

Gedeo Work Songs in the Context of the Ethiopian Revolution

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(with songs recorded by
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SOMMARIO

Quest'articolo è stato scritto nel 1977 per una conferenza tenuta nell'Etiopia marxista, ma incomincia con un'affermazione controversa: "La società è più di quello che l'economicismo marxista non ci induca a credere" (Attali 1977). Tradizionalmente la gente gedeo possiede la stretta compattezza di una società a strato unico, e in ciascun capitolo il contesto sociologico dei loro "canti di lavoro" fornisce delle indicazioni per la loro comprensione. Il primo capitolo descrive la particolare geografia del territorio densamente popolato di questa società agricola che intrattiene strette relazioni con le popolazioni confinanti (soprattutto con i Gugi). Vengono descritte le condizioni prevalenti all'epoca della rivoluzione etiopica, comprese le condizioni psicologiche e fisiche del loro lavoro e dei loro canti. In ciascun capitolo vengono effettuati dei confronti con altri stili di canto, sulla base dei risultati delle analisi di Alan Lomax. Il secondo capitolo descrive le diverse funzioni dei vari tipi di canti di lavoro – tutti rigorosamente definiti e circoscritti a particolari attività: la raccolta del caffè, la costruzione delle abitazioni e delle strade, la macinatura, la pastorizia, la preparazione dei cibi, o il taglio della legna. Alcune trascrizioni cercano di chiarire il metro, il tempo, l'armonia, la polifonia, il timbro e l'insieme dell'organizzazione tonale. Il terzo capitolo si occupa dei testi. Citazioni in lingua gedeo forniscono un'esemplificazione dei metri e delle rime, ma è la semantica quella che consente a un osservatore esterno di comprendere quanto viene espresso. Il quarto capitolo riassume i diversi rapporti tra gli stili dei canti e i tratti culturali.

Dei file audio consentono al lettore di costruirsi una propria "immagine" di questi canti.¹

Keywords: *Gedeo, work song, revolution, Ethiopia*

ISO 693-3: drs, amh, gax

¹ For the 74 audio files see the attached folder (www.ethnorema.it/pdf/numero%209/1997GedeoWorkSongs.zip).

Musique ... miroir de la société, elle renvoie à une évidence: la société est beaucoup plus que ce que les catégories de l'économisme, marxiste ou non, voudraient nous laisser croire. Jacques Attali 1977²

Introduction

Why study the music of an Ethiopian people whose name, *Gedeo* (phonetically [gɛdɛ'ʔɔ]) even Ethiopians didn't know until recently?³ Why bother to analyse their songs, when they themselves claimed to have no "music", no poetry, no "songs"?⁴ Why take time for "work songs" when for many Ethiopians the real issue was to find work and survive?

There is no answer unless it is this obvious one: Music is "man revealing himself to fellow man"⁵. Music is, in every conceivable form, a mirror: A mirror not only of the individual soul, as Western musicology would tend to stress, but also of a society as a whole. A mirror more revealing, maybe, than any analysis in the clear-cut terms and statistics of economy and sociology, because music is more redundant, more central and more focal than other human activities, including speech.

Music turns up most frequently at the ritual points of human experience "when groups of people must agree on a minimum program of feeling or action."⁶

There are some other facts which would appear to call for a study of the present subject: Descriptions of Ethiopian music are relatively few in number. This has been pointed out on several occasions,⁷ but it is especially true for the secular Ethiopian music and for the music of the southern peoples of this country.⁸

Those studies which are available concentrate either on some aspect of the music as music,⁹ disregarding the text, or on the text alone which, however, does not normally occur in isolation from music and dance and their sociological context. There is a need for integrated studies.¹⁰ The present study does attempt to analyse songs in their context, viewing the "musical event" as an integrated whole - but one of the weaknesses of the present study is the neglect of much of the "hidden meanings" which may or may not be concealed behind so many verses whose surface meaning appears to be trivial at first sight.¹¹

² Attali 1977: 9

³ "Gedeo", formerly "Derasa", is an ethnic group of about 250000 people (estimate, Bender 1971) in the Gedeo *awraja* of the Sidamo province, Southern Ethiopia.

The present study was made in Dilla town early 1977, during several months of linguistic work. The recording of the songs was made by the students *Kebede Gaammo* and *Elias Banaata* with a simple cassette recorder bought in Dilla town. We are grateful to *Peter Lohmann* who refreshed the recordings for the present paper. Both Kebede and Elias have transcribed some of the song texts, and they helped the author to understand them. The paper had originally been conceived as a contribution to the Addis Abeba conference on "Socio-political Institutions of Ethiopia", scheduled for July 1977, which however never was held, due to irregularities of the revolution.

⁴ In 1974 some young men in Dilla informed us that their people had "*no real music*" and "*no poetry*" of their own. The traditional forms of singing were not regarded as worthy of attention.

⁵ P. Schaeffer 1946: "C'est l'homme à l'homme décrit dans le langage des choses", quoted by Attali 1977:19

⁶ Lomax 1968: 15

⁷ Gezachew Adamu, 1972:1, Dufala 1973: 34 f., Powne 1968: vii and 122.

⁸ Most of the studies of Ethiopian music - especially until the 1970s - concentrate on the ecclesiastical music of the North Ethiopian tradition. Exceptions are the studies of Günther, Jenkins, Reinhard, and Sárosi.

⁹ The studies of Reinhard and Sárosi deal with the music only, those of Cerulli and Littmann, with the text only.

¹⁰ Andrzejewski 1972: 4, "since almost all Galla poetry, like hymns, is sung, the key ... lies in the musical aspect of the scansion, which still awaits extensive analysis by a musicologist."

¹¹ Other aspects which are neglected in the present study are (1) dance movements, (2) work movements, and (3) the role of instruments.

Of all songs, the "work songs" should, of course, deserve special attention if one is looking for socio-economic insights from music, because these songs have quite obviously the most direct relation to activities of the society.

1. Gedeo songs in their context

1.1 The wider context

1.11 The historical and geographical context

There is strong evidence that the basic traits of a culture's song style will resist change - even over periods of hundreds of years.¹² Such traits might be the vocal quality, the basic form of melodic movements, the basic relation between word and tone or between solo singer and choral groups. It appears that these features are rooted in the basic attitudes and conditions of a people's life and will not change easily.

In addition to such change resistant qualities of the overall style, the very form of some particular songs may be preserved over a long period of time also, and it has been suggested¹³ that "work songs" could be one of the most conservative forms of music: Even though the texts may be improvised differently on each occasion (as is the case with Gedeo songs), the musical form itself - with its closely conditioned tempo, rhythm and melodic shape - is likely to remain the same as long as it is related to an unchanging work process - a process vital for the culture's survival over long periods of its history.

For the present study, it has not been possible to record songs over a longer period of years, and it appears therefore that the present study has no historical dimension. However, the different song types may well represent different stages of a historical development.¹⁴

As far as the relation to other African music is concerned, Ethiopian music in general - not only the musical tradition of North Ethiopia - has repeatedly been presented as entirely different and isolated from the musical traditions of the rest of the continent.¹⁵ To counterbalance such statements, we will briefly sketch those similarities and relations which do in fact exist, and which have also been revealed by means of "cantometric" measurements of Lomax and his team.¹⁶ Buried in the wealth of their comparative material is the insight that there are similarities which can be expressed by a "coherence index" across African song styles. As the map shows, the Ethiopian song style has the lowest "coherence index" (76), while similarities of other song styles are characterized by higher figures: Guinea-Coast (100) - Madagascar (100) - Northeast Bantu cluster (92) and Moslem Sudan (92)¹⁷. It should be noted that these similarities are statistically significant.

Map #1 shows where there are similarities between Ethiopia and several other areas, as far as song style is concerned. The relation to the Guinea Coast is of particular

¹² Lomax 1968: 75 relates present day song styles to perspectives "millennia deep".

¹³ Encyclopedia Americana, 1970 vol. 19, entry "work songs" 177

¹⁴ Some songs have been marked as "old" or "new" under 2.12

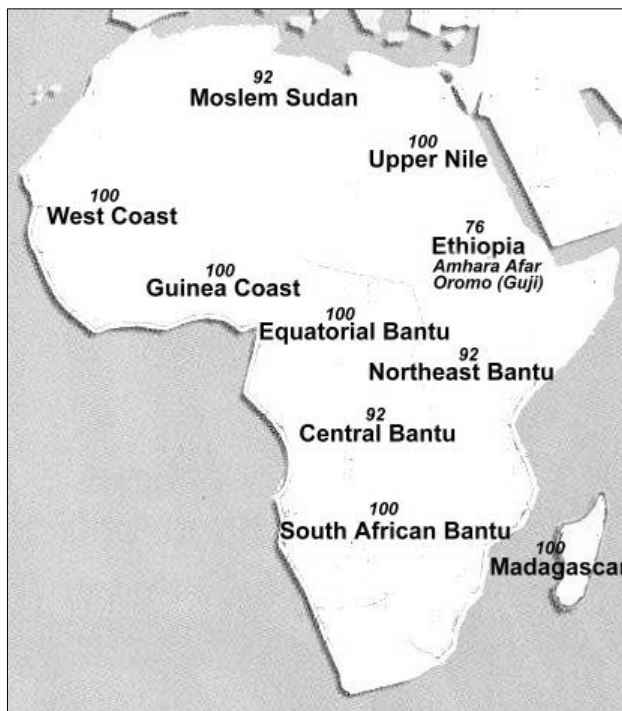
¹⁵ Cf. Dufala 1973: 34 and Gezachew Adamu, 19721. Powne 1968: xxii speaks of the "divergence between Ethiopian music and ... 'true' African music."

