

AFRICUS ERITREA



N. 14

Periodico Culturale dell'Associazione Onlus Italia Eritrea

giugno 2013





PERIODICO CULTURALE DELL'ASSOCIAZIONE
ITALIA ERITREA ONLUS
Trimestrale - Reg. Trib. di Roma 87/2005 del 9/03/2005
Via Dei Gracchi, 278 - 00192 Roma
Tel. 348 40 67 111 - Fax 06 32 43 823
www.assiter.org - e.mail: iteronlus@yahoo.it

Direttore responsabile: Lidia Corbezzolo
Redazione: Lidia Corbezzolo, Nahom Haile, Pier Luigi Manocchio, Franco Piredda

In collaborazione:



**Ambasciata dello Stato
di Eritrea**



eritreairitrea.com



Istituto di Cultura Eritrea



SOMMARIO

	pag.
<i>Iter</i>	
Editoriale	3
<i>Lidia Corbezzolo</i>	
<i>Eritrea</i>	
Gender Empowerment: Employing Our Full Potential	4
<i>Daniel Semere</i>	
Intercultural Musical Fusion for a Sizzling Performance	6
<i>Meron Abraha</i>	
Monasteries of Mummies in Eritrea	8
<i>Daniel Semere</i>	
... On Beliefs and Superstitions	10
<i>Meron Abraha</i>	
Wedding in the Hidareb Ethnic Group	12
<i>Daniel Semere</i>	
Funeral Ceremony in Tigre Society	14
<i>Daniel Semere</i>	

Archivio fotografico: Antioco Lusci

Progetto grafico e Stampa: Arti Grafiche San Marcello S.r.l.
Viale Regina Margherita, 176 - 00198 Roma

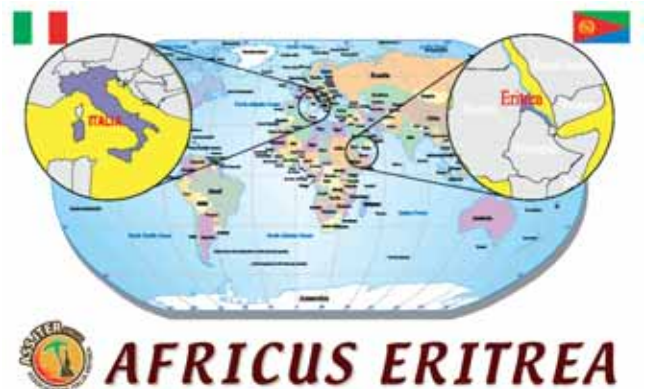
Abbonamento annuale euro 25,00

Ass.Iter Onlus c/c postale n. 84275023

Finito di stampare: giugno 2013

In copertina: Keren (foto Lusci)

Hanno collaborato a questo numero: Lidia Corbezzolo,
Nahom Haile, Antioco Lusci, Daniel Semere, Meron Abraha



EDITORIALE

di Lidia Corbezzolo

Carissimi Amici e Carissime Amiche

È in pieno svolgimento alla Scuola di Medicina dello Sport- Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore-Policlinico Gemelli e all'UOC Fisiopatologia e Riabilitazione Respiratoria, la formazione in medicina dello Sport del dott. Eyob Tesfasellasi per il progetto Asmara Benefiting Sport Activities.

Per Asmara sarà un progetto molto importante perché coinvolgerà gli atleti di tutte le discipline ed i medici eritrei quando la formazione medica sarà fatta in loco.



*Università Cattolica Policlinico Gemelli
Dott. Massimiliano Bianco, Dott. Flaviano Giorgiano, Prof.
Paolo Zeppilli, Dott. Eyob Tesfasellasi, Lidia Corbezzolo*



Dott. Brunori, Direttore dell'UOC e il dott. Eyob

Ringrazio veramente di cuore i sostenitori di questo progetto : il dott. Mario Ruffin, il dott. Piero Manocchio, la dott.ssa Giovanna Gargano, La Solidarietà Alitalia Onlus, il sig. F.G. Amiji, ed il Comune di Roma che ci ha concesso la proroga della rendicontazione al 30 giugno 2014.

Con grande fatica ma anche con grande entusiasmo stiamo procedendo affinché in Asmara si possa aprire il Centro di Medicina dello Sport.



