reported earlier that the Gedeo had bow and arrows (Jensen 1936:111). My interlocutors on this trip were all unaware of this, so I assume the statement was based on a misunderstanding. The children now play with bow and arrows, and this bow they call *dagani*, an Amharic word. According to them, the arched form of the *kadjuma* is a symbol of the female. It must be cut and shaped by a *kadadu*. The *kadadu* hands it over to the husband and he puts it on the ground at the back wall of the house.

Furthermore, from that time on, the woman wears a leather bracelet, which they call *cacu*, beautifully decorated with cowrie shells.

The Gudurru

The Gudurru has his name from a braided hairstyle, which he actually wears. Soon, when a Raba returns from the hunt, his head is shorn bald, only a very small tip remains on the vertebrae, which is woven into a thin braid.

There is the strange custom that a Gudurru must not die with this hairstyle under any circumstances. Therefore, if a Gudurru falls ill a little more seriously, it is imperative that his braid be cut off, thus making him a Kolulu. If he recovers from the illness, his name is indeed Kolulu, and he also makes up for the corresponding feast before the time when he would otherwise become Kolulu.

It is quite obvious that one has only reached the right age for dying as a Kolulu. When a Juba dies, nothing like this happens. This is apparently considered to be an early death, which frequently occurs. But once a person has reached the age of Gudurru, he must not die. If he were to die with the hairstyle of a Gudurru, all his relatives would also die. This could be avoided by the family giving a feast to which they have to invite one Luba, one Juba and one Gudurru. These three would then have to bless the relatives. But even this ceremony could not prevent the sons and nephews of the deceased from dying before they reach the Kolulu degree.

If an official dies before he has become Gudurru, he is always replaced by a brother or cousin. As a Gudurru, this substitute is omitted because his sons are already Luba and are thus in possession of power.

The Kolulu

This age grade corresponds in many ways to what the Sidama call *uoma*. The Gedeo call ethnic foreigners who wear the *kalacha* (phallic headband), like the *kallu* (traditional leader) of the Guji, *uoma*. At the beginning of the Kolulu period or actually even before that, during a man's Gudurru period (at least 1–2 years before the time when his sons are circumcised), one of the really big celebrations in a man's life takes place. We had already seen when looking at the Gudurru age that it sometimes happens much earlier for other reasons. He invites anyone he

Image 11: Hairstyle of the Gudurru

even suspects of being related to him. A rich man slaughters 3–5 cattle, a poor man 1–3, in order to be able to entertain all the guests.

In the early morning his son or grandson shaves his head bare in the hut, using *bulbulla* (honey water) to soften it [the hair] instead of water. Before the last hair falls, a goat is slaughtered and the *mora* (stomach fat) is placed on the head of the Kolulu. Then he is anointed with butter. A man stands guard at the door so that no one calls "good morning" into the hut. This is considered particularly ominous. Then gradually the invited guests gather outside the door. The host speaks to no one but his wife or one of his sons, and only in a whisper. Each of the guests gives two or three thalers (see fn 24, p. 54) to the Kolulu, depending on their wealth.

With this festival a fundamental change is going on with him [the Kolulu]. While it is otherwise absolutely impossible in a man's life to pick up an ensete knife, which is a purely female instrument, he now possesses such a knife. He may take possession of another's property without any legal remedy. It is said to have been rare in the past for a Kolulu to take others' garments. But it was said to be normal that he would slaughter someone else's sheep. However, if he used a knife other than the women's ensete knife, he was guilty of theft. But if he took an ensete knife, no one could eat from the sheep except his wife and other Kolulu. If, until then, he had been the one who had to slaughter for the whole family, he stopped this activity with the Kolulu degree. Women basically have the age grade degree of their husbands. One of my interlocutors, who was Luba, had to slaughter an ox for his mother, who was a widow, because his father's brother was promoted to Kolulu early due to illness. According to this, it seems that the brothers of a

man who, due to an illness, experienced early promotion to Kolulu, also have to participate in the celebration for the promotion of the age grade. Since his mother was only a woman, my interlocutor got off cheaply, because one ox was enough.

The Chewajji is only an age grade to be able to count the age. Similarly, the name Lumasa is only used to indicate the age grade before being Raba. There are no ceremonies associated with them.

The political order

The political organization is completely based on the age grade system. The supreme leader of the people is the *abba gada* and his deputy the *jallaba*. Both *abba gada* and *jallaba*, as well as *murticha* (leader of the Raba age grade) and *faticha* (deputy of the *murticha*), live in Subo, the eastern district of Gedeo. At the time of our presence, the Dalanna group was initially the holder of the Luba rank and thus in possession of actual power. The Luba *abba gada* (traditional leader) was Mego of the clan Logoda. After hunting the buffalo, the Bilbanna group became the Luba. The *abba gada* was to be a son or nephew of Kanke from the clan Hemba after the hunt. The *Jallaba* for the Dalanna was a certain Shuttu from the clan Gorgorsha; for the Bilbanna, a family in the clan Derasha is responsible. The Luba and Juba *abba gada*, together with the entire apparatus of ministers in these two age groups, are responsible for all matters of the Gedeo. But surprisingly, they are both from the group of three (*sasse bate*), although the group of four is usually considered the higher one in absolute terms. One is tempted to draw a number of conclusions from this fact, but this should remain purely hypothetical.

Abba gada and *jallaba* (deputy leader) are the only officials who are not appointed until the transition to the Luba degree. *Murticha*, *faticha* and the three *bobasa* apply only to the Raba degree and have no more function as Luba. All other offices are already in use as Raba. The Raba *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*) is called *dabballe*, and all other offices like *roga* (district head) or *jalqaba* (deputy district head) are marked for the Raba by a prefixed *dabballe*. The three *roga* are the leaders of the three districts [Subo, Dibatta and Rigatta]. Subo (in Oromo language = married man) in the east of the country is the preferred district in every respect. The Gedeo, in their opinion, originally only lived in Subo. Dibatta (the one who pushes) is the western part, where our camp was located. Considerable parts of it were originally Guji territory, but according to the Gedeo, they fell to Gedeo though peaceful infiltration. Maybe the Guji gave the district its name. Rigatta (the evader) lies in the south of the country. It appears to be the youngest of the districts.

At the head of each of the districts is a *roga*, to his side a *jalqaba*. The *roga* of Dibatta for the group Dalanna was Worba Kurse from the clan Hanuma; he lived in Galalcho. Because this is one of the rare examples where it is not the eldest son who inherits the office from the father, the background needs some explanation.

As Raba, a certain Dori Bädo was *dabballe roga*, but he died and left behind only little brothers. Because the right age was to be found with a cousin, the office fell to Worba Kurse. The equivalent for the Bilbanna group was Gäta Dori from the clan Dobba'a in Janjamo.

The *jalqaba* from Dibatta in the group Dalanna was Ilma Tshetne from the clan Bakarro. His opponent from Bilbanna was Dama Lelli from the clan Hemba in Aramo at Yirga Cheffe.