¹⁶ Cf. map #1 which has been abstracted from Lomax 1968: 75-110. It presents only those similarities found in Africa which are 1. statistically significant and 2. relevant as context for Ethiopia.

¹⁷ Lomax 1968: 94

interest because it is supported by evidence from a different field of research: On the basis of agro-economic data, Sauer¹⁸ has pointed out that there is an archaic agricultural similarity - or a common heritage - basic to both Ethiopia and the Guinea Coast.

Such similarities of agricultural patterns are reflected in the "mirror" of the "song style", and these patterns have resisted change over many centuries.



Map #1

"African" song style regions¹⁹ (coherence indices 92, 100)
 "Ethiopia" including "Guji" (coherence index 76)

Even a general comparison (Ethiopia vs. Africa) shows that the "Ethiopian" song style, with the lowest coherence index of 76, is the most divergent song style in Africa. This actually agrees with various other claims that Ethiopia is culturally different from the rest of Africa (the inaccessibility of the highland, the history of the orthodox religion, the linguistically separate Ethio-Semitic and Omotic language families, etc.). As a next step, the Gedeo song style (chart #1B)²⁰ will be compared with the overall profile of the "African" song style²¹ (chart #1A). The purpose is to identify how the Gedeo song style is similar to - or different from - what Lomax describes as the typical "African" song style.

Charts #1A and #1B display a comparison of the profile of Gedeo songs with the "Overall African Profile" (the latter according to Lomax 1968: 93).

¹⁸ Carl Ortwin Sauer, as quoted in Smets 1955: 6 from a source published before 1923.

¹⁹ The basis for this map is Lomax 1968: 92

²⁰ The profile has been abstracted from Gedeo songs. The African profile is taken from Lomax 1968: 93

²¹ Groups like the Tuaregs and the Egyptians are excluded, because their song style traditions are closer to the Mediterranean and European traditions.

		Overall African Profile (ca. 600 songs)														
	Scale of features	Dominant feature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	e
01	leader vs. chorus	overlap, alternation								8		10				08
02	relation orchestra / vocal parts	accompmt. complemtry. or none												12		12
03	relation within orchestra	unison, some overlap	1					6								01
04	choral musical organization	polyphony, unison													13	13
05	choral tonal integration	cohesive														13
06	choral rhythmic organiz.	cohesive														13
07	orchestral musical organiz.	polyphony, unison														13
08	orchestral tonal concert	cohesive, none														13
09	orchestral rhythmic concert	cohesive, none														13
10	text part	about half repeated							7							07
11	vocal rhythm	simple						6								08
12	vocal rhythmic organiz.	unison			3											03
13	orchestral rhythm	regular						6								06
14	orchestral rhythmic organiz.	none, polyrhythm	1								9					01
15	melodic shape	undulating, descending									9					09
16	melodic form	litany										10				10
17	phrase length	short										10				10
18	number of phrases	1 or 2													13	13
19	position of final	lowest	1													01
20	range of melody	5-8, 10+							7							07
21	average interval size	diatonic, wide										10				10
22	type of vocal polyphony	parallel, counterpoint	1													01
23	embellishment	none													13	13
24	tempo	medium, fast									9					09
25	volume	mid, loud							7							07
26	vocal rhythm	none													13	13
27	orchestral rhythm	none													13	13
28	glissando, gliding notes	some, prominent									9					09
29	melisma, note load	syllabic, some													13	13
30	tremolo, quavering attack	none													13	13
31	glottal effect, gutt. attacks	none													13	13
32	vocal register, placemt.	mid							7							07
33	vocal width / tension	wide									8					08
34	nasalization	marked, intermittent					4									04
35	raspy	intermittent, marked				4										04
36	accent	moderate, forceful							7							07
37	consonants	slurred													10	10

Chart #1A

The Overall African Profile, to be compared with Chart #1B, the Gedeo Song Style Profile

Gedeo Profile (74 songs)

1	Scale of features	Dominant feature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	e
01	leader vs. chorus	simple alternation, social unison								8						05
02	relation orchestra / vocal parts	no instruments, or few	1							8						01
03	relation within orchestra	no instruments, or two	1		4							10				01
04	choral musical organization	heterophonic										10				10
05	choral tonal integration	medium blend							7							07
06	choral rhythmic organiz.	good rhythmic blend										10				10
07	orchestral musical organiz.	none or heterophonic	1									10				01
08	orchestral tonal concert	none or minimal blend	1		4											13
09	orchestral rhythmic concert	none or on the beat	1									10				01
10	text part	about half of the text repeated							7							07
11	vocal rhythm	simple metre, some parlando						6							13	09
12	vocal rhythmic organiz.	simple polyrhythm									9					09
13	orchestral rhythm	simple meter, some parlando						6							13	09
14	orchestral rhythmic organiz.	simple meter, some parlando	1			5										01
15	melodic shape	arched or descending	1												13	01
16	melodic form	simple litany with variation										10				10
17	phrase length	shorter than medium, 3-4 seconds										10				10
18	number of phrases	four or eight, asymmetrical					5									05
19	position of final	lower half			4											01
20	range of melody	third or fifth			4											04
21	average interval size	narrow intervals			4											04
22	type of vocal polyphony	parallels or counterpoint								8					13	08
23	embellishment	no embellishment													13	13
24	tempo	medium tempo									9					09
25	volume	loud										10				10
26	vocal rhythm	no rubato, strict rhythm													13	13
27	orchestral rhythm	no rubato, strict rhythm													13	13
28	glissando, gliding notes	no glissando													13	13
29	melisma, note load	syllabic													13	13
30	tremolo, quavering attack	little or no tremolo													13	13
31	glottal effect, guttural attacks	glottal activity present							7							07
32	vocal register, placemt.	mid voice, some falsetto	1						7							01
33	vocal width / tension	speaking voice and some yodel						6							13	06
34	nasalization	sight nasalization										10				10
35	raspy	great raspiness			4											04
36	accent	normal accent							7							07
37	consonants	precisely clearly articulated				4										04

Chart #1B

The Gedeo Song Style Profile

Similarities

In some regards, the Gedeo style is similar to the general "African" style. Such common traits include the following:

1. The presence of polyphony (it is now assumed that polyphony originates from this continent).
2. The use of hand clapping or percussion²².
3. The roles of "solo" and "responding" choral group.

Differences

However, there are many differences which make the Gedeo style more "individualistic" than the African style:

²² Dufala 1973 mentions this feature which is extensively analyzed in Jones 1959.

1. In the relation between solo and choral groups, leadership is modest but prominent.
2. Choral integration is less smooth than in the African average, because of the particular timbre of the individual voices.²³
3. The polyrhythmic complexity²⁴ which characterizes most of the African music south of the Sahara is not typical for Ethiopian music.

In all of these features one could see some relation to the more individualistic style of singing, as has been pointed out by other ethnomusicologists.²⁵

1.12 Relations to neighbouring ethnic groups

The closest relations of the Gedeo people have always been those to the Guji people. Gedeo songs have to a large extent been borrowed from the Guji inventory, and the texts of many Gedeo songs contain Guji words. It is not uncommon to find even Guji lines rhyming with Gedeo lines.²⁶ The explanation for this extensive borrowing lies in the traditionally close relation between the two groups which can roughly be described as a necessary symbiosis of a pastoral people (Guji) who to some extent depend on an agricultural people (Gedeo). The Guji people are looked up to by their Gedeo cousins as a noble independent semi nomadic group (or so say the Guji people²⁷). The Gedeo, on the other hand, are looked up to be their Guji cousins as the well-to-do, progressive and diligent little relative (or so say the Gedeo people).

Relations to the other close neighbour, the Sidamo people, are much more distant than those to the Guji people. This has its historical reasons, of course, but it is surprising: One would expect the Gedeo people to share their songs with the Sidamo people rather than with the Guji: the Gedeo and the Sidamo languages are much more closely related.²⁸ However, the two musical inventories and their stylistic features are quite distinct.

As far as other ethnic groups are concerned, the musical styles differ from one group to the other. The Gedeo people may readily identify the style of the music of some other group (because there are typical differences), and they may enjoy it - but borrowing will only occur with songs from the Guji or Amhara culture - the latter now through radio, school and cassettes.

1.2 The agricultural and sociological context

Gedeo music cannot be isolated from its function, and work songs especially would cease to exist without the particular activities, movements and patterns of social "togetherness" with which these songs have been linked for centuries. When some songs were recorded outside the proper context of pounding, digging, or getting a response from other singers and dancers, then the singer would act out the correct movements with substitute tools, or he or she complained that something was missing - or would not even start singing. The songs demand the proper context of work and "togetherness".

²³ Cf. sections 2.213 and 4.1

²⁴ This complexity has been described by Jones 1959.

²⁵ Dufala 1973 also claims that the Ethiopian song style is different.

²⁶ The following example is taken from song 22: ... *dogoo janna* (Gedeo), and *boonaanganna* (Guji)

²⁷ As documented by Haberland 1963, section D

²⁸ Sidamo and Gedeo are classified together as "Central Highland East Cushitic", while the Oromo dialect "Guji" is in the "Lowland East Cushitic" group. This classification (e.g. in Bender 1971: 187) is widely accepted.

The work itself, on the other hand, may demand that people sing.²⁹ At least - if the work does not demand it - it leaves room for singing. "Alienation" of man from work, or from his workmates, has not yet reached that stage where group patterns disintegrate, machines and radios take over, and songs die. It is only in the town areas, and only to a very low degree, that more complex types of work and mechanization make work songs impossible.