*Dott. Eyob e Lidia Corbezzolo al Policlinico Umberto I
al Reparto UOC Fisiopatologia e Riabilitazione
Malattie Respiratorie*

GENDER EMPOWERMENT: EMPLOYING OUR FULL POTENTIAL

by *Daniel Semere*



Of all the bad and disgraceful experiences the world has ever seen, those that have an effect on a specific or targeted group as a whole have secured a black point in history. There were colonialism, apartheid, caste system, ethnic cleansing, etc. The seriousness of these is that the effect is holistic influencing the whole member of a specific group. This means, when it deprives a chance it does so to the whole, hence it makes the cost much heavier. One such experience that has a global manifestation or which is pervasive everywhere is gender inequality. It is a sad fact that women share equal role and burden in raising a society but seen and treated as less. They have been subjected to various forms of suppression by the same society they nurture as their lives are severely constrained by cultures that limited them to the role of “keeper of the family,” which is often justified by the female capacity to give birth to children. What makes this even worse is that the cost transcends this particular group and affects the whole society as it cripples half of the potential resources and achievements that could be harvested.

Societies’ marginalizing of half of their members in such improvidence for so long perhaps starts from the moment of birth which then on is solidified and endorsed vigorously. In many societies there is severe discrimination on the basis of gender which starts even from the birth of the child. While the birth of a boy is celebrated with gunfire and distributing sweets and food, the birth of girl is usually considered as an unlucky incident if not as shame. They are also subjected to many

harmful cultural practices like genital mutilation and others. The girls then are forced to stay in houses and are rarely sent for education. Girls are married off without their will through exchange marriages and selling the girls into marriage. The result of this is that it forms identity by which young people accept ascribed roles and limit them within that framework. The fact that reproductive work, childcare and household chores are seen as the natural responsibility of women poses a major obstacle that women have to confront in order to achieve equal opportunities. In effect, this attribution of roles determines an unequal access and control of resources and opportunities, which negatively affects women’s self esteem, self-confidence, and eventually lowers their social and labor performance.

In our country, Eritrea equality of women was demonstrated a while ago through their active participation in the armed struggle where they’ve shown outstanding qualities that they could be reliable partners in any and every task provided the opportunity. In this respect many thing might have been achieved in our country especially when compared with our counterparts in the developing world. However, in ensuring their equality in each and every opportunity, there is still a lot of work to be done. To these end government bodies and particularly the National Union of Eritrean Women and the society as a whole have been working relentlessly and as a result a lot of improvement have been achieved.

The National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS) has also





been working on gender empowerment as one of its main program areas targeting the youth and students in particular.

It has therefore a project office dealing with gender issues. As stipulated in its programs it tries to empower young women by increasing awareness of gender-based violence and rights of women, by providing capacity building trainings, and by also trying to improve access to and equality of health services and education. This task aspires to produce gender sensitive and well balanced Eritrean youth and also endeavors to improve the participation of females in higher positions in the society. In doing so, it hopes to help protect the fundamental human rights of women and also help to sensitize and enhance the awareness of the society on the decisive role of women for the socio-economic, political and cultural transformation of the country. Towards this end the NUEYS has divided its effort in three broad programs mainly dealing with Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting, early marriage, and gender leadership with girl education constituting an independent area of activity.

The NUEYS operates from the deep conviction that these are major reasons why women fail to be educated and lack control over their lives. Hence the effort made is geared toward ensuring that young women and men are aware of the damage caused by the above sad facts. It also endeavors towards raising the awareness of teenagers and the community at large on their consequences. And at last tries to empower and cultivate gender leadership qualities at all levels. These are being done through conducting different researches, giving various training programs and awareness campaigns on the above programs in different levels and areas and mainly in school clubs targeting young people, students and teachers.

Although this task is huge and much has been done, the greatest challenge still remains to be the difficulty of convincing people of the benefits of stopping such deep-rooted practices. And as the program rightly stated, this requires a long term commitment with tenacity and steadfastness, a steady investment in education, and also further research. In this respect collaboration with all partners, both technically and financially, is by all means crucial and hence initiatives should be taken.