Each of the three districts had, however, besides the *roga* and *jalqaba*, a *haiyu* who was responsible for the whole district. The district was administered by this three-man council. All Gedeo country is studded with men's houses (*songo*). Along the road, for example, there are three men's houses within a 20-minute walk. Each Gedeo family belongs to one of these men's houses, that to which it is closest. The neighbourhood assembly is also called *songo* and includes the families that belong to a men's house. To each men's house belongs a fixed number of *haiyu*. It also includes 1–3 *murra* (messengers) who run errands. These *murra* were not punished; they were only insulted with words. *Songo* is the smallest administrative unit. The Luba and Juba *haiyu* used to hold court hearings at the men's houses and administer justice.

Image 12: Men's house in southern Gedeo

The men's house in Dokeno (where our camp was located) had, for example, five *haiyu* for Dalanna: Ware, Kurse, Darro, Harro and Dera. For each of these five, there are families from which the *haiyu* have been appointed for Bilbanna.

Because the *dabballe haiyu* are already known, these five Luba *haiyu* already know to whom they have to give the two feathers at the handover.

Several men's houses, including Dokeno's, are under the control of a *haiyu* named Dekamo Bonoiye, who resides in the men's house in Sissa. Nobody knew how many *haiyu* of Dekamo's rank, under which some *songo* are summarized, exist. The next authority, which heads the combined districts, are three *haiyu*. The men's house in Dokeno, and therefore also Dekamo, are under the control of a certain Wotto. His two colleagues are Oda Dube and Dogoma. These three, with their numerous men's houses, are then finally under the control of Bursa Tondi at the men's house in Banko (i.e. not in the village of the same name, but on the top of the mountain where the chief of Banko lived), which belongs to the clan Hanuma. Bursa is the descendant of the legendary man Olo, who came out of a tree and founded the sub-group Lakitu of the clan Hanuma. He is in charge of one half of the district of Dibatta, where the group of four (*shole bate*) live. He has a colleague, Ilma Alaka from the clan Hemba, who is in charge of all the men's houses of the group of three (*sasse bate*) who live in the south of Dibatta. The man who will replace Bursa, and is therefore Bilbanna, is called Ilma Sinto and is also of the clan Hanuma.

The two *haiyu* of Dibatta, Bursa Tondi and Ilma Alaka, are in turn subordinated to Goddi Boddi of the clan Bakarro (*sasse bate*), who is responsible for the whole of Dibatta. Strangely enough, his opposite Bilbanna, Abba Wotte, is from the clan Hemba and thus also from the group of three. One would think that in a country where power belonged primarily to the realm of the group of four, the two highest *haiyu*, the highest offices, would also be held by this group. Or, if the district division is much younger, at least the offices would belong to different groups, so that such an important office alternates between the two groups.

This political order is still completely intact today, which is all the more astonishing because, apart from the order of chiefs, it no longer has any significance at all. The offices are still used at every major change of Bilbanna and Dalanna; the chiefs are even Raba, Luba etc. themselves. Even in some matters, the privilege of being able to punish still continues, but with the goodwill of the population. If, for example, one *haiyu* A sends a message to another *haiyu* B, using only one messenger, *haiyu* B will take no notice of this message and sue A to the next higher *haiyu*. It is in fact forbidden to send a message only by a single messenger; there must always be two, one from Bilbanna and one from Dalanna. *Haiyu* A would undoubtedly be sentenced to a fine of 2–3 thalers and he will pay it, since he himself belongs to the age grade system.

In the case of the Gedeo, we have recorded the only example in southern Ethiopia of an age grade order in which all political power was granted only through the system. Only the arrival of the Amhara and the resulting appointment of the chiefs brought about change in this respect. The officials who were primarily eligible as chief – *burqi anna* (father of the source) – had no political

power before because they had no office in the *gada* institution. It was probable that offices could be acquired through a kind of meritocracy. However, it must be stressed that explicitly delegated political power and power through prestige in a culture like the Gedeo are hardly different in principle.

The despised castes[25]

The leather workers[26] and blacksmiths are grouped together in a caste, just like in Sidama, and are also called *awado*. However, we have not seen any blacksmiths in Gedeo. There is still a strict prohibition on marriage to this caste, although, at least in the judgment of the Gedeo, it can already be regarded as obsolete, as they praise the leather workers very much for their craft.

Image 13: Leather worker with his sons

The leather workers no longer use stone tools like their colleagues in Sidama. Nevertheless, all the paths are full of stone splinters, as they still used them in the Italian times. The [stone] tool is called *borati* in the Gedeo language.

25 The term 'caste' used to be commonly employed in the literature on Ethiopia. Today authors opt for more neutral terms, such as '(hereditary) status groups' or 'cultural strata' (Epple 2018).

26 Jensen and his team documented the work of the leather workers in Gedeo in more detail than other professional groups or aspects of culture. Elisabeth Pauli even filmed and published a short documentary on their work (Pauli 1960).

The potters allegedly no longer live in Gedeo today. They are called *watta* (like among the Guji) and would all have moved to Guji land.

Image 14: Stretched cowhide

I have already explained above that perhaps the *akaku*, i.e. the original Gedeo, are the element that is scornfully called potter among these peoples, because among all other peoples, too, the potters were predominantly farmers, with some women also making the pots. However, the pots are not made by the *akaku*. Instead, they buy them from the *watta* at certain markets. But the Gedeo eat wild boar meat, which we had interpreted as an original custom of the *akaku*, and among the Sidama, eating wild boar is given as a reason for the inferior position of the *haditsho* (potters).

In any case, the historical development of the Gedeo is quite different from that of the Sidama. There [in Sidama] is a huge group of *haditsho*, who are considered to be second-class people, and who probably correspond to the *akaku* in number. Here [in Gedeo] is a numerically not ascertainable group of *akaku*, who do not want to marry the strangers [the *dalatta*], which is confirmed by the *dalatta* in so far as they do not want to profess themselves as *dalatta*.