Even though the overall patterns of agricultural production form a complex network with the experience of countless generations woven into it - it still is true that almost all of the traditional activities, tools and relationships of the Gedeo gardening-and-husbandry culture are simple. They are simple enough to lend themselves to repetitive rhythmic coordination.

A comprehensive description of this "ensete culture"³⁰ cannot and need not be given here: Most of the relevant aspects have been described in recent studies.

Only some of the relevant traits need to be mentioned: The Gedeo "ensete culture" is characterized by a delicate balance between pasture and tillage, and by the symbiosis with the pastoral Guji people. As in other ensete areas, population density is very high.³¹ A family may not actually be able to see all of their neighbouring compounds through the thicket of ensete, coffee and bamboo trees - but most neighbours live so close that it would acoustically be possible to lead a conversation with them, possibly without even leaving the house. The researchers have often witnessed such conversations.

The cultivation of ensete - which apparently dates from the aboriginal population³² - is being performed to its optimal economic effect³³ with the use of hoe and digging stick. To introduce the "progressive" plough would bring no improvement in this gardening culture of the Gedeo area, and would in fact be retrogressive.³⁴

Recent changes in the patterns of production originated in the time of the Shewan contacts and conquest.³⁵ Related to this is the change in the system of land tenure, with its sociological and psychological implications, and the more extensive cultivation of coffee as a cash crop.³⁶

The immediate sociological conditions of work are characterized by two traditional Gedeo forms of cooperation, called *gollo* and *gottale*. The *gabbar - neftenya* system - the system of feudal lords and their underlings - and its developments have been described by McClellan.³⁷ This system was superimposed on the traditional system in which forms such as *gollo* and *gottale* still operate.

"*Gollo*" resembles the Amharic "*debo*" in that a loose but rather stable group of men, mostly relatives and neighbours, will meet to work for each "*gollo*" member in turn, as the need arises. Meals are usually provided by the wife or relatives of the *gollo*

²⁹ Of all Gedeo kinds of work, "pounding" appears to "need" music most. Supicic 1971: 113 (quoting Combarieu 1907), mentions "pounding" as a kind of work which would be impossible without some kind of musical support.

³⁰ Most extensively this was covered by Shack 1966. There also are many references in section 3 of Haberland 1963, Smeds 1955, also see McClellan 1978: 431.

³¹ Estimates vary between 100 and 500 persons per *gasha*, where 1 *gasha* equals 40 hectares

³² Stiehler 1945: 257-282 is quoted by Smeds 1955 to this effect.

³³ Smeds 1955: 5

³⁴ Mesfin W. Mariam 1972: 92 notes: where the use of the plough is "impossible or uneconomical, hoe culture represents a higher form of adaptation and not ... a lower one."

³⁵ Cf. McClellan 1978, *passim*

³⁶ McClellan 1978: 434 points out changes in the cultivation of land, and McClellan 1988: 9ff. on coffee replacing other export goods.

³⁷ McClellan 1978: 426-440

member who has benefited from the group's help on that particular day. Cash is not paid.

"*Goottale*" denotes a different arrangement of communal labour: Help is not mutual and regular, but a *goottale* group is only called together for one particular project such as building a road, helping with the construction of a house, and similar projects. After the work has been done and after due feasting and enjoyment at the expense of the project owner, the group will dissolve. Here too cash payment is unusual.

The sociological position of the "musician" has always received special attention from ethnomusicologists. But it is very rare in the Gedeo culture that a real "musician" produces music which he "sells" to passive consumers. These roles are not normally separate roles. There are actually a few specialized Gedeo "musicians" (about ten) who have built themselves their own "*kiraara*" fiddle (Amharic *krar*) and play it in a peculiar ostinato style³⁸ to accompany their minstrel songs - but even in the case of these instrumentalists who may be "used" and paid at festivals, the special role of a "musician" is not separate from the basic role of the "peasant": Most of these musicians have their own farm, and some are known to have "returned" to being peasants again.³⁹

Apart from these few exceptional instrumentalists (they are "exceptional in many ways, and their instruments typically are imported), the division "musician vs. listener" is only known in the religious context - not really a division of labour in the usual socio-economic sense.⁴⁰ In general the Gedeo society takes it for granted that not a few musicians, but everybody has some measure of musical creativity. This, of course, is something which a western ethnologist like Lévi-Strauss finds "difficult to admit".⁴¹

1.3 Psychological and physiological aspects of work songs

The relation between work and musical rhythm must be viewed both from the side of music, and of work.

- Work with its body movements, when repeated, tends to co-ordinate the movements⁴² and to generate rhythmic patterns - which again tend to generate "music" in the fuller sense.

- Music, on the other hand, tends to trigger body movements and measurable changes in the body metabolism.⁴³ The body movements may be sublimely suppressed where they are not acceptable - as in the concert halls of western cultures - but the impulse remains.

The relation work / music is universal and perennial: Farmers in old Egyptian mural paintings, bakers accompanied by flutes in Theban art, the spinning song in Wagner's opera - and today's background "muzak" for industrial workers⁴⁴ - all of them are

³⁸ In the present sample, one "*geebo*" song (number 16) is accompanied by an ostinato of 4 notes of ascending fourths - a pattern entirely different from Amhara patterns of using the "*krar*".

³⁹ The term *anshed'a ofo'la* "wash and re-settle" is used for such changes of profession, of tribal or religious affiliation.

⁴⁰ Attali 1977: 25 claims "La distinction entre musicien et non-musicien ... une des toutes premières divisions du travail."

⁴¹ The wording is Attali's, 1977: 291

⁴² This has been confirmed experimentally by Abramoff 1902 and Féré as early as 1902.

⁴³ These and other physiological effects are listed by Merriam 1964: 111-114

⁴⁴ "Muzak" was the commercial production of music as economic stimulans, cf. Attali 1977: 17 and 222f.

instances of the same underlying relationship between music and production, a relationship which has finally been commercialized in the last decades.⁴⁵

How then can music be made to "work" for an increase of production? What are the conditions under which the Muses would bring "profit"? Research in this field has shown that any background music or "functional music" is effective only under certain conditions:⁴⁶ The work must be repetitive, monotonous and not too complex. The worker must be young or inexperienced (i.e. he is not yet committed to his individual work rhythm). If these conditions are fulfilled, the output may increase by 4 to 25 percent. (The rhythm of the music and the rhythm of the work are not named as conditions.) If these conditions are not fulfilled, the "functional music" may interfere with the task and may be rejected by the worker. A considerable amount of funds has been invested in research and optimization for such "background music", and it is estimated that in the 1970s, already 70 percent of industrial firms profit from this investment in music.

In the case of the traditional work songs however, the optimal coordination of body movements, the smoothest pattern of cooperation within the working group, and the shaping of the work songs and their rhythms must be viewed as the accomplishment of many generations. Their experience has shaped and integrated every dynamic detail of this complex process. But there are some kinds of work which do not seem to allow for a direct coordination of musical rhythm and movements required by the work: In the Gedeo culture, the outstanding example is coffee picking - better described as stripping coffee from the low branches of the coffee tree on to the mats under the tree. (An example of a song related to the harvest of coffee is number 46.)⁴⁷ Nevertheless: men who strip coffee will sing the particular "work song" which accompanies coffee picking, and their knees move slowly as they do so.⁴⁸ They will do the rhythmic movements of picking, holding branches, stripping off the fruit, etc. but will rock on their toes and move their head with the rhythm of the music. Here it is not directly (or not only) the musical rhythm which supports the (a-rhythmic) work movements, but it is the general euphoria of participating in the "rhythmic event" which supports the work of these men.

Some other aspects must be noted in which the spontaneous work songs differ from "functional music":

Firstly, the industrial worker does not himself chose the music. He does not himself sing or in any other way contribute to this music. It is showered upon him. Secondly, unlike the work song, industrial "background music" does not "connect" the individual workers to each other by way of challenge and response, or by improvised participation and interaction. Background music silences the workers.

The very properties of the old work songs - such as the sharing in a "composition event", interaction or euphoria of adequate rhythmic support - are now being sought by innovative music groups of some industrialized countries.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Cf. "Music and Work" in "The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior", Robert M. Goldenson (ed.), vol. 2, pp. 847 f.

⁴⁶ These conditions are listed in Goldenson (ed.) vol. 2, p. 848

⁴⁷ The song is introduced with the words *bunint'e work'ott'a weello weellina'ennen* "We sing a song of coffee picking."

⁴⁸ Bücher 1902: 369, and von Hornbostel 1950: 348 list "picking" as one of the instances of work which cannot be performed rhythmically.

⁴⁹ For example, the "Free Jazz" movement or the "Guild" or Archie Shepp, or Stockhausen saying "I want to integrate everything". Attali seems enthusiastic about these movements (see 1977: 265-295), as he wants to return to a status without alienation and division of roles.