The fact is that it will be to no avail to talk about any sort of development while marginalizing half of our, ironically so, invaluable resources. When we come and think of it, there is no part of any

d e v e l o p m e n t
scheme where
women directly or
indirectly affect to
an extent of decisive
level. It, therefore,
should be pointed out that



their critical role in the overall task of the nation should be galvanized by providing them with equal opportunities, acknowledging their natural rights, and hence empowering them for greater accomplishment that would be in the interest of the whole society and indeed to the world.

Finally, it should once again be unequivocally stated that building a healthy society has the female at its center; and so any disadvantage of them has direct relation with the kind of society that is going to be raised. What's more, as females almost everywhere constitute more than half of the society their relegation to a small corner under their qualification no doubt reduces our potential by half. And that's why empowering them is and should be one of the number one task of any development aspiring nation and responsible society.

Daniel Semere, is a researcher at Research and Documentation Center, he is also a columnist in Eritrean profile.

INTERCULTURAL MUSICAL FUSION FOR A SIZZLING PERFORMANCE

by *Meron Abraba*



Most of us know what KKK stands for, but at the musical concert in Cinema Roma in early April these letters evoked a whole lot new meaning: Kunama, Kojack and Kandia.

It's true the

announcer did come up with the most bizarre, but nonetheless appropriate, association of the three initials.

Back to the three K's. The first of course pertains to the Kunama cultural performance, presented by musical wonders Hayle Nati and Meryam Shawish and the Gash Barka Cultural Troupe. The second is a great guitarist from Congo (DRC) and Kandia is a Kora player from Guinea Conakry.

The mix of the three K's worked well to deliver a stupendous performance.

Just like mentioned in one of the concert's promotional posters, Kojack and Kandia do not know each other. They first came to Asmara in 2012 but with different bands. Kandia came in February when he played the Kora for Tiken Jah Fakoly. Kojack came in October accompa-



nying Elie Kamano from Guinea Conakry and Maryse Ngalula from Congo Kinshasa for their concert in Asmara.

Kojack and Kandia both fell in love with Asmara that they didn't hesitate to come back and perform together with Eritreans when the Alliance Française of Asmara extended them an invitation. The result was the big gig at Cinema Roma on April 9, 2013. They had also presented a show in Barentu on Sunday April 7.

In the words of Ms. Cecile Antonietti, the Director of Alliance Française:

"Eritrea unites these artists here and that's why we have called this concert **MADE IN ERITREA.**"

"We chose Gash Barka because we didn't want to remain confined to Asmara when it comes to musical concerts," said Ms. Antonietti.

Explaining that the Alliance Française (AF) supports the cultural exchanges, she went on saying that this show served two purposes: let the Barentu population discover some new music on one hand and allowing the foreign musicians discover in return Gash Barka's rich culture and traditions, because they will after all be spokespersons.

The concert is part of "a cycle of musical encounters called **ENSEMBLE**" (French for together)." In fact, the AF had collaborations with the Anseba region earlier this year when Comorian singer Maalesh gave a workshop to young and promising Eritrean singers, and later gave a concert all together.

And this time around Kandia, Kojack, Kizano (drums) and Gregory (base guitar) have spent 3 days in Barentu, working with Hayle, Meryam and the Gash Barka Cultural Troupe.

"Kunama is one of the many colorful cultures in Eritrea and we thought giving it extra flavor by fusing it with a variety of African beats.

Moreover, Gash Barka music is closer to the Sub-Saharan traditional music,” Ms. Cecile pointed out.

“The fusion between Kandia’s *Kora* and Hayle Nati’s *Abangala* simply had a magical effect,” she said.

When compared with the dances and the dancing arts of the other Eritrean ethnic groups, many will surely agree that Kunama folklore is probably the most varied and complicated in its performance.

Kunama way of dancing has its own particular rhythm and carefully coordinated stepping variations, involving feet-beatings to the rhythm of the dance as well as of the song.

I have always been fascinated by the way of dancing of the Kunama. By “way of dancing” I am referring to the beating of their bead-strung legs, particularly of those of the male dancers, in sync with the rhythm of the music.

I have read somewhere that women are solely responsible for beating drums and that singing too was usually a women’s prerogative, but that during some dances, well-known male singers would take over from the women thus giving and bringing into a dance a particular flavor.

