Gurage Kata Sleepwalker Post



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Ethiopia is a land of discovery, but above all a country of great antiquity, its culture and traditions dating back more than 3,000 years. Like many other African countries, Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state. Many distinctions have been blurred by intermarriage over the years, but many also remain. The differences may be observed in the number of languages spoken – an astonishing 83 – falling into four main language groups: Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan. There are 200 different dialects.



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The Tigrigna and Amharic-speaking people of the north and centre of the country are mainly agriculturalists, tilling the soil with ox-drawn ploughs and growing *teff* (local millet), wheat, barley, maize and sorghum. The most southerly of the Semitic speakers, the Gurage, are also primarily farmers and herders, although some are craftsmen. The Gurage grow *enset,* 'false banana', whose root, stem and leaf stalks provide a carbohydrate which, after lengthy preparation, can be made into porridge or unleavened bread.

One of the more unusual, functional objects made by the Gurage is partitions, fence posts in actuality, which are used to create space for both common and “magical” purposes. They are used to separate people from animals for pure function, and to create a protective enclosure capable of magically dispelling bad spirits. Like many other peoples throughout the world, the Gurage are particularly superstitious and they engage in many rituals involving talismans and charms. On one level then, the partition may be viewed as a stationary talisman created for protection.