2. Analysis of the songs

2.1 The functions and uses of the songs

2.1.1 A survey of the song types and their functions

The Gedeo terminology is the natural starting point for an analysis of the functions of Gedeo songs. As in the classical Greek terminology, different types of songs are named according to their different functions: Songs used when threshing grain were called *ptistikos* by the Greeks, the grinding songs were called *digdis*, etc. and these types are found in many different cultures of the world.⁵⁰

Chart #2 lists all of the song types which were found in the Gedeo inventory. For easy comparison, the terms which have been used in other studies of Ethiopian folklore are given alongside the Gedeo terms.⁵¹

Function	Gedeo term ⁵²	Oromo/Guji term used by Cerulli	Amharic term used by Gizachew	Amharic term used by Tsegaye	Amharic term used by Powne
1. Enjoyment					
1.1 Games	<i>geebo</i>				
1.2 Enjoyment	<i>68-74 olka, siissimo (women) googgore A (women)</i>	festive singing <i>olka</i>			
1.3 Dance song	<i>k'eet'ala A (modern), sirba</i>				dance
1.4 Annual festivals	<i>25-26 loogaashimo, neyne (girls)</i>			new year	
2. Life Cycle					
2.1 Lullaby	<i>05-06 dogga</i>	cradle	mother's song		lullaby
2.2 Love song	-	love	love	love	love
2.3 Marriage song	<i>14-20 geebo, danboobiyyo 03</i>	nuptial		wedding	
2.4 Mourning song	<i>31-32 wi'lissha, gadda 07-10</i>	religious			<i>leqso musho</i>
2.5 Christian burial	<i>faaro</i>				

⁵⁰ Cf. Belvianes 1950: 122, Hickmann 1949: 11, quoted by Supicic along with other examples, 1971: 114-115

⁵¹ The sources are Cerulli 1922: 10, Gezachew Adamu 1972: 1, Tsegaye Debalkie 1967: 5-17, and Powne 1968: 61-83

⁵² Numbers refer to songs of the audio files. The " ' " apostrophe indicates glottal stops, but in [p' t' c' k'] it indicates glottalized consonants. Double letters stand for length of vowels and gemination of consonants. The [d] in *adê* is an implosive "d".

3. Religious					
3.1 Traditional religion	23-24 <i>k'eet'ala B, hayyata</i>	religious			
3.2 Christian	<i>faaro, mazmuure (mod.)</i>	Christian			ecclesiastical
4. Bravery					
4.1 Hunting song	29-30 <i>wiri'o, geeraarsa 04</i>	hunting (<i>gierarsa</i>)			
4.2 War song	04 <i>geeraarsa</i>	war		battle	war
4.3 Boasting song	29-30 <i>wiri'o, geeraarsa 04</i>				<i>fukkera</i>
5. Work					
5.1 Shepherd's song	01-02, 11-12 <i>ade (boys)</i>	pastoral	shepherds		
5.2 Picking, planting, carving, cutting	58-67 <i>gelele</i>			picking planting	picking harvesting
5.3 Building, digging	21-22 <i>googgore A, gelele 57-67</i>				
5.4 Threshing, pounding	46-48 <i>weello A, meella 49-55</i>				churning
5.5 Weaving	-				weaving
5.6 Grinding (women)	<i>weello B -</i>		grinding		
5.7 Cutting (women) gathering wood	33-45 <i>dookko, siissimo</i>			gathering wood	

Chart #2

Song types according to functions

The Gedeo inventory has about 20 different song types, each of them with its specific functions. Some types have different functions (such as the *faaro* which occurs both in burial services and Christian services), or *weello A* and *weello B* - one in the context of threshing (always done by a group of males), the other in the context of grinding (always done by a single woman). In several cases the informants did not agree on the exact use of a term (this was the case for *googgore A* and *B*, *weello B*, and *ade*).

It should be noted that there are no specific Gedeo "love songs" and no work songs for "weaving". The Gedeo people are not weavers, and there are no specialized craftsmen. The absence of "love songs" is explained by the fact that several different song types may contain verses of love. Marriage songs are not sung by the bride or bridegroom, but to them.

Some terms have both a general and more specific meaning. So *geebo* in the general sense means "play, game", while in a more specific usage the same word denotes a particular song type.

The exact function of each type will be described in some detail in the following section. The order is the same as that in chart #2.

2.12 The different song types and their functions, including transcriptions

In this overview of the various song types, rough transcriptions have been added for the most frequent song types.

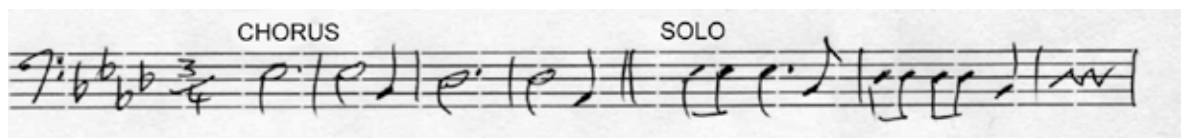
*Geebo-t*⁵³ (songs 14-20)

The term has a general meaning "play, game". As a verb, *geeb-* means "to play". This denotes all kinds of games with or without music, such as Christmas hockey, or any children's games. In the more specific sense however, *geebo* denotes those songs which are sung and danced at weddings or other joyful occasions where people meet to eat and drink, to talk and be happy. Adult men and women as well as the youth may be present. The *geebo* type is said to be of recent origin. Instruments which may join the singers are the *masenk'o*, the *krar*, and the *okole*.⁵⁴ In the present sample, there is only one song which is accompanied by instruments: In song 16, two *masenk'o* players accompany the solo singers with an ostinato consisting of 4 notes. This can be transcribed as follows:



Olka-k (songs 68-74)

This song is sung most frequently when after a meal the people are sitting together in the house, or in the compound, where some special event has been celebrated. This could be any kind of joyful occasion, such as a marriage, a promotion of somebody in the Gada system, or the completion of a building. Women may join in, but children are excluded. There are no instruments. Some men specialize in singing this song. A rough transcription of song 73 is given here below.



Siissimo-t

This type of a song is sung by women only - especially when they are preparing *k'oc'o* food and, while the food may still be on the fire, they sit together waiting for their husbands to come back from their farms.

⁵³ The suffixes *-t* and *-k* stand for feminine and masculine. A Gedeo phonology is presented in Wedekind 1980.

⁵⁴ The *okole* resembles the *kebero* drum used by the Amharas, a drum beaten at both ends.

Googgore-k A (songs 21-22)

This term is used for two different song types, according to some informants. (cf. *googgore B*) The first type is sung by women only - especially older, respected women - when they meet at their *shongo* (gathering). Their husbands may be present, too, in a separate group, singing and dancing the *k'eet'ala*. The women usually stand close to each other, moving slightly only, when they perform this old dance-song.

Sirba-k

The term is a general term best translated as "dance song". The verb is *sirb-* "to dance", and this root is common to Cushitic languages.⁵⁵ *Sirba* is performed at festivals which are more confined to the house or the compound, but which allow for some "jumping" and dancing, with good food and drink. Adult men and women, as well as young people may be present. Only seldom will instruments be used.

K'eet'ala-k A (songs 23-24)

There are two types of *k'eet'ala*. The more modern type is performed by young men who sing and dance "for enjoyment" (girls stand to observe from a distance, or join in occasionally). In contrast to *sirba*, *k'eet'ala* is usually performed in the open air, at larger gatherings and great festivals of the whole community. Occasionally a shield may be used as percussion "instrument". Percussion is recorded only for song 20.

Loogaashimo-t (songs 25-26)

The term is related to *logashibo* (Amharic). Young boys will sing this song when going from house to house, asking for money, at the *birre'a* time, i.e., between the rainy season and the dry season. A more elaborate Wolaytta custom appears to be the origin of this Gedeo form.

Neyne-t

This is an Amharic loan word (Neyne is a girl's name and the imperative of "come"). The texts of this song type are full of Amharic loan words. Girls of up to 16 years of age sing this song at Meskerem 1 (8. Sept.), to ask for small gifts. cf. *Loogaashimo-t* above.

Dogga-k (songs 09-10)

Dogg- means "to hug a baby". *Dogga* is a "lullaby". A mother will also sing *dogga* when going about her work, keeping "voice contact" with her baby.

Danboobbiyyo-t

The meaning is "good news". *Danboobbiyyo* is sung when the bridegroom and his friends are on the way to the house of the girl's father, or when the bridegroom returns with this bride, taking her to the new house. The *danboobbiyyo* type appears to be one of the older song types. Instruments are not used.

Traditionally it is in the *danboobbiyyo* songs - but also in other songs such as *adê* (song 02) - that two solo singers have the roles of *aad'a* (1st Solo) and *enk'a* (2nd Solo). In this tradition, the two singers sing with an intended time lag, and with an intended harmonic friction.

⁵⁵ Song and dance cannot be separated in Ethiopian cultures.

Wi'lissha-k (songs 31-32)

The song type called *wi'lissha* is a mourning song, sung at the burial place in the fields which is called *wi'limalco*, at that point in the mourning ceremony where the body is being buried. As accompaniment, three to five drummers may be present, and percussion sticks may be used by other participants.

Gadda-k (songs 07-10)

A mourning song which is performed at night, in the house of the deceased, over a longer period of time. The Guji people have the same custom. No instruments are used.

Hayyaata-k

Hayyaata is sung as part of the traditional religious rites, when people assemble in the house of the "wise man" or the "wizard". (The Sidamo people have a song termed *hayya* which is used for religious rites too - esp. with circumcision ceremonies.) Apart from a specific drum, no instruments are used.

K'eet'ala-k B (songs 23-24)

(cf. also *k'eet'ala A*, above) Men come together with the religious leader (*hayyicca*) to perform some of the traditional ceremonies, singing this type of song. The purpose of these rites may be to prepare men for victory in a battle, to heal or protect people from impending famine or cholera, to purify a house from dangerous mushrooms, etc. No instruments are used to perform these old rites, but special tools called *t'aare* and *woyyo*. No Guji words are used in these songs.

Faaro-t

Almost any song of more serious character can be called *faaro*. Young people use the term *mazmuure*, "religious song", instead, which is a loan from Amharic.

Geeraarsa-k (song 13)

This is a praise or "boasting" song, praising those who have been successful in battle or hunting. Naturally, only *adult* males sing this type of song. It is more common with the Guji people than with the Gedeo people.

Wiri'o-k (songs 28-30)

Like *geeraarsa*, this is a hunting song or a song about successful fighting - but according to some informants, it is older than the preceding type, and no longer used.