If we assume, as do the actual Sidama of today and the *dalatta* among the Gedeo, a population element that is closely related to the Guji or any other Oromo people, it can be said that in Sidama the old population element was completely overrun and the old culture – except for the preparation and planting of ensete –

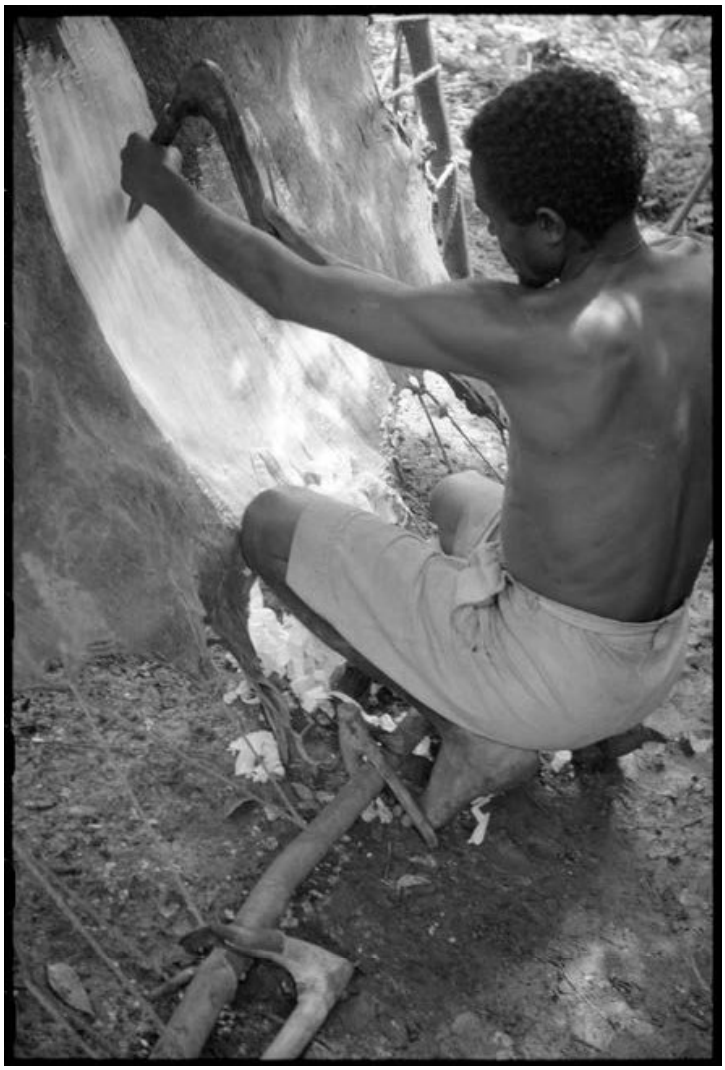


Image 15: Scraping the leather

was almost completely wiped out, while in Gedeo it was so strong that it was able to assert itself and place itself as an equal alongside the newcomers.

Today, when the old leather clothing of the Gedeo women has largely gone out of fashion and been replaced by cotton clothing, the leather workers would be quite unemployed if they had not, for the most part, switched to farming. This was only made possible by the arrival of the Amhara. In the past, a member of the *awado* caste could not own land. He usually wandered from place to place, staying in one place as long as the orders for leather work flowed well, and then moving on to another place. This discontinuity is the reason why the huts of leather workers among the Gedeo did not, and usually do not even today, have central piles. The clan affiliation was also not constant among the leather workers, because they each had an affiliation to the clan on whose land they were sitting and hence changed clan with each move.

The weavers had a special position. Weaving is not an old craft in Gedeo and definitely started after the arrival of the Amhara. We find the same process at

Image 16: Paths through an ensete garden

work in Gedeo as everywhere in southern Ethiopia where weaving was lacking. First, weavers of foreign origin enter the country and then the farmers themselves start to learn how to weave. These, their own farmers, the Gedeo marry without reservation. But they imposed a marriage ban on weavers of foreign origin. Now, however, this [ban] may be connected with the fact that they are reserved at all against foreigners unless they know their lineage exactly.

Image 17: Women working on the scraping boards in the ensete garden

Image 18: Woman wearing leather skirt

Religious and spiritual life

The concept of God

The concept of God among the Gedeo is extremely similar to that of the Sidama. The heavenly God is male and is called Magenno, the goddess of earth is female and is called Butina. The fact that the earth is considered the wife of the God of heaven was unknown to our interlocutors among the Gedeo. They are usually mentioned together in prayers. Magenno lives in heaven, but is not identical with heaven. The sun and moon are considered his eyes. As in all of Ethiopia, the sun (*arisho*) is female and the moon male (*agenjo*). A saying that is used when someone believes he has been wronged is:

> *Butina konne udi magenno konne udi.*
> Earth and heaven shall see this injustice.

For sowing the following formula is recited:

> *Magenno konne fultshi butina konne fultshi.*
> Heaven and earth shall let this grow.

Butina is not mentioned in the harvest prayer. It must be taken into account that the Gedeo today are considered Christians and therefore have a tendency to put it as if they have always had a God. On the other hand, Magenno as a concept of the divine also includes the earth.

When barley is harvested, the man takes a handful of it, gives it to his wife to roast and throws it into the house. He says: *Magenno konne iti* (Magenno shall eat). The fact that Butina is not mentioned here is connected with the fact that the formula *Butina konne iti* is a curse and means that the earth should eat someone, i.e. he should die and the grave should devour him.

Death ceremonies[27]

The dead are buried in the cemeteries (*eräsa*). These are overgrown places where no one is allowed to cut wood, and no one enters them except when someone is buried, so that the weeds grow there. Some have already been buried at the church according to Amhara custom. The original grave of the Gedeo is a 1.5-metre-deep hole, at the foot of which a side tunnel is dug to the east, into which the corpse is placed with the head facing east in a squatting position – men on the right, women on the left.

If the deceased is a man, his house is torn down; the wood is put on a heap and not touched. A new house is built for the widow, which is also demolished if she dies a widow. But the wood can be used as firewood. When a married woman dies, the house is still used by her husband.

Image 19: Dilapidated house of a deceased man, the central pole lies on top

Death is proclaimed by loud lamentation, with the family guiding a saddled mule. As soon as the siblings of the deceased arrive, the feast of the dead (*wudisha*) takes place, which in many ways resembles the *wui'la* feast of the Sidama, only not as pompously performed. There are separate places where these *wudisha* feasts

[27] Detailed descriptions of Gedeo burials dating back to the 1934/35 expedition can be found in Jensen (1936:412ff.).

are held. The private property of the deceased is displayed on specially erected scaffolding. In the middle of the place there are 4–6 drums beaten by men.

Image 20: Drummers at a funeral ceremony

If the deceased has killed people, the head-rings are worn by the male and female relatives of the man, not by those of his wife, at the *wudisha* feast, according to the number of killings, as I have described before (Jensen 1936:416). Later they are hung on masts (*dufäa*) which are erected at the tomb. Today one sees few such masts in Gedeo land. It was explained to me that the Gedeo were afraid of the Amhara because they were Christians. The Guji have it easier in this respect because they are not Christians.

The duration of the *wudisha* feast is 1–4 days. How long it is to be held for is determined exclusively by the *haiyu* (legal experts at the *songo*). If the deceased is a Luba, then all the Luba come with their *bokku* sticks and dance with them by clamping the sticks between their legs.