And I witnessed this first hand at the concert. At the huge drums were women, who, to the surprise of all of us viewers, kept beating with both hands for an unfathomable length of time. The lead singers were Meryam Shawish, the Shingrwa star known for her very high-pitched voice, and Hayle Nati, a well-known Kunama vocalist and *Abangala* (a banjo-like instrument) player. With their upbeat music, both artists delivered a bouncy performance to the roaring applause of the packed hall of Cinema Roma.

The dancers and singers of the Gash Barka Cultural Troupe also wowed the audience that evening. Dressed in bright clothes, and the funny-looking stray hats on the top of their heads, the men danced and beat their feet on the stage – so hard that at one time they looked like



they would fall right through.

On stage that night Kojack and Kandia also sang, proving that their vocal talents also equaled their skill for their instruments. Highly energetic and passionate, both performed to an otherwise not so enthusiastic audience – well not as enthusiastic as an audience should be anyways (dancing and jumping on their feet is what is implied here).

Many a time, guest artists have voiced dissatisfaction at the fact that Eritreans are not the loud or cheering type when it comes to live performances, and particularly those featuring foreign musicians.

Nonetheless, the performance earned admiration by the audience, and people were particularly impressed by the way Kojack played his guitar. The kora also had an interesting local touch and provided an opportunity for breathtaking jams with the guitarist and the singers.

Delivering her opening remarks just before the concert, Ms. Cecile said:

“This is one of the most exciting projects I have ever worked on. It was the first time for the Alliance to work in Barentu and I hope it’s not the last. Barentu was very warm, but the welcome was even warmer.”

The concert was sponsored by the Alliance Française of Asmara in collaboration with the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), the Gash Barka Administration and the PFDJ Bureau of Cultural Affairs.

Meron Abraha, is journalist and web chief editor for Shaebia.org.

MONASTRIES OF MUMMIES IN ERITREA

by Daniel Semere



The practice of mummification has existed in Egypt since ancient times and latterly in Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. In Eritrea, mummified corpses are found in the Debre Libanos monastic complex of Ham, in the Btsu-Amlak monastery in Debarwa, and in the Enda Tsadkan monastery in Deqqi-Shehai. Moreover, some accounts and oral traditions state that bodies in the caves of Matara, Bareknaha, and Hargom were wrapped in similar way to those in Ham and other monasteries. They remained un-deteriorated for long periods of time. According to some monastic sources in Debre Libanos the mummified corpses consisted of about five hundred well preserved individuals. There is a slight overlap of time between the final disappearance of embalming in Egypt, which according to some scholars occurred in the 7th century AD, and the emerging of it in Eritrea in the 5th century AD. Except for isolated visits and reports by some concerned individuals the mummies have not been studied scientifically.

The Debre Libanos monastic complex is one of the ancient monasteries in the Horn of Africa. Different sources state that the Syrian missionary Abba Meta or Libanos founded it probably at the end of the 5th century. Abba Libanos was a monk who was born in a wealthy family in Byzantium and came to Eritrea in the period from 463 - 470 A.D. Abba Libanos taught and spread Christianity over much of the country, before he eventually made Ham his residence. The mummies found in Debre Mariam in Ham are believed to be as old as the monastery. Most of the bodies have been well preserved and in

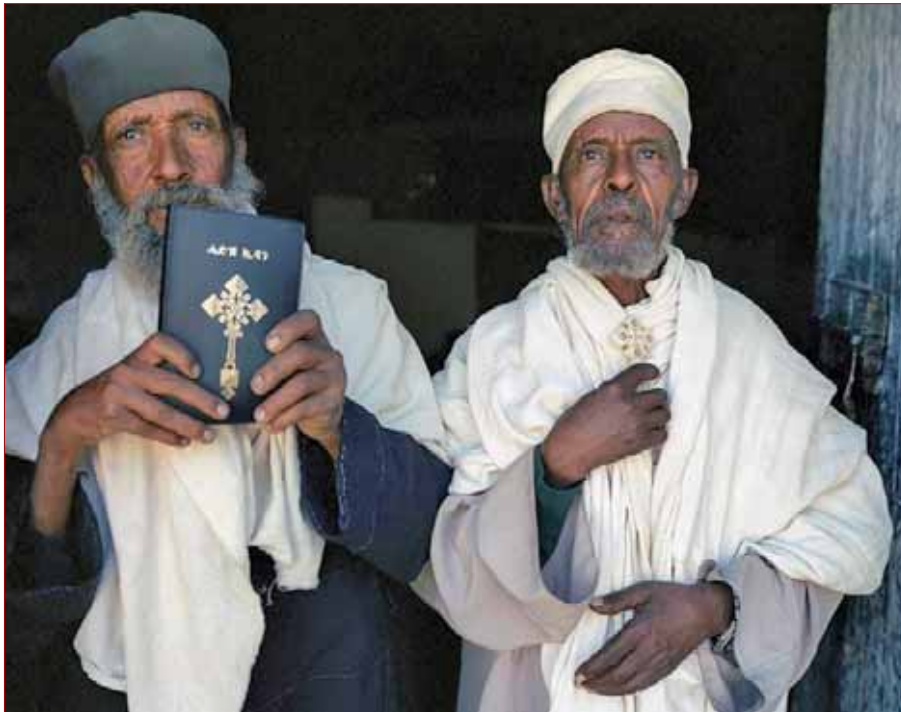
good condition for about 1500 years.