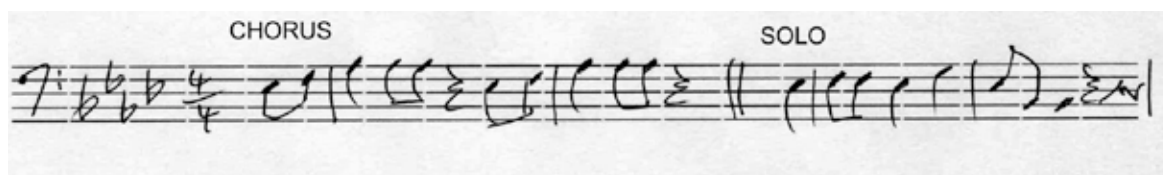
Adê-t (songs 01-02, 11-12)

Some informants would simply call this type of singing *geebo* (play), or *hekk'a* (watching). Especially young boys sing this song when they are out in the fields, protecting crops from monkeys, or when they are watching cattle. Song 02 is an example of the *aad'a - enk'a* duet.

Gelele-t (song 57-67)

This song is often heard in the form of exclamations interspersed in other songs. Men and boys above the age of 14 sing this song when they are together digging a field, cutting grass, gathering coffee, or building a house - which implies subsidiary activities such as felling trees, cutting wood, digging holes, preparing a bamboo roof, etc. It is sung also when planting ensete - which is work for males - or shen carving a beehive. The song leader may be echoed by a second solo singer. This song type is

also well known with the Guji people. As a specimen, a rough transcription of song 59 is included here below:

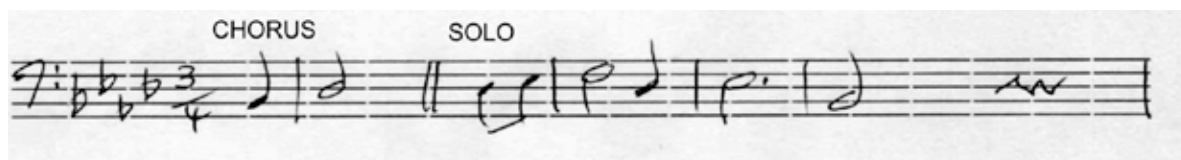


Googgore-k B (songs 21-22)

The second type of googgore, according to some informants, is sung by men only. The activities which demand this song would be building a road, or digging the way, cutting branches, building bridges, etc. All of these activities would ask for cooperation within a larger group.

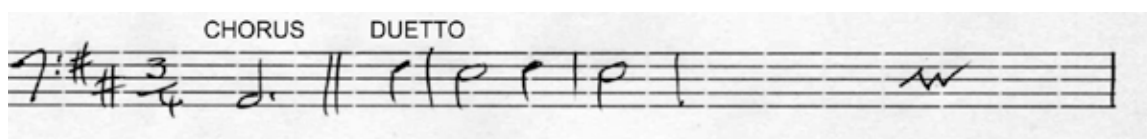
Weello-t A (see also *weello B* below, songs 46-49)

Men sing this song when threshing grain (millet, barley, wheat) or coffee. For "picking" coffee - or rather for "stripping" coffee from the branches of the coffee trees - there is a different song. The rough transcription of song 48 is included here below, as an example for the *weello* work songs:



Meella-k (songs 49-56)

Some use the verb *meell-* for all different kinds of "singing in a group". More specifically, *meella* refers to the songs of a group of men - about 4 to 20 - who are pounding or "threshing" the dry black coffee fruit in huge mortars or in rocky holes in the ground. In town, machines have taken over this process. Like some other songs, the *meella* is characterized by the *aad'a - enk'a* duetto (see the description under *danboobbiyyo*). In the rough transcription of song 51 here below, the "duetto" takes very different forms.



Weello-t B

A women may sing quietly to herself when she grinds corn on the grinding stone. Some call these songs *weello*, others say this type has no name of its own. (The verb "to grind" is *day-* / *dalt-*).

Dookko-t

The verb form is *dookk-* "to sing" (said of women singing and working together). This type of song is performed by women only, especially when they are preparing ensete, cutting it, packing it in bundles, and carrying it home together. When a group of women go out to collect firewood together, they may also be heard singing this type of song. As in some of the other song types, two women may sing in the typical *aad'a -*

enk'a duetto as described under *danboobbiyyo*. Rough transcriptions of songs 41 and 45 follow here below, to represent this very frequent type of work songs.



Other song types.

The above list of terms covers all of the traditional forms of song and song-dance types, including some of the "loan" types. In addition to these, there are, of course, songs, which young people have learnt at school, or picked up from the radio. There also are marching songs which are sung at demonstrations. Most of these may be called *mazmuure*, or simply *musik'a* - using the loans for "song" and "music" from Amharic - or *k'eet'ala* - "dance song", if the performance is public.

2.2 The musicological structures of the songs

2.21 Elements

2.211 Metre, rhythm, tempo

Metre

Most of the songs have two or four beats per measure. Those with a 3/4 or 6/8 metre or with triplets are exceptional. They belong to these following types only.

- festive dance songs (*geebo* 14-20, *wiri'o* 28-30)
- women's work songs (*dookko* 33-45, *weello B* 46-49)
- some of the *gadda* mourning songs (07-10)
- some of the *meella* work songs (50-56), the only work songs with 3/4 or 3/8 metre.

Tempo

The tempo of work songs is regulated by the optimum speed of work movements, rather than voice versa, as von Hornbostel suggests - cf. also Awramoff⁵⁶ who observed that "an adequate, economical tempo will emerge". It should be noted that most work songs are slow in tempo with the exception of the pounding songs.

Songs in which the main beats⁵⁷ follow each other at a speed of around 100 per minute (100 M.M.) or less, have been considered "slow tempo". The following songs types are "slow" in this sense:

⁵⁶ v. Hornbostel 1950: 346, quoting insights of Abramoff 1902

⁵⁷ In most cases these "beats" equal syllable units

Slow

- all work songs except pounding songs.
- the women's songs of "enjoyment", such as *siissimo* and *googgore*⁵⁸, especially those of the older generation.
- some of the mourning songs such as *wi'lissha* and *gadda*
- the cradle songs called *dogga*.

Fast

A "fast" tempo with beats of about 160 or more per minute, has been recorded for the following songs:

- most of the pounding songs, such as *meella*
- dance songs of the younger generation, such as *k'eet'ala*.

In addition to these fast songs, the final sections of several other song types are fast too. They give the impression of doubled tempo, or a "stretta" effect, because the hand claps are doubled or shifted by half a measure (esp. songs 15, 16, 38, 43), and some acceleration may add to this impression.⁵⁹ Some of the *dokko*, *k'eet'ala* and *geeraarsa* songs belong to this type.

Rhythm

In general, rhythm is marked by a relatively strong speech accent. (Gedeo is a stress language.⁶⁰) The accentuated beats are supported by hand claps. Percussion might add complex ostinato accompaniments - but in our sample of Gedeo songs this has not been recorded. The rhythmic structure of Gedeo songs could be called "simple"⁶¹ in the following sense: There is no polyrhythm,⁶² most metres can be regarded as regular 4/4, 2/4, or 3/4 metres, and changes of metre are rare.

On the other hand, this "simple" rhythmic pattern usually is modified subtly in several ways: Subtle deviations from the regular metric beats, especially by anticipation, by syncopation, or by other "inciting" effects. Similarly, the change from a regular 4/4 time to an occasional 5/4 in the solo parts adds some spicy surprise here and there. There are some instances where the solo part is of irregular length, and the choral group is irritated - so that some singers in the choral group start their response out of time. In addition to such rhythmic complexities, there always is that slight modification of the regular metre which is caused by the language itself. The song's basic, "simple" rhythm is continually modified by the linguistic features of long vs. short vowels and long vs. short consonants.⁶³ Sometimes the regular "word stress" will be suppressed or displaced. These linguistic features are not simply levelled out by the musical rhythm, but they actually add to its charming complexity.

Free Rhythm

Free rhythm, speech accent and syllable timing override all regular metre. This is a characteristic property of the solo parts of some of the older song types:

⁵⁸ Songs 21 and 22

⁵⁹ The final "doubling" of claps (as in song 15) is common for several cultures of Ethiopia

⁶⁰ Stress in the Gedeo language is not contrastive, but strong and prominent, cf. Wedekind 1980 p. 137f.

⁶¹ Cf. Powne 1968: 72, "Ethiopian music is rhythmically very simple"

⁶² Polyrhythm is a common African feature, cf. Jones 1959, *passim*

⁶³ Cf. Wedekind 1980 pp. 134, 159

- women's "festive" songs such as *googgore* (songs 21, 22)
- the shepherd's song *adê* (songs 11, 61)
- the "boasting" songs *k'eet'ala* (song 23) *geerarsa* (song 13) or *wiri'o* (songs 28, 29).

2.212 Harmony, polyphony

The usual pattern is antiphonal: Solo parts are followed by choir responses or solo responses. They alternate, and they alternate without much overlap. Accompaniment by instruments is rare. In our sample, only one song (number 16) has two fiddles accompanying the singer. Singing in parts is unusual.

Polyphonous passages do however occur, and they are of different kinds:

- occasionally, harmonic intervals may overlap between solo and choral group or two solo singers
- there is singing in parallels
- there may be ostinato accompaniment
- simultaneous singing of parts which usually follow each other, especially in the end of a performance (climax, *stretta*)
- pseudo-intervals which really are variants of singing "unisono" - but this can produce minor or major seconds, where unisono or octaves might have been intended or expected.