It is noticeable that in all death ceremonies the sacrifice of animals is completely missing. After 4–5 months follows the *dibayu* ceremony (*dibafata* in Oromo language means libation), which ends the mourning. The eldest son of the deceased travels with the next of kin and neighbours to the grave, pours some *bulbulla* (honey water) on it and places a porridge (otherwise the Gedeo do not eat porridge) made of wheat, barley and ensete on the grave. He says a prayer in which he turns to the God of his father and the God of his grandfather with a request for help against illness and the usual blessing. After the return from the grave, the

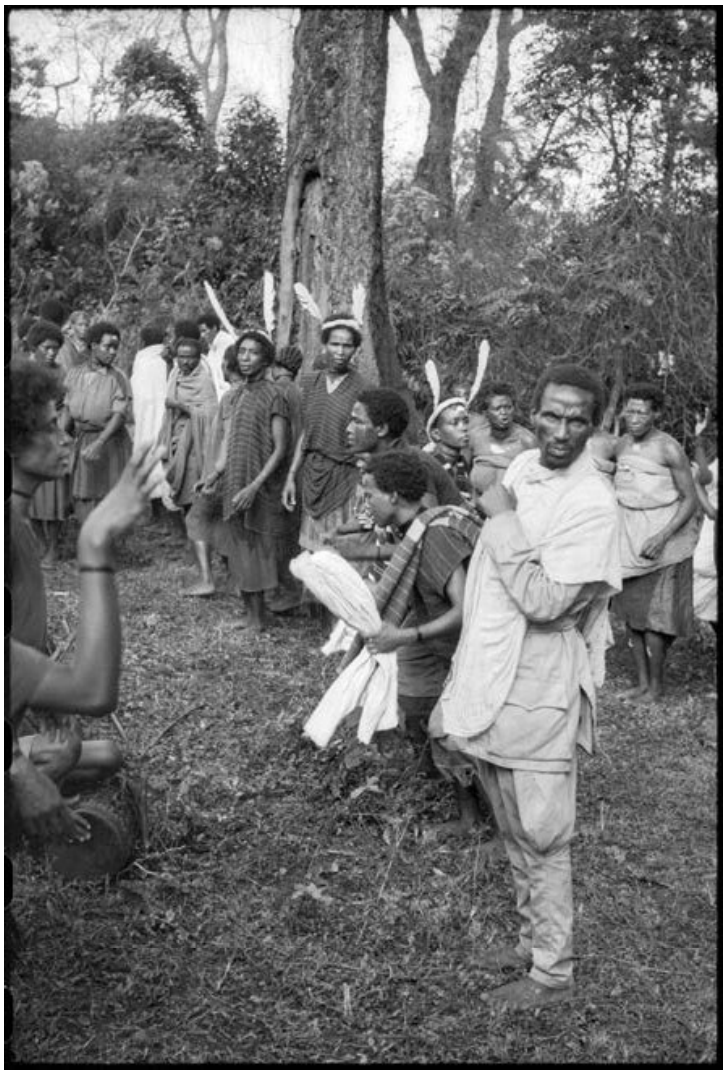


Image 21: Women with feather headdress at funeral feast. The headdress will later be hung on the memorial pole

guests have to be entertained. The food must be prepared with firewood from the demolished house of the deceased. This is the only time when the wood of the house is touched again. Now the time of mourning is also absolutely over for the widows. A relative who lives far away has to find out if the *dibayu* ceremony has already taken place before he can go outside the house and start crying.

Widows can still mourn for their husband if they are at another funeral, but under no circumstances in the deceased's homestead. They may or may not marry younger brothers of the deceased; this does not affect their right to remain in the homestead and to continue to use the land they have previously cultivated. This *dibayu* ceremony at the father's grave can be repeated if the son deems it necessary due to difficulties of any kind.

When a man dies as a Juba, he is not buried in the cemetery, but outside the gate (*dallaä*) that leads through the outer fence at every homestead. In most cases, the farmsteads no longer have this outer fence; but it is never omitted to build at

Image 22: Memorial pole (dufäa)

least the gate or at least to hint at it by attaching one or more crossbars to two coffee trees. The tomb of a Juba is then located outside the gate on the right side, when you look through the gate from the inside to the outside. His wife is also buried there after her death.

At this very gate, between the gate and the first hut, after a year or more, a ceremony called *auwala* (grave), in which a cow is killed, takes place again. It has not become clear whether they first adopted this custom from the Amhara. In any case, they emphasized very strongly that the cow was not killed for the deceased, but only for the son, so that he might be well. But the name of the ceremony and the rule that married daughters and their husbands may eat from the animal, but not the male relatives of the deceased, speaks against it. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that in the past, in this *auwala* ceremony, a yellow fruit (*hidde*) was "slaughtered" (*dule*) by them and only later a sheep or a cow took the place of the fruit. Today the *hidde dule* is used as a defence ceremony against black magic. I will come back to this gate and the bloody sacrifices which are carried out at it.

The ideas of a soul are extremely blurred and unclear among the Gedeo. For soul they use the Oromo word *lubbu*. They have always known that the soul at death takes over the body. But, that the soul goes to God in heaven, they have only learned from the Amhara. On the other hand, one prayer shows that they associate a soul image with the shadow. They say that the shadow (*gadiddu*) does not die and goes to heaven. They pray – for example, when childless – at the grave of the father: "Shadow of my father, shadow of my mother why don't you give me children. You've had children too, now give me some." Then they pour honey water on the grave.

Other ceremonies

The gate

The gate is called *dallaä* and is almost as important as for the peoples west of the Woito River. It is not missing from any homestead, is often built badly and hastily, and yet it is the common shrine of the extended family. If distant relatives also live in the settlement, they must build their houses slightly apart and have their own gate. But if a brother or cousin wishes to settle away, he cannot build his own gate, unless his new home is so far away that he cannot be expected to bring the animals to the old gate. The owner of the gate, who is always the oldest man of the family, can give him permission to build his own gate by bringing a piece of glowing firewood to his new place of residence.

I have already mentioned one blood sacrifice made at this gate, but it is unclear if it occurs only due to Amharic influence. Furthermore, the sacrifice of a sheep takes place at this gate on average once a year. The prayer formula is: "God of my father, God of my mother, God of my grandfather, God of my grandmother keep sickness away, give child blessings, give crops, etc." They [the Gedeo] never mention a prayer for livestock, but if you ask them, they say that of course they knew one.

Then the blood of the sheep is sprinkled first on all the houses that belong to the farm, then up to heaven, then in the four directions. Then a small piece of each part of the sheep that is inside the fleece is laid down on a green leaf somewhere in a sheltered place on the farm with the words: "God take this and eat this."

The following is given as justification for this. Of the sheep, only the blood and these small pieces belong to God. The goat, on the other hand, belongs to God altogether. One would never dare to slaughter and consume a goat alone in the very narrowest family circle. God would be very angry about this. But he is not angry if all adult people from the neighbourhood are invited. It is customary at these sacrifices at the farm gate, but only for the goat sacrifice, to cut the goat's skin into rings and distribute it among the participants of the feast.

During this ceremonial slaughter at the gate, a Luba or Juba must always be present. Should such a person not be present in the family, then someone from outside, but a close relative of course, must be invited.