Almost all the monasteries in Eritrea are found on the sheer cliffs of mountains such as Bizen, Tseda-Emba, Debre-Sina, Mariam Ayla, Libanous and Btsu-Amlak, and one has to travel for several hours in order to get there. This is mainly because when the monks first came to these regions they chose to settle in very isolated and mountainous areas. Various sources and oral histories indicate that these monks who came from the Middle East founded most of the monasteries in Eritrea. The group of monks who came from Syria, for instance, finally located themselves in the mountain of Emba Soira. They are jointly referred as *Tesaetu Kedusan* (nine saints). As the name indicates the mountain is named after the country where they had come from. Their biography illustrates that these monks were living in monasteries of similar habitat in their home countries. Except for Deki-shihai and Himberti, which are located in Zoba Maekel, all the other monasteries and caves where mummified corpse are believed to be preserved are located in remote places in the southern region of Eritrea. The Debre Libanous monastic complex for instance is located close to the Eritrean-Ethiopian border near Zal Ambessa. It was originally located in the village of Ham,



but has now moved to its presently accessible location perched on the edge of a cliff below the Ham plateau. Various visitors to the place have confirmed that the approach to the monastery is extremely difficult since one has to climb a steep cliff. It is about 150 Km south from the capital of Asmara, and there is a stiff walk of three to four hours in order to reach the monastery in the plateau. Matara, Bareknaha, and Hargom are similarly distant and are located near Senafe. These caves, moreover, require

a walk of not less than three hours. The Libanous monastery in Guhetsea near Mendefera is also in the southern region though relatively closer than the others. It is located some 60 Km from the capital of Asmara. All the communities in the monasteries including most of the surrounding societies are part of the Tigrinya ethnic group and are followers of the Orthodox Church. There are also some Muslim communities of Saho especially around Senafe.



Daniel Semere, is a researcher at Research and Documentation Center, he is also a columnist in Eritrean profile.

... ON BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS

by Meron Abraba



It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that many Asmara residents were perturbed by the thunderstorm last Sunday night. The deafening sound of thunders and the flashing lightning bolts did cause panic among the lighthearted.

In the wake of that stormy night, we were talking about the night's event at home when the issue of lightning bolt strikes came about. My grandmother said that in the traditional society, women would throw a piece of iron (or metal), be it *amenkerker* (a kitchen tool to poke the hot carbon chunks in a brazier) or any metal tool out in the open so as to divert the lightning bolt from striking the house. Talk about traditional (yet very scientific) lightning safety practices!

While this supposedly superstitious belief has its plausible explanation, quite numerous others do get you pondering.

Just the other day, as I talked to a friend near to where I live, I couldn't help noticing the once clear blue and sunny sky suddenly darkening, with droplets of rain starting to fall. And as I hastened to avoid an unwanted shower, I remembered the superstitious belief that I heard as a child, and that persists to this day: it is said that if it rains while the sun still shines, a hyena (female) is giving birth.

Just like most African or other societies in the world, the Eritrean society and particularly

rural Eritrea has its share of superstitious beliefs. For example: If the palm of your right hand itches then you will receive money, but if it is the left hand then you will incur unexpected expenses. Whistling inside the house in the evening is believed to attract snakes. A bee flying into your house is supposed to bring prosperity...