Apart from octaves (the natural interval where adult males sing "unisono" together with women), the following intervals have been found to occur in the present sample of 74 songs:

- The interval of a "pure" fifth (i.e. emically pure⁶⁴) occurs where group and solo parts overlap, and this is the case, for instance, in the following songs: *gadda* (song 08) and *meella* (song 54).
- The interval of a pure fourth occurs where two women (or two groups of women) sing parallel, for example in one song which has several repetitions: *dookko* (songs 03 and 40). The pure fourth is "resolved" (in the sense of functional harmony) in a particular harmonic formula: *dookko* (song 41).
- The major third results from a temporary overlap of the solo part with the group part, in a mourning song: *gadda* (song 08).
- The minor third⁶⁵ occurs in some other songs, as does the major third: *meella* (song 56) and *olka* (in 68-74 some examples are found).
- The major second occurs as a variant of unison singing, or of singing in parallels, in the group part of *loogaashimo* (song 25).
- The major and minor seconds occur very frequently in the "friction unison" of several *aad'a - enk'a* duettos (as found in song 02). The function of this kind of "polyphony" appears to be "timbre" rather than harmony or polyphonic progression. The "friction" passages of these duettos approximate the unisono where the intervals are so close that the two notes beat with each other. The two voices integrate to such an extent that they appear to be one voice - with a new timbre. In such passages, the

⁶⁴ The actual "etic" realization may vary, but the "emic" intention remains the same: "the interval of a fifth"

⁶⁵ Major and minor thirds are not variants of the same interval - neither do they contrast in the sense of Western diatonic scales. They have to be seen in the context of melodic formulae of the Gedeo culture.

two singers like to be very close to each other, possibly because they want to "feel" the interval friction physically.⁶⁶

2.123 Timbre

The following remarks about voice qualities are true for all song types, and illustrations could be adduced from nearly every song of the sample.

"Timbre" or "Colour" may be a more important feature than "harmony and progression", as Tsegaye Debalkie pointed out when speaking of Ethiopian music in general.⁶⁷ Unfortunately the terminology for the analysis of voice qualities is not as elaborate as the rest of the western musicological terminology.⁶⁸ And as far as linguistic descriptions of voice qualities are concerned, again there is no established, well-defined set of features, and no system of parameters ready to be used as a tool. Therefore, impressionistic descriptions and linguistic terms will be used to describe "timbre": "Timbre" of Gedeo singing is characterized by a high incidence of glottal sounds, glottal shake, nasalization, falsetto interjections, tense attitude, precise enunciation, and loudness. Each of these features will be considered in turn.

"*Glottal activity*" is frequent, and the language itself has a high frequency of glottal stops, glottalized consonants, pre-glottalized resonants, and vowels of a glottalized timbre.⁶⁹ This linguistic feature accounts for much of the virile, harsh and raspy quality of the Gedeo singing style.

"*Glottal shake*"⁷⁰ is found in the interjections made by old singers (songs 10, 17, 51). They seem to be an expression of joy, satisfaction, and energy. Linguistically spoken, these interjections consist of long central vowels such as schwa or "a" or "e" which are interrupted by glottal stops: "ʔεʔεʔε". The "shake" is a series of controlled glottal contractions with a frequency of about 10 Hertz. These interjections are usually accompanied by a broad smile and slow seesaw movements of the head. They are found in some group responses of *gadda* and *geebo* songs, but they are typical for *wiri'o* and *olka* songs - songs of the older generation.

"*Nasalization*" is moderate, but does occur in Gedeo songs. Linguistically this feature is non-phonemic for the language (i.e., it does not serve to distinguish meanings), but it occurs as a "free variant" of vowels, and in a few exceptional words.⁷¹

"*Falsetto*" and "harsh" articulation is heard in the short "*huzza*" interjections of single male voices or of entire choral groups (e.g. at the end of song 10). These interjections have a similar distribution as the so-called "*weibertriller*", the Amharic *ililta* trills as in song 43, or the groans and shouts of the work songs. Falsetto or *yodel* voice occurs in longer passages of the shepherds' songs such as song 01. In this song, broken chords imitate the *masenk'o* fiddle.⁷² In songs 11 and 12, the imitation of the fiddle is deceptively perfect, as a comparison with the "real" fiddle in song 16 may show.

⁶⁶ In one case a solo singer called his partner over to himself in order to have physical contact.

⁶⁷ Tsegaye Debalkie 1967: 6

⁶⁸ Merriam 1964: 105, "the problem is to find more precise terminology or more precise measurements".

⁶⁹ This is described as "laryngealization" in Wedekind 1980: 140.

⁷⁰ Lomax defines glottal shake as "considerable amounts of glottal articulation, forceful" (1968: 70)

⁷¹ Described in Wedekind 1980: 140

⁷² Both hands are used for resonance, to make the imitation perfect.

"*Tenseness*" is predominant. Unlike the relaxed, "*wide throat*" disposition of West African singers, the Gedeo disposition is rather on the tense side. The tenseness is especially obvious in the choral singing in Christian services, where high notes will be produced with strong efforts and strained voice, esp. where the register is that of a high chest voice. In traditional songs, the general vocal disposition can be more relaxed, but because of the factors mentioned above, the overall impression is still that of a rather "*harsh*" timbre (e.g. song 10).

"*Pronunciation*" is precise, compared with West African song style. Texts can usually be understood clearly. In addition to the precise enunciation, the loudness of most songs makes them easy to understand.

2.22 Structures

2.221 Tonal organization

Most of the melodic material consists of short formulae of four to seven notes⁷³ - and this relates to poetic structures of rather concise patterns (cf. section 3.1). The formulae are arcade shaped or simply descending, with an overall compass of a third to a sixth in the solo parts. A few melodic formulae have a compass as small as a second - others, by a transposition, a compass of a seventh.

The most frequent intervals are the major second, the major or minor third, and the repetition of the same tone. In the responses of the choral group, the repetition of the same tone and the pure ascending fourth are the preferred intervals.

Interestingly, intervals larger than a fifth have not been found in Gedeo songs.

In the "composition" of these melodic formulae, the determining factors are (a) linguistic features of the Gedeo language, such as word accent, canonic shapes of words or phrases, and (b) the metrical shape of traditional poetic lines (Amharic *bet*; cf. section 2.211 about metre).

One of the reasons why these factors determine much of the musical shape is the fact that Gedeo music does not use melismatic embellishments: Linguistic syllables and musical notes are linked to each other in a one-to-one relationship.

The analysis of the tonal organization of any musical tradition is a study of its own - and it goes beyond the immediate purpose of the present analysis. At present, only some preliminary descriptive notes can be given.⁷⁴

The intervals of about forty songs has been studied - which is about half of the songs collected. The study of the inventory of these intervals seems to indicate that the basic "scales" of Gedeo songs are (*anhemitonic*) *pentatonic*.⁷⁵ As a description of Gedeo tonality, this statement is not sufficient - because there are various types of such scales.

A closer investigation of all Gedeo scales would be needed. But musical scales reveal very little about sociological facts. The reason is that scales are not conditioned by

⁷³ In passages without text it is difficult to decide whether a section uses one formula, or two.

⁷⁴ It should be remembered that the terms for intervals are used here in a very loose way, without definitions of variants or exact Hertz figures.

⁷⁵ This kind of scale is common for Africa south of the Sahara, but the fact that the scale of many Gedeo songs has five tones and most of them have no semitones does not mean there is only one Gedeo "scale".

social structures: scales tend to be fossils.⁷⁶ So musical scales do not reveal much about a people's basic attitudes,⁷⁷ while other properties of song style do.

2.222 A "syntax" of melodic formulae

Various types of melodies have already been presented in the transcriptions of section 2.1.2 above. From such melodies, a syntax of minimal "rules" can be abstracted. They show (a) which kinds of melodic progression are allowed, and (b) which kinds of progression are preferred.

It was found that such "rules" do in fact produce culturally acceptable melodies.⁷⁸ To describe such rules, charts #3 and #4 use certain abbreviations:

Ascending and descending intervals are marked as "/" and "\",

Major and minor intervals are marked as "#" and "b".

Obviously, "5" stands for the interval of a fifth, "4" for a fourth, "3" for a third, "2" for a second, and "1" for a repetition of the same note. (As has been noted before, Gedeo songs have no intervals larger than a fifth.) In the charts, the frequency of each interval (chart #3), and the frequency of the most common melodic steps (chart #4) will be listed.

Intervals of High frequency			Intervals of Low frequency		
Rank	Interval		Rank	Interval	
1.	prima (repetition)	1	7.	minor descending 3	\b3
2.	major ascending 2	/#2	8.	pure ascending 4	/4
3.	major descending 2	\#2	9.	major ascending 3	/#3
4.	pure descending 4	\4	10.	pure descending 5	/5
5.	major descending 3	\#3	11.	minor descending 2	\b2
6.	minor ascending 3	/b3	12.	minor ascending 2	/b2

Chart #3

Interval Frequencies by Rank

The chart of interval frequencies (chart #3) shows that in general the descending steps are more frequent and that ascending steps are rare.

Exceptions to these generalisations are:

Although ascending steps are infrequent, the major ascending second is a frequent melodic step.

Although descending steps are frequent, a minor descending second is a very rare melodic step.

The most frequent interval is the prima - i.e., the repetition of a tone (but this is, of course, not an "interval" in the natural sense of the word).

⁷⁶ The sociologist Max Weber had hoped to find sociological clues in musical scales.

⁷⁷ The musicologist Lomax considers musical scales one of the least revealing factors of song style. Scales are not even listed as a special parameter (Lomax 1968: 20-23).

⁷⁸ This has been observed by Chenoweth 1969.

As far as large intervals are concerned, it will have been noticed that the largest melodic step is the fifth; and it is sung only as a descending interval. No ascending fifth, and no interval larger than a fifth will be heard in Gedeo songs.