Image 23: Example of a gate

The gate does not play any role in everyday life, it is simply ignored as if it did not exist. Only in ceremonial life does it come into action. When the Raba go out on the *dida* hunt, when they return, when the Luba cuts his *bokku* stick, when the Juba goes out to cut the *wuadässa* stick – on all these occasions the Gedeo go out through the gate and return through the gate as well.

If the owner of a gate is *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*) and his son is called Luba *haiyu*, while he [the *haiyu*] is still alive, his son must have his own gate, which he uses only as a ceremonial exit. The blood sacrifices continue to take place at the gate of the father, who is still allowed to slaughter as Gudurru. Only when he becomes Kolulu does the son inherit the gate.

Killing

The man who has killed big game experiences the utmost honour that these nations have to give. It is quite similar with the Gedeo as with all other peoples of southern Ethiopia, therefore, it is summarized here briefly. The killing of humans only counts if the cut-off penis is brought as evidence. Killing women was highly frowned upon. The next most important thing in killing success [after a male human] was a lion or an elephant. Such a man got his whole mop of hair thickly anointed with butter, since the Gedeo have a great preference for this kind of use for butter. It is the custom of all southern Ethiopian peoples to rub their hair with butter – for example, the bride at her wedding – but nowhere have we seen it so often as with the Gedeo. Not a day goes by when you do not see pass by many women, their heads completely white and extremely unappetizingly thickly smeared with butter, and men, a piece of hair from the swirl [crown of the head] glued with butter onto the forehead. It is men and women who come from gatherings. No guest can leave the house without being anointed with butter. There is some resistance to the expression "anointed", but it is undoubtedly the same idea that underlies this expression in the Bible and here. Here and there we are not able to make a sense of custom. Because the women do so well with the butter, they have to sleep at night on the neck rest, which is used by the men everywhere else in northeast Africa. Here among the Gedeo, the man only uses the neck rest when he has killed something.

When he moves out [for killing], he colours his hair and the upper half of his face red with *sorsa* soil. If he returns successfully, his upper face is rubbed with white paint (*borre*) and he has the white feathers of a *humo* bird or other white feathers in his hair. Now the *werre'o* festival takes place, which is counted as a pronounced age grade festival. The *abba gada* (traditional leader), *jallaba* (deputy leader), *roga* (district head) etc. appear, and the *abba gada* is served first, even when there are people of the group of four present – precisely because it is a festival that belongs to *djila*. Now he [the killer] is no longer *monesa* i.e. a man who has not yet had any killing successes, but he is an *edjäsu*. By the way, the Juba do not become *edjäsu* just by killing a mouse or a butterfly, nor do the Raba by participating in the common buffalo hunt. On the other hand, the one who himself [i.e. the one who actually] kills the buffalo or a lion becomes *edjäsu*. The Gedeo had a close friendship with the Guji, but only with the Guji in the west of their territory. They call these Guji Aladu or Alaba. The other groups in the east and south of their country, the Uraga and Jemjem, were killed by them as well as the Sidama, Wolaita, and Amarro.

The ketala ceremony

To hold this ceremony, which has a distinctly festive character, several men's houses are united. In our camp, for example, the men's houses under Dekamo

Image 24: Woman returns from a gathering with butter in her hair

Bonoiye united. The ceremony is held when disease or epidemics accumulate and is intended to remove them, but is also held prophylactically. All the people who belong to the men's houses gather and dance. The *murra* (messengers) cut two plants called *bitta*, consisting of the plants *gorra* and *hadässa*, and give them to the *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*) who dance with the *bitta* in their hands. The elderly pray to Magenno and Butina that sickness will stay away from them and curse the plagues and sin (*tshubotte*), because they assume that sin comes to the sinner and forces him to do sin. Finally, the *haiyu* walk around the whole people with the *bitta* plants four times counterclockwise and then walk with the plants to a place called *mata murra* (= cut off the head) south of Banko and throw away the *bitta* plants. In the past, epidemics went away immediately after this ceremony; today, unfortunately, it is more difficult to get rid of epidemics, because people are more sinful than before.

Protection against theft in the fields

To protect against theft in the fields, the Gedeo stick defence signs (*tare*) into the earth in a clearly visible place, just like the Sidama. Three types of these signs were named to me, which have to be put into the field by three different groups of people themselves and also have to be removed again before the harvest. [For one of these signs] it is the *wojjicha*, the doctor of the Gedeo, who puts the *moro* from the lower part of the leafstalk of the ensete (so called because it resembles the *mora*, the abdominal fat of slaughtered animals) into the field for a client.

Image 25: Tare sign

The thief will sense this *tare* sign by the fact that his body will swell very strongly. Then he must go to a *wojjicha* for treatment, which is most effective when he confesses his act and pays some punishment to the *wojjicha*.

The Banqano people, who have a special relationship with lightning (see p. 37), are the second group of people who can protect the fields. Just as among

the Sidama, they put the tree parasite which is called *bado* here into the field. The thief is then struck down by lightning.

Finally, the small *kallu* or the *maginnin kanna* (see p. 81) are responsible for safety in the fields. They work with white ostrich feathers, which they set up in the fields. The thief expects an invisible bird to bite his nose so that it bleeds. Securing the fields naturally costs something, usually a small part of the harvest, which compensates those whose special skills have been used.

Adoption

Foreign-born, mostly Guji, adult men and only in rare cases small Gedeo children from the next of kin are adopted. The adoption of a foreign-born adult can happen for two reasons. Firstly, just like with the Sidama, you can adopt a trader so that he is considered to be Gedeo. However, the Gedeo claim that they have always let traders go free. Secondly, in this way, a childless man can exchange his property for services during his lifetime. It is said to happen frequently that a Gedeo adopts a Guji in this way.

The ceremony is as follows. The relatives of the adopter are called together and the heads of both the adopter and the person to be adopted are shaved bald. In the presence of the relatives, the adopter ties a cotton thread around the neck of the adoptee and says: "This is my son." The whole assembly is then catered for, and this concludes the ceremony. Contrary to my earlier statement (Jensen 1936:326), blacksmiths have nothing to do with this.

Adopting a Gedeo is considered impossible unless it involves the small child of a brother or another close relative. This happens so rarely because a man generally still hopes to have children of his own. He has to make this decision [to adopt] while the child [to be adopted] is still in the womb. His own wife then has to buy a cloth for the future mother, with which the child is rubbed at birth. He can then adopt this child later. But it is not even necessary to adopt a brother's child in this way. If he does not love his brother and therefore does not want him to inherit his property, he can simply call the old men together and declare that the son of his brother shall have his property. This young man then behaves like his own son when the childless man dies, i.e. he tears the cotton cord that he wears around his neck, which only happens when father and mother die.

The sharre ceremony at the kallu

Once a year, the *kallu* (traditional leader) of the Guji invites [all inhabitants of his territory] to the *sharre* (in Oromo language *mogassa*) ceremony. Those Gedeo who live on former Guji territory – i.e. part of Dibatta and Rigatta – are also invited. The Gedeo present the *kallu* with coffee, ensete and barley and are blessed in return. They receive two calabashes of *bulbulla* (honey water), one for Dibatta

and one for Rigatta, from which men, women and children drink to share the blessing.