And there is my favorite: while I thought it was only good manners to cover your mouth while yawning, I found out that it is because it stops evil spirits from entering your body when your mouth is wide open. Apparently, yawning is the work of the Devil.

It's common for a bunch of people to look at you as you eat while a single person staring would be an 'evil eye.'

The list of these superstitious beliefs goes on.

Over four decades ago, my grandmother was an avid coffee addict and she would have the customary three-round coffee ceremony three times a day. And each time, she insisted that nobody disturbed her during the process. If a guest came as she prepared for her 'mandatory' ceremony, she would first ask the person if he/she intended to stay throughout the whole three rounds, as she wouldn't have anyone leaving in the middle.

All women share similar attitudes when it comes to the coffee ceremony. It seems it's some sort of taboo to leave in the middle of a coffee ceremony: it's believed that the person leaving takes the house's prosperity away with him.

The atmosphere is aggravated if one of our feathered friends ventures into a room in the



middle of a coffee ceremony. The hen, which (under the circumstances of the coffee ceremony) is thought to be the devil's messenger, is rudely kicked out of the

room, with curses and insults showering on the terrified creature.

When I referred the issue to my mom, who I know has no belief whatsoever in superstitions, she said that it does ring true, at least among the first generation (her mother's).

As far as I know, no scientific analysis can satisfy the rational mind as to how a hen could possibly be considered as the messenger of evil.

But what is a superstition? The Digital Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as bringing good or bad luck.

People in the west believe that it's bad luck if a black cat crosses your path; you break a mirror or place a shoe upside down. This is called superstition not only because no one can prove that the "bad luck" you stumble upon indeed came from the mirror you broke, the shoe you misplaced or the black cat that crossed your path, but also because "bad luck" is something everyone would describe in his or her own way!

The use of superstitions is very old, particularly because for a long time people didn't have the science to explain the cause and effect of things that happened, like certain weather occurrences or illnesses. Instead, these 'unlucky events' were often associated with

other things that happened, which actually had nothing to do with them! Complicated, I know!!

I would like to think that there is less superstition in Eritrea as compared with other African or even western countries; and this due to the fact that the EPLF hardly tolerated similar cultural regressions during the 30-years liberation struggle.

We owe many of the superstitious beliefs to the advent of the Italian colonization. The expression "Tocca Ferro" is among such impacts!

Literally meaning touch iron, the phrase is said when seeing a hearse passing by or something unpleasant!

A few years back, a cousin and I were driving when she suddenly remembered that she had forgotten her driver's license at home. We barely had finished our sentences that we saw a policeman down the road. At an impulse, we both shouted "Tocca Ferro" but not seeing anything any metal object in the front, we immediately sent our hand out of the window and banged the roof of the car. We laughed at our actions as we passed the unsuspecting police officer.

To this day, whenever I hear that phrase, I go back to that anecdote and can't help but smile. Looks like that even the most rational people can hold superstitious beliefs.

Let me part with a verse from a song by renowned artist Stevie Wonder:

"When you believe in things that you don't
understand,
Then you suffer,
Superstition ain't the way... "

Meron Abraha, is journalist and web chief editor for Shaebia.org.

WEDDING IN THE HIDAREB ETHNIC GROUP

by *Daniel Semere*



Just like any other wedding the first step of the wedding in the hidareb ethnic group is the engagement. A hidareb boy or girl has very little say in choosing their future partner similar to other traditional societies in Eritrea. It is the father of the boy who selects a bride for his son. After the father made his selection he consults with his wife and brothers. After they reach on an agreement the father sets to the girls house with some of his relatives and friends. The hidareb are Muslims, therefore as the Sheri'a allows it kinship marriage is common. So if the girl selected is within the close kin families, things are easier. However, if the girl belongs to a far relation or is not even related to the grooms family the father of the groom and his brothers make some enquiries about the kin line of her family's ancestors.

If the family of the girl accepts and the two families make an accord they will fix a date for the engagement party and part. On the engagement day the bride's family will prepare a party with a lot of food and drink. After eating and drinking, the groom's family gives 5 Gines (Sudanese Currency) as a sign of their gratitude for the party.