Chart #4 displays the most frequent melodic formulae of Gedeo songs.

Frequency	First interval	Second interval		
50	prima (repetition)	prima (repetition)	-	-
14	major descending 2	major ascending 2	\#2	/\#2
14	major descending 2	major descending 2	\#2	\#2
14	major ascending 2	prima (repetition)	/\#2	-
11	major ascending 2	major ascending 2	/\#2	/\#2
11	major ascending 2	major descending 2	/\#2	\#2
8	major ascending 2	major descending 3	/\#2	\#3
8	prima (repetition)	major ascending 2	-	/\#2
8	prima (repetition)	pure descending 4	-	\4
7	prima (repetition)	major descending 2	-	\#2
6	prima (repetition)	minor descending 3	-	\b3
5	pure ascending 4	pure descending 4	/4	\4
5	minor descending 3	major descending 2	\b3	\#2
5	minor ascending 3	prima (repetition)	/b3	-

Chart #4

The Most Frequent Interval Sequences

2.223 The basic song form and its variants

The general form of all songs in the present collection can be schematized as a sequence of solos followed by choir responses. Here, "S" stands for the solo sections, and "C" for responses of the choral group.⁷⁹ This basic form is found in a large number of songs of different types (most of them are *dookko*, *gadda*, or *olka*). But it can be modified in different ways as will be seen further below.

In the transcription of the following song, the Solo (S) and Chorus (C) passages have four bars each.⁸⁰ The "S" and "C" sections follow each other in a regular, repeated pattern. They are accompanied by regular hand "claps" which serve as the rhythmic "backbone" of the entire song:

The image shows a musical score for a Gedeo song. It consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'SOLO' and contains the lyrics 'barc'umma(a)febot' -t'oni jor- -roole.' The middle staff is labeled 'CHORUS' and contains the lyrics 'ach'a -ha jor -roo -le'. The bottom staff is labeled 'CLAP' and shows a rhythmic pattern of claps (represented by 'x' marks) and rests. The time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

⁷⁹ Cf. Schaeffner 1946: 464: "variation ... ne va guère au-delà l'on échange de quelques notes."

⁸⁰ The text is given under 3.21

This responsive pattern can be abstracted as follows:

S S S S S S ...
 C C C C C

But there are various modification of this basic responsive form.

- In pieces without a choral group, such as *adè*, *weello B*, or *dogga*, the "C" part (i.e., the response by the choir) is substituted by sounds such as grinding or hacking, indicated by "#" (in songs 49, 55, 58, 61, 64, 66).

- This may also be substituted by a singing in a different register. For instance, in the *aad'a - enk'a* duettos, the singer may switch to a *falsetto* register where normally the "C" section would start.

- In the *dogga* song type, there are pauses "#" or short exclamations instead of a choral response. These modified patterns can be symbolized by alternations between "S" and pauses "#", where the "#" stands for a real pause or for the rhythmic noise resulting from the work.

S S S S S ...
 # # # #

- In those songs where the dance movements are central, such as in *sirba*, *k'eet'ala*, *geeraarsa*, and *wiri'o* the pattern starts out as usual:

S S S S ...
 C C C

But then both the solo singer and the choral group may sing simultaneously (and therefore, more frequently) when the song approaches its end or its climax, as in songs 10, 14, 15, 16, 38, or 43:

<i>build-up</i>		<i>climax</i>		<i>end or break</i>		<i>next round</i>
S S		S S S S		S S #		S S
C C		C C C C		C C #		C C ...

- Some song types allow for passages of "*free, rhapsodic rhythm*", such as the types *googgore* (e.g. song 21), *siissimo*, and *weello*. The solo parts are sung in a *free* speech-rhythm and may vary in length. In the following presentation, the irregular length of a solo passage is indicated by colons ":"

S :: S S :::: S ::
 C C C C ...

- Some songs have a pattern of alternation which is somewhat irregular: There may be two solo passages - with or without overlap - before the choral group responds:

SS SS SS ...
 C C

- The alternation may include more than two different kinds of sections. So the basic S-C-S-C pattern may be "embellished" by occasional shouts, trills and other "non-

symmetrical" parts. These kinds of extensions of the basic pattern are found in the types *gelele*, *meella*, and *wi'lissha*:

S s S S ...
 C c C

- In a number of song types such as *geeraarsa*, *gelele*, or *k'eet'ala* - the response of the choral group always has two sections: One is the more elaborate section, and the other is different or shorter, such as an ascending fourth, or a single note. This shorter or different response of the choral group can be symbolized by "c", as in song 26:

S S S S S S S ...
 C c C c C c

- The solo sections (here indicated by "S") will not always be sung by the same person. In many cases the solo singers take turns, and the most natural point for changing roles is after two lines (i.e., after one "bet" of Amharic poetics). However, there seem to be no strict rules against more irregular patterns.

S1 S1 S2 S2 S3 ...
 C C C C

- In songs with the *aad'a* - *enk'a* "duetto", the two singers nearly sing simultaneously, approximating a unison:

SS SS SS SS ...
 C C C

- There are some non-Gedeo song types which are obviously borrowed from different musical traditions, and these may consist of short lines, sung by the choral group only without intermissions by solo singers. This pattern is found, e.g. in some of the recent "marching" songs, where there may be interjections of short "huzza" shouts.

- There also are recent patterns such as strictly strophic forms, where the choral group continues to sing for several lines without "interruption" by responses (e.g., in recent church songs), where stanzas are separated by pauses.

CCCC # CCCC # CCCC ...

- With the influence of radio and cassette, the solo songs of the urban culture may exert their influence esp. among younger people. In these songs, the prominence of an individual, or the accompaniment by a band adds roles which are unknown in traditional Gedeo songs:

SSSS SSSS SSSS ...
 band band

The words of the song text will, of course, change from performance to performance. The singers may also change, and the dynamics may increase or decrease. But even the melodic progression may vary from one section to the next: E.g., where one soloist sings three identical notes,

o o o

the next soloist may sing an ascending or descending second:

o
o o

The width of a descending large interval - especially when this is the final interval, or when this is sung by a choral group - may vary considerably from one response to the next. The variations depend on the development of the song's dynamics: In the first choral responses, the formula may be sung as a descending and ascending third. But as the group warms up, the "same" response may develop into a descending and ascending fourth.

In all of these examples of basic song patterns and their variants, we find both "*Improvisationsfreude*" and "*Formenstarre*"⁸¹ - i.e., on the one hand, a delight in improvisation - but on the other hand, a stiff preservation of musical form. Or, as it has been said with reference to African music: there is "variation" but no "amplification".

2.23 Classes of songs and their structural characteristics

In section 2.12, all songs have been listed according to their different functions. In the present section, different classes of songs will be contrasted in terms of their different internal musical structures. The classification is tentative, because some of the differences listed here may be differences of degree rather than differences of category.

All *work* songs differ from other songs in that

- Intervals in the solo sections are larger
- The tempo tends to be slow - except for *weello A*
- Hand clapping may be substituted by the noise of tools (e.g. songs 38, 49, 55, 56, 64).

Men's work songs - in addition to what was said above

- Predominantly have a 2/4 or 4/4 metre
- Tend to have shorter solo melodies (fewer syllables)
- More than one solo can alternate with more than one group section
- The group response has two parts - one long, one short.

Women's work songs - in addition to what was said about work songs above -

- They have rather slow tempo,
- The rhythm can be based on a 3/4 or a 6/8 metre,
- The melodic movement proceed in smaller intervals.

Each of the other song classes has characteristic differences which distinguish them from the work songs above:

Hunting songs ("boasting" or "battle" songs)

⁸¹ The concatenation of short repeated periods and the pattern of solo-choir responses is described as typical for most of Africa, see Schaeffner 1946: 464 and 405 ff.

- They have large intervals in the "Group responses"
- These responses tend to be very short motifs
- Both the solo and the choir parts tend to be slow, but there may be a climax at the end of the song

Mourning (burial) songs and the *geeraarsa*

- Usually have fewer nonsense syllables than other songs
- The solo sections have smaller intervals
- The responses of the group do not change except, in the *gadda* type

Marriage (nuptial) songs

are of very different types, but tentatively the following generalizations can be made:

- Most solo sections are long
- Only one choral group responds, and it does so unisono
- The tempo is rather fast
- rhythms of a 3/4 or 6/8 metre are frequent

Enjoyment songs (festive songs)

- They have the characteristic "friction" between solo parts
- Hand clapping or stomping (*olka*) supports the rhythm
- This clapping can be doubled in the last section (except for the *olka*)

Cradle and *pastoral* songs (*dogga* and *adê*)

- They differ from all of the others in that they are sung by one person or a duetto
- They may have long pauses
- There may be long falsetto passages (*adê*).

3. The song texts

3.1 Linguistic aspects and poetic forms

3.11 Phonology and grammar

The language of everyday speech and the language of songs differ in several regards. It is common that phonological and grammatical features will change in the context of poetry and music.

As far as phonology is concerned, some surface rules⁸² do not apply in song texts. In other words, rules which change the phonetic shape of words to allow for a "smooth" pronunciation - these rules simply do not apply in song texts. The result therefore is that sounds are closer to their original form than in normal speech. The preservation of final vowels does not happen in normal speech - this only happens in songs.

⁸² In the sense of phonological rules which change "underlying" forms to "surface" pronunciations.