The *kallu* of the Guji has come down from heaven and takes his power to heal sickness, bring child blessings and foretell the future directly from God. He is hence the great *kallu*. With the other small *kallu*, of which each Gedeo clan has several, one does not know exactly where they derive their power from. The only interesting thing I noticed about this information was that the Gedeo used exactly the same word, *kallu*, for the traditional leader of the Guji and for their magic priests. But they never mentioned the *kallu* of the Guji in the singular form *kallica*. It is obviously a form of honour when one speaks of him in the plural, in the same way as in the Oromo language the plural form for "good day" is used even if one is only greeting one person one intends to honour.

Rain and locusts

There are neither rain nor locust priests among the Gedeo. When the rain comes too late, all the people gather at the highest men's house in Banko. The men then pray all at once to Magenno for rain. The women make the shrill screams that they produce on all occasions and that they call *ilile* (ululation). Then rain comes immediately.

When the locusts come in large flocks, the first one who notices it must immediately shout out loud; all the people then join in. The men hurry to the men's house with their spears, the women with their sticks. The spears and sticks are held to the west and in a loud chant the locusts are told to disappear to the west beyond Lake Abaya and be destroyed there.

Gogorre

The *gogorre* institution is also known as the age grade of women. It is a means to defend oneself against slander. If, for example, a man scolds a woman, calls her a bitch and talks about the bad smell she emits, and does all this only because he was turned down by her, the woman – if she gets wind of it – can defend herself against it in the following way. She complains to the wife of the highest *haiyu* (legal expert at the *songo*), in our case to the wife of Burssa. If the latter comes to the conclusion that the plaintiff is right, on a certain day she calls together all the women of the district, who together storm the house of the slanderer, biting and scratching him and above all pulling at his penis, trying to tear it off until the relatives redeem him by paying a sum of money for the women to let go of him. After this raid, the women then sing and dance the special *gogorre* dance in the man's homestead.

Forms of patient healing

There is hardly any other area ([in terms of subject] and incidentally in the whole of southern Ethiopia) where such blurred ideas prevail as in that of healing the sick. It may also be that research has not succeeded in penetrating so far that the ideas appear clear and concise. Probably both are the case. The Gedeo, as a particularly superstitious people, have healers in various forms and a very large number of them. At a distance of some hundred metres, one repeatedly hears loud singing on different days or during the whole night, sometimes accompanied by drums. Then the various healers there are always at work. Nevertheless, we did not succeed in getting to one of these healers in Gedeo, although we tried very hard. In response to our alleged illnesses, we always got the answer, we should try this and that and not forget to promise the healer a sum of money if it would help.

The most common name for the different types of healers is *maginnin kanna*, which roughly corresponds to the *abba waqa* of the Guji. If they do not think much of a doctor, they call him *gofitsha*, which is meant as a kind of insult. I have observed, however, that they hardly ever say of a certain medicine man that he is a *gofitsha*, for fear of his mysterious power; rather they say summarily that in former times the *maginnin kanna* were empowered by God, but that today's are only *gofitsha*.

First of all, the *maginnin kanna* include the *kallu*, which – presumably in imitation of the great *kallu* and chief of the Guji – promise child blessings and healing of sickness through prayer, blessing and advice on blood sacrifices. They say, for example, that the sacrificial animal must have a certain colour, in which direction the blood of the sacrificed animal should be sprayed and whether the patient should crawl through the fur or not. Payment for this type of treatment is always due only after the patient has been cured.

Also included are those *kallu* who use very similar means to combat the disease, but who fall into a trance and speak with a different voice. This is the voice of God, whose medium they are. The way of healing is very similar to the previous kind. I happened to be told about the *kallitsha* method for treating scabies. The medium tells the patient to rub the green stomach contents of the sacrificed animal on the itchy spots. The patient eats the sacrificed animal together with his relatives, and then proceeds with the stomach contents according to the advice of the *kallitsha*.

Then there are the *chidäsa*. Under the name, again quite different types of healers are summarized. First the circumcision doctors were called that and they probably gave the whole group the name (*chidan* = testicle). Since the Gedeo had no livestock in earlier times, the Oromo name for the one who knows how to castrate was probably transferred to the circumcision doctor. Their category also includes *chidäsa*, who specialize in arm or leg fractures and in dislocated bones. We got to know a special case of the treatment by such a *chidäsa* of the

approximately 12-year-old son of the chief of Banko. He had injured his shin when he was playing. The *chidäsa* wanted to heal the wound by inserting a small piece of green wood into the wound, obviously with the idea of giving the pus an opportunity to drain off along the wood. But the boy developed a high fever and strong glandular swellings, which went down immediately after we removed this piece of wood. Unfortunately, the father was not willing to take his boy to the hospital in Yirga Alem.

In addition to these surgeons, there are also specialized internists and dermatologists. While surgeons mainly have to prove their skills, internists and dermatologists have inherited their knowledge from their fathers. They possess medicines about which one can learn absolutely nothing, because the medicine would become ineffective if you talked about it.

Another kind of *chidäsa* are the *wojju*. They heal with magic power and magical means. They take grass in their mouth and chew it thoroughly. Then they spit on the wound or the diseased area and rub the saliva on it.

The age grade order is especially consulted in cases of childlessness. The couple in question invites one *haiyu* and one *chidäsa* to their home and slaughters a sheep. The woman's body is smeared with blood. This is followed by a prayer: "God of the earth, God of the sky, God of *abba gada*, God of *jallaba*, God of *roga*, God of *jalqaba*, God of clan Derasha etc. (all seven clans are enumerated) give this woman child blessing." If the woman has not had a child after a year, she is considered hopelessly infertile.

With the belief in God's spirit, of which the *maginnin kanna* are possessed, is connected a belief in the spirit of a bird, of which they [the *maginnin kanna*] are also possessed. The Gedeo call this bird simply *simbirra*, which in Oromo language means bird (the Arsi call it *laboba*). The spirit of this bird was created from a goat, according to the Gedeo, to explain why this bird is so fond of goats. When the *maginnin kanna* speaks in a trance with a changed voice, the spirit of the bird speaks out of it. If this spirit then says something bad about the *maginnin kanna*, the gathered are convinced that he will do something bad to him. They promise him goats and *dadi* (honey mead), whereupon he is completely satisfied and does not harm the *maginnin kanna* anymore. The *maginnin kanna* is empowered by the bird's spirit to heal the sick. By the way, this bird is also surrounded with holy shyness by all Oromo. When you hear him scream, you have to bend down immediately, pick grass and put it on your head. It is also believed that cattle or mules become sick or die when his shadow falls on them.

Many of the manipulations of all medicine men are directed against evil influences, which are believed to be the cause of most diseases. So, infinitely much is attributed to the evil eye or direct actions of black magic, which like the black magician is known as *falfalla.* No one was able to show us in which way the *falfalla* works – because no one is a *falfalla* and therefore cannot know what he is doing

[i.e. no one admits to being a *falfalla*] – but people were firmly convinced of his effectiveness, up to the assumption that someone could be killed by black magic.