In addition the groom's father presents of different types of goats for the bride's family. He gives 12 goats of a Duan type for the bride's father; he also presents 7 goats called Bishat and 5 goats called Drfnab to the mother of the bride. Furthermore he pays 30 Gine to the bride's family as a wedding present. Except for the 2 of the Drfnab goats given to the mother and the 30 Gines, all the gifts goes to the bride's family. The

2 Drfnab are eaten on the wedding day. Half of the money is spent on a special small portable Agnet, kind of traditional house, in which a bride will be transported with some of her things to the grooms house. This special wedding Agnet called KbHot is exceptionally decorated and is specially made to be light and strong for it is on a camel's back that it is transported to the groom's house while the bride is in it.

In the Hidareb ethnic group the boy and the girl that are engaged are not supposed to meet till the day of their wedding. They are even cautious not to meet on their way accidentally. And if they bump in to eachother after all, they cover their face, turn around and go to opposite direction. On the engagement the day of the wedding is not set. The gap between the engagement and the wedding is usually long because the girl usually young and practically a child on her engagement. So the wedding has to wait until she reaches the proper age.

The wedding

A company composed of the groom, his friends, elders, and three women sets to the bride's house on camels and with their drums on the eve of the wedding day. They take their journey singing and dancing and racing their camels with one another. Once they reached the bride's house, their in-laws give them a warm welcome in a place especially prepared for them and the groom rests for a while on a bed specially made for him. Then 2 of the Drfnab goats given by the groom's father to the bride's mother on the





engagement day are sacrificed and cooked and roasted deliciously. Porridge is also made, a big coffee is made from some of the coffee bought by the groom's family and some coffee from the bride's family. After that they all eat and

drink together. There is also a lot of food brought by neighbors, relations, and friends who come to share the happiness of the day. The day passes by while everyone plays and laughs around. Especially the young spend the day playing a game called Bobib.

The next day the groom's family, the bride's family, and the guests gather in a special shade called Das made for the wedding. The Sheik (religious leader) conducts the religious affairs that have to be performed at the wedding. After that the groom's family presents their gifts of dresses and jewels they brought for the bride, to her family and the bride puts them on. Then the bride father makes a speech saying how proud he is to be their in-law and often gives from 30 up to 50 goats he prepared for his in-laws. If he is poor this is not mandatory. And the groom pays Sidaq (bride's price) to the bride's father. This price differs from place to place. In some area it is about 40 goats or 4 cows or oxen, while in other area it is around 22 goats. At last the groom's family returns back to their house with their new bride after thanking her family.

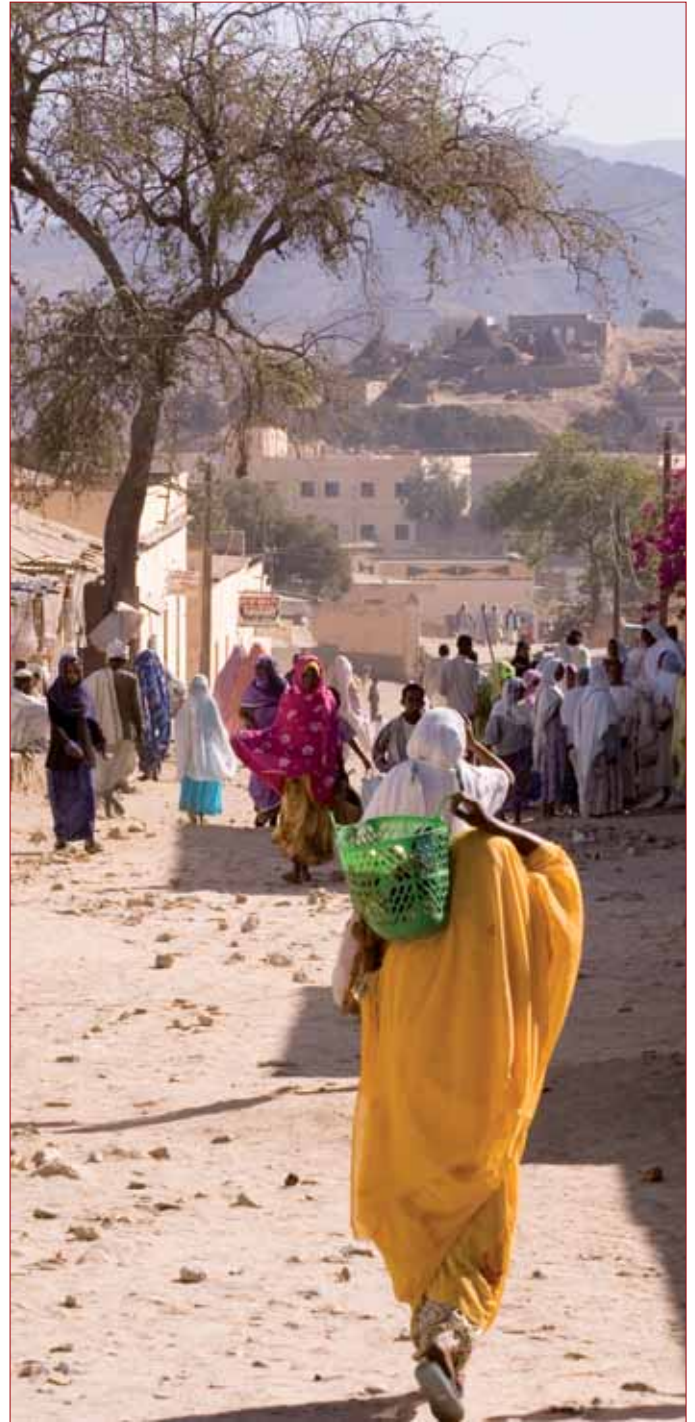


Foto Lusci

Daniel Semere, is a researcher at Research and Documentation Center, he is also a columnist in Eritrean profile.

FUNERAL CEREMONY IN TIGRE SOCIETY

by *Daniel Semere*



Funeral ceremony of the Tigre society has different small variation from place to place or from clan to clan.

The body is rest in the place where the person died whether or not the ceremony is attend-

ed by family members of the deceased. This is unlike the Tigrigna Ethnic group who usually would transport the body to the origin place of the deceased.

The funeral ceremony of Tigre society varies with regards to the situation of the deceased. If the person is a woman the only women dirge while the men mourns without uttering any noise. No one is allowed to enter to the place where the body is lying except elderly women. However, before these women enter the place where the body is lying, an elderly man or preferably a Shiek recites a writing called 'yasin'. Then only can the women enter and after that no one is allowed to dirge.

The women then thoroughly wash the body and crement it with 9 meters long piece of cloth. The body is wrapped by a mattress made of dried leaves of palm tree and put in a bed. After this four men take the body to its resting place but after reciting a prayer. The men are helped by others along the way. It is considered to be a blessing to touch the people who have carried the body. On the way to the resting place the body could only be accompanied by 7 women and the rest would have to wait back home.

The depth of a grave should be up to a waste-line of a full size man. After this another hole within the grave is dug where the body is put. This hole is called "Wedel had" and its depth is up to a man's knee.

After a prayer the people return back to the house of

the deceased. Male and females mourn separately. A widow mourns her husband for 40 days and she should not get out of her house in those days. After 4 months and 10 days the widow closes her mourning. In the last day she doesn't sleep the whole day and night, and hence she is accompanied by her friend and neighbors.

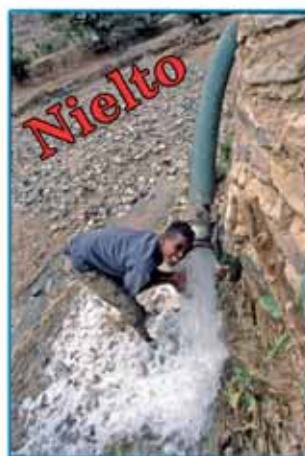
If the deceased is a young person respected and loved by others the mourning ceremony is different. The girls of the village gather and play a traditional dance called "Shnbur". They wear the deceased's clothes, sword, and often belonging. The dance continues for 7 days.



Daniel Semere, is a researcher at Research and Documentation Center, he is also a columnist in Eritrean profile.



5xMille ad Assiter Onlus C.F.96104530587



*Caro Amico Commercialista
vuoi invitare la tua clientela a destinare
il 5 x mille ad Assiter onlus
che fa tanto del bene? Grazie di cuore*

Lidia Corbezzolo
presidente

Pier Luigi Manocchio
vice presidente

www.assiter.org
Assiter onlus
via Dei Gracchi 278
00192-Roma





Foto Lusci