When you go to the market to buy wooden things, they are wrapped in ensete leaves, because someone might hit them with his eyes [i.e. give it the evil eye], which would cause the wood to crack. One knows this characteristic of wood and tries to work new wooden things efficiently with butter. Nevertheless, one is convinced that a bad person is causing it [the cracking].

When building a house, the place where the central pole will later stand is designated by an ensete plant, because a person with the evil eye will supposedly not notice that a new house is being built here, but think it is a garden.

Image 26: House building: Ensete plant at the site of the central pole

Two examples for the defence against black magic.

[1] If the fruit on someone's barley field stands much better than the fruit on the neighbouring fields, then it is absolutely necessary for the owner to do the following ceremony. In the evening, shortly before sunset, he slaughters a sheep

in his house. When he cuts the throat of the sheep, he says, "The *falfalla* shall die!" He takes some of the blood between thumb and forefinger and throws it to the west and says to it: "God will make *falfalla* disappear as the sun is going down now!" The green stomach contents are deposited outside the house and the sheep are eaten.

[2] The Gedeo do not have the practical custom, like the Sidama and Guji, that a girl who is abandoned can simply throw her stick into the house of the chosen one [i.e. the man she chooses] and be married. When a girl gets older and still has not found a man, it is evident that a *falfalla* is involved. Parents take the girl to a *maginnin kanna* and he can advise on various defensive measures. One of them is the following. You put a pot of water on the fire and let it boil. When the steam rises, they say: "Let this girl's lot rise like this steam!" Immediately afterwards they throw a small piece of glowing firewood into the water, which goes out with a hissing sound. Then they say: "So shall it be done to the *falfalla* who works to the disadvantage of this girl!"

There are no Muslims in Gedeo country, they are all Christians they declare with pride. But there are many followers of the God of Sheik Hussein. This movement does indeed have many followers among the Gedeo and on Fridays you can usually hear the devotional churches singing loudly: "*Alla hu mirham*, Sheik Hussein!" The singers do not understand the Arabic text they are singing and our Arabic-speaking interpreter translates: *Alla* is the name of the god to whom Sheik Hussein prays, *mirham* means grace. In the main, however, these congregations look after themselves, because the services culminate in the healing of the sick. Some natives claim to be possessed by Hussein and that he gave them the ability to cure diseases.

Near our camp lived a man, Bitola, who was possessed by the spirit of Sheik Hussein. He gathered his congregation on Fridays under a tree that he had made into an *aduari* tree because under it the delegates of Sheik Hussein had first sung and danced. From time to time, some members of his community would go into a trance – also infested with the spirit of Sheik Hussein – who Bitola would then fan with ostrich feathers and order to get up again.

Serendipitously, his wife Loni was possessed by the Christian spirit Mariam. She gathered mostly the same congregation on Sunday, sang the same Arabic song with them, did the same ritual in every respect as her husband. For simplicity's sake, Bitola also did the fanning with the ostrich feathers on Sunday, this time in the service of Mariam. Loni had inherited the spirit from her father and had a reputation for curing epilepsy in particular.

Miscellaneous data

Given the great similarity of the culture of the Gedeo to that of the Sidama, the life cycle is also more or less the same. Here are only some features from the Gedeo culture mentioned, as far as they are different from the corresponding ones of the Sidama. Sometimes there are also additions, which we do not know whether they do not also occur with the Sidama, either because we have not seen them or because they did not occur in conversations with the Sidama.

As an essential difference between the two groups, I would like to state that at least some Sidama had a burning interest in the history of their country and that the knowledge about it was highly respected by the people. Even if some Gedeo could list their family trees up to 13 or 14 generations, the real interest in connecting these family trees with each other and with other facts was missing.

Partly this was due to the fact that Sidama (as well as Wolaita) had been seized by an earlier Christian wave in the fifteenth century and that there was still a certain memory of it. But this Christianization seems to have reached its southernmost point in Sidama, east of the lakes, and never reached Gedeo. A sign for this assumption is that the fitshe (new year) festivity, which is apparently of ancient Amharic origin and has gained so much importance in Sidama, is unknown in Gedeo.

In no other region in southern Ethiopia have we found it so clearly expressed that all tubers are female and all grains are male. The woman also has the right of disposal over the tubers, especially the ensete, which is used for intensive stock management, while most other tubers, such as yams, taro or sweet potatoes, are only taken from the garden when needed. On the other hand, the man has the right of disposal over the grains, which are kept in his own storehouses. If the husband is not present and the wife is to have barley or some other grain, sometimes her own little son can give her what she wants, but under no circumstances can she go to the [grain] loft herself.

Calendar

I have often asked the Gedeo for the names of the days that the *ayana* still knows among the Sidama. Finally, I read them the names as they are common among the Sidama. They remembered the words darkly, but could no longer indicate how many day names they had had in total. They only remembered Dulatte and Adula as lucky days that played a big role before the arrival of the Amhara. It should also be noted that this forgetfulness was not only present among my interlocutors, but is quite common in general, since the calendar no longer has any function in the life of a Gedeo.

The month names they gave me are extremely similar to those of the Sidama, only with some changes: Birra, Onkolesa, Sodasa, Arfasa, Wooja, Tadesa, Bito Tesa, Chantsa, Ela, Wooja Wachi, Adolesa, Hageya, Situ. Since there are 13

names, but usually only 12 months are counted in the area, it is likely that two names fall on one month.

Just like the Sidama, they have a four-day market week. The market is called *diko*.

Cardinal points

Very remarkable for southern Ethiopia are the names of the cardinal points, which I have consequently checked repeatedly. East means *alle* (up), west *ade* (below), north means *mida* (right), and south *bitate* (left). This is exactly the opposite of how most other people name the cardinal points. The Guji have the same names as the Gedeo, while the Sidama, Arsi and all the Oromo people up to the Shoa-Oromo can only imagine looking to the east, and consequently have the word for left for north. Deviating from this – and standing alone – the Burji have the designation left for west and right for east.

Myths[28]

The origin myths for the crop plants are not very productive. Allegedly there is no wild ensete in Gedeo. The first ensete came out of a seed, which, in their opinion, was washed up by water. At first it grew only on the banks of the rivers until man found it there and then planted it everywhere. The cereals were found in the green stomach contents of a cow slaughtered for sacrificial purposes.

The sun and the moon fought over who should shine during the day. They both wanted it. Then they fought among themselves and the sun won. The moon fell to the earth in Sibobaute. The Gedeo came together and struck at it with their spears, so that it was badly wounded. Still today you can see it in the spots in the moon. The sun wanted to go back to the east at night, but could see nothing. So she brought the moon back up to the sky and asked it to shine at night. This idea of the sun going back at night is unusual. Most of the southern Ethiopian peoples assume that every morning a new sun comes out, so each sun has only the lifetime of one day; while the moon, according to their conception, has a lifetime of one lunar period, from new moon to new moon.

According to another version, before the battle with the moon, the sun had two eyes, one shining by day, the other by night. The night eye was destroyed in the battle between the sun and the moon.

Purity

Although the Gedeo are considered by other peoples to eat impure food [e.g. wild boar], they do have a concept of purity, which is mainly related to the sphere of

[28] Numerous myths that Jensen and his team collected during the expedition in 1934/35 are published in Jensen (1936:490ff).

sexual life. A menstruating woman is unclean and one abstains during this time from sexual intercourse. Men are unclean if they have had sexual intercourse the night before. Beer preparation is subject to particularly strict rules with regard to the purity of the women involved in its preparation. You must be sexually abstinent during this time.

The Gedeo have neither a place for giving birth nor a special hut for menstruating women. When a child is born, many women flock together, not men. If it is a boy, everything happens four times, with a girl three times.

Marriage

Before the arrival of the Amhara, allegedly, no bride price had been customary.

The woman was chosen from a district as far away as possible. In the past, this had been prescribed anyway, because the two exogamous groups – *shole bate* and *sasse bate* (see p. 35) – settled separately in the Gedeo region. This form of bridal choice was also praised because it prevented the woman from running away too quickly from her husband. If the woman nevertheless ran away and no reconciliation occurred, the marriage was dissolved.

The courtship and wedding take place in very similar forms as with the Sidama. The bride must also receive a cane from her father beforehand, but also a headrest, which she only receives when she moves into her own house.

At the wedding, a friend (*jala*) plays a particular role. He has to live close to her parental home, because she spends the first four days and nights in his house. Eight friends of the groom pick her up late at night from her father. Armed with her staff, she walks very, very slowly to the house of the *jala*. The friends sing and dance along. Finally, they escort her to the house of the *jala*, where the groom is not present at first. Only when his friends have left, he enters the house. The parents of the groom have a special ensete food (*genbi*), which is eaten now. Then the game begins that is often played by southern Ethiopian peoples: she refuses to eat. Then the bridegroom puts ten Ethiopian thalers before her and asks her to eat. She still refuses. Another ten thalers should change her mind. The amount of the sum the bridegroom has to pay naturally varies according to wealth. Finally, she says she is full. Then the bridegroom puts on the jewellery that he wants to give her. Then they eat together and sleep together in the house of the *jala*.

This *jala* is always a married man, as can be seen from the fact that he has his own house. I was expressly assured that – in contrast to the Sidama – he regarded the bride as his sister and had treated her accordingly in the past.

After four days she follows her husband at a normal pace to her in-laws' house. Here begins – at least in our terms – a terrible time for them. She is not allowed to leave her parents-in-law's house nor to do anything that gives her movement. In front of the in-laws' house a kind of veranda is built, which immediately shows that there is a newly married bride in the house. The richer and more distinguished

a man is, the longer he must lock up his wife in this way, sometimes up to three years. If the man is less rich or attaches less importance to etiquette, he may let her move at three months. It seems that this custom is related to the beauty ideal of fat women, for men always emphasize that women become fat from good food and lack of exercise during this time. If they didn't get fat, you would look at the man with a certain disdain.

A new house for the young couple will only be built after this seclusion is over. The young man must never see his parents-in-law, and they must never enter the house built for the young couple.

Appendix

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List of illustrations

Glossary

(all terms, unless otherwise indicated, are in Gedeo language)

abba gada	highest traditional leader
ade	west, below
agenjo	moon
akaku	“grandfathers”, old established group of the Gedeo
alle	east, up
arisho	sun
auwala	ceremony one year or more after a burial
awado	leather workers and blacksmiths
baalle	“feather”, age grade
bado	tree parasite
bitate	south, left
bobasa	leaders of the *dida dula*
bokku	phallus-shaped sticks from olive tree
borati	stone tool
borre	white soil used for painting
bulgu	man-eater
burqi anna	“father of the well”, honorary hereditary title
cacu	leather bracelet of women decorated with cowrie shells
caffe anna	“father of the pasture”, honorary hereditary title
chenyicha	strips of animal hide that are worn around the neck, arm and fingers
chidäsa	healer
dadi	honey mead
dalatta	“the one who is born”, group of newcomers to Gedeo
dallaä	gate of a homestead
dibayu	ceremony that marks the end of mourning
dida	ceremonies at the end of an age grade
diko	market
dida dula	ceremonial hunt
djalo	wives of the *jala*
djila	general term for everything sacred to the Gedeo, especially for everything related to the age grade institution
dufäa	masts erected at tombs of killers
edjäsu	killer
edjirsa	olive tree
eräsa	graveyard
falfalla	black magician

fatitsha	deputy of the *murticha*
foqo	provisional hut
gadiddu	shadow
genbi	special ensete food, eaten at wedding
gofitsha	insulting name for healer
gogorre	institution and dance of women to defend oneself against slander
gonadde	person who is not circumcised because of fear
gossa	clan
guta	hairstyle of the Juba
hare	donkey
haiyu	legal experts at the *songo*
hidde dule	defence ceremony against black magic
ilmo	son
jala	friend that plays a special role during a wedding
jallaba	deputy of the *abba gada*
kadadu	relationship between different age group grades
kalacha	phallic headband
kallu	Gedeo: magic priest/ Guji: traditional leader
ketala	cleansing ceremony
lubbu	soul
maginnin kanna	healer
mate	circumcised man
mida	north, right
mina	“house”, sub-group of a clan
mindo muranne	“cutting the penis”, circumcision
monesa	man who did not kill
mora	stomach fat of a bull
moro	lower part of the leafstalk of the ensete
mukanesa	tree (*croton macrostachyuss*)
murra	messenger
murticha	leader of the Raba age grade
ofoldäni	“he sat down”, circumcision
olka	period of festivals and ceremonies belonging to the age grade system
olo	“doll”, sub-group of a clan
roga	district head
shole bate	“four homesteads”, moiety consisting of four clans living in the north of the country
sasse bate	“three homesteads”, moiety consisting of three clans living in the south
songo	men’s house or neighbourhood assembly

sorsa	red soil used for painting
tare	defence signs in the field to protect from theft
tshubotte	sin
tuladne	ceremony of making piles
uoma	foreigner
warraiye	partridge, *wollima* in Sidamo
watta	potter
werre'o	age grade festival
wogesa	circumcision specialist
wojju/icha	healer
wolchoke	dog
wudisha	feast of the dead

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Kolulu	name of Gedeo age grade class	43, 55, 56, 57, 75
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Logoda	Gedeo clan name	35, 39, 42, 44, 49, 59
Luba	name of Gedeo age grade class of chief political responsibility	6, 31, 43, 44, 45, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 61, 71, 75
Lumasa	name of Gedeo age grade class	31, 43, 57
Magenno	heavenly God, male	7, 69, 77, 80
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