Phonological Change

Normal pronunciation	changes to	Poetic form
... CV #	>	...CV: #
<i>geerco</i> #	>	<i>geercoo</i> #
short final vowel	>	long final vowel
...C(V) #	>	...CV #
<i>dayy(i)</i> #	>	<i>dayyi</i> #
voiceless final vowel	>	short final vowel

Phonological features which also are of interest are the following: Stressed syllables tend to coincide with "good", accentuated beats of the musical rhythm. Alterations such as "elisions" - i.e., the deletion of extra syllables - are frequent, but only for the sake of metre. As has already been pointed out (section 2.211), vowel length and consonant gemination bring subtle modification of the "simple" musical rhythm.

Grammatical features of interest are the following: Syntactic inversions are made for the sake of rhyme (not for the sake of meter). Since Gedeo is an SOV language - where the object has to precede the verb - the following kinds of inversion only are found in poetry, not in normal speech:

Grammatical change

Normal syntax	changes to	Poetic form
Subject Object Verb	>	Subject Verb Object
<i>Kebbede foot'a gane</i>	>	<i>Kebbede gane foot'a</i>
"K. towel made"	>	"K. made towel"
Subject Object Verb	>	Object Verb Subject
<i>geercoo gumare k'oc'e</i>	>	<i>gumare k'oc'e geercoo</i>
"old cabbage picked"	>	"cabbabe picked old"

The cooccurrence of Gedeo and Guji words - often in the same verse - also is a remarkable feature of Gedeo poetry.

3.12 Metre

There are some unsolved problems in the analysis of Cushitic poetry, and the hope has been expressed that questions of scansion in Galla orature, for instance, might some time be answered by the analysis of the musical side. The relation word to tone, or poetry to music has not been studied closely for the present paper, but some details may be added here to the study of Cushitic poetry in general.

The Gedeo language has both quantifying and accentuating properties.⁸³ The stress or accent of the words tends to coincide with the musical "main" beat, but not always is the "main" beat sung on a stressed syllable.

⁸³ Accent is only "phonetic" (predictable from the morpheme shape), but prominent and strongly articulated.

Example:

stress spoken

ónakéett'i

stress (beat) sung

ónakeett'í

The linguistic features "length" and "gemination" are preserved even in the context of musical rhythm this has been pointed out above already (cf. 2.211).

The number of syllables per line varies between 4 and 7, but the responses of the choral group can be as short as one or two syllables. The same metres are found both in the collection of "Galla" poetry which Littmann has analyzed,⁸⁴ and in the present collection - but in Gedeo poetry, shorter lines with only 4 or 5 syllables are more frequent than in Littmann's collection. Since there is no melisma, the melodies are shorter too.

3.13 Rhyme

Rhyme is the other dominant force behind Gedeo poetry - but it is not as commanding as metre. In the songs there are many violations of rhyming rules, but few violations of the metre.

"Rich" rhymes (Littmann's "vowel harmony") are infrequent and possibly accidental in the corpus of Gedeo song texts. "Rich rhymes" are not regarded as superior to simple one-syllable rhymes.

Rich rhymes:

... *booggee*

... *d'ooggee*

Simple rhymes:

... *kooyyoo*

... *teeyyoo*

In many cases the first line of a rhyming pair is semantically irrelevant. The line has been inserted for the sake of rhyming only.⁸⁵ There are examples where the logical progression of thought is only given in every 2nd, 4th, 6th etc. line, while the odd lines have no relation to the rest of the poem, as far as their meaning is concerned.

In several instances the lines do not rhyme at all - this, however, is regarded as a violation of the poetic rules by those who listen to the song.

3.2 Semantic aspects of the song texts

3.21 The apparent triviality of the texts

The text of song 19 with its first line *You don't have a chair*⁸⁶ appears to be very trivial. But the first impression may be quite misleading, as the subsequent stanzas would suggest:

⁸⁴ Littmann, 1925: 5-11, and cf. Mengistu Lemma 1963: 145-149

⁸⁵ This was the firm opinion of all informants.

⁸⁶ The transcription of the music is given under 2.233 above.

1 Barc'umma affebot't'oni, jorroole

You don't have a chair

- *maye'ni ofoldattoni? jorroole*

- where will you sit?

2 Dancumma affebot't'oni, jorroole

You don't have a beautiful girl

- *aninni osoldattoni? jorroole*

- with whom will you laugh?

3 Andidika ora, jorroole

On the way to Andida

- *re'e geegeesite, jorroole*

- goats move.

4 Oosummati zamana, jorroole

When I was young

- *gedhebo allalenne, jorroole*

- I took care of sheep.

In the last paragraph it has been pointed out that questions of "meaning" are secondary to "formal" questions like rhyme, metre, and overall scansion. - at least in some regard.

In this connection it must be remembered that the total song text of one particular performance cannot be expected to be very coherent. Only the minimum of two lines should hang together, bound by a rhyme. But it happens that even these two lines are improvised by two different singers - singers who may have difficulties understanding each other acoustically, because they work in different corners of the field.

It should also be remembered that the present collection has not been made under special arrangements with special singers - but the corpus contains the standard quality of singing, with all its shortcomings and spontaneity and freshness.

Faced with all these "shortcomings" of Gedeo poetry as it is found in the present collection, it is important to be aware of the more "hidden" qualities of such poetry:

The apparent triviality and meaninglessness of the texts could be due to "allusive diction"⁸⁷. This is a very common feature of poetry, and someone foreign to such innermost concepts of a culture will hardly be able to appreciate all of the cryptic clues and will see a void where there is densely packed allusion.

Song texts tend to be more redundant than everyday speech.⁸⁸ Verses with their exact numbers of syllables, their exact stress placement and their well-defined vowel qualities have been preserved through several generations, and most of them are known to the majority of the adult population. It is therefore inconceivable that there should be no semantic relevance behind the overt, apparently "trivial" surface meaning of apparently "incoherent" verses.

3.22 A statistical approach to the texts

A statistical approach has been chosen as a guide to the overall themes and the basic attitudes which express themselves in Gedeo song texts. The results are tentatively summarized in the following sections.

⁸⁷ This is claimed by Andrzejewski for Oromo (Galla) poetry in general.

⁸⁸ Lomax 1968: 13 ff.

- The comparison of meaningful phrases shows that Gedeo song texts are not "wordy". Gedeo song texts have a small number of new words per line, repetitions are frequent, and nonsense syllables also are frequent (counting as "nonsense" items like *hoowo*, *woyya*, *hoyya* which are also found in songs of the *Wet'awit'* people)⁸⁹

A comparison has been made of words from Gedeo songs, from Gedeo work songs, and from Gedeo stories. This material has been contrasted with results from other cultures.⁹⁰

For the statistical comparison of Gedeo texts, about 440 words have been categorized, 200 from work songs and 200 from other song types. For the sake of comparison, this has been contrasted with 2000 of the most frequent words of everyday conversations and narratives.⁹¹

Song texts from six other, non-African cultures serve as background material: The average frequencies of the non-African songs texts are taken from Lomax.⁹² For the sake of easy comparison, the figures from these different text collections have been arranged in five columns in chart #5.

Category	Gedeo song texts percent	Gedeo song texts rank	Gedeo work songs rank	Gedeo everyday speech rank	Non-African song text samples rank
Community	24%	1	1	1	4
Social negative	14%	2	3	3	8
Objective world	13%	3	2	5	2
Body	8%	4	5		17
Work	5%	5	4		21
Family	4%	6	6	6	16
Action, movement	3%	7	16	2	3
Time and being	3%	8	10	4	1
Age	3%	9	8		20
Communication	3%	10	10	4	7
Cognitive	3%	11	7	7	13
Social positive	3%	12	16		6
Dimensions	3%	13	8		14
Want, get, retain	2%	14	13		19
Ego	2%	15	17		5
Sex	2%	16	13		12
Sensory	1%	17	14		18
Domination	1%	18	18		15
The universe	1%	19	22		10
Orientation, sequ.	0%	20	22		9
Role	0%	21	22		11
Status	0%	22	22		22

Chart #5

Frequencies of words of different categories

⁸⁹ So Günther (1972) in his study of West Ethiopian peoples.

⁹⁰ Lomax has adapted the "categories of word types" from Colby, unpublished, and 1966. For this paper the categories have been adapted from Lomax 1968: 277- 280.

⁹¹ The frequency figures are based on a Gedeo text collection and material published in Wedekind 1990.

⁹² These are songs from various non-African cultures, including Navaho, Acoma, Uvea, Japan, US Negro, and Kentucky, cf. Lomax 1968: 274-276

A comparison of the four columns "Gedeo songs texts" with Non-African songs texts shows the following differences as far as these 22 categories are concerned.

Comparison of Gedeo song texts with Song texts of other cultures

The Gedeo texts - more than texts from other cultures - are concerned with "Community" (other persons, social places), with the "Social negative" (anger, sadness, attack, destruction, death and difficulties, and negative evaluation in general), with "Getting and Retaining", with "Family" (kin, children) with the "Body" (body parts, clothes, eating and drinking) and with "Work".

On the other hand, the Gedeo texts show less interest in the general categories such as "Time and being", "The Universe", "Orientation and Sequence". They also show less interest in the "Ego", in social "Roles" and in the "Social positive" (affections, beauty, giving, pleasure, etc.)

Comparison of Gedeo song texts with Gedeo everyday speech

Compared with spoken texts, the song texts contain more references to the "Social negative" (details see above), to the "Body" and to "Work".

But when they sing, Gedeo people refer much less to "Actions and movements" (going, travelling, actions determining a position), to "Time" and to "Communication" (saying, hearing etc.), much less than in everyday conversations or story telling.

Comparison of Gedeo general song texts with work song texts

In work songs, as one would expect, the references to "Work" and to the "Objective world" (natural objects, artefacts, natural places) are significantly more frequent. References to concepts of "Action and Movement" (going, travelling, actions determining a position) are less frequent than in normal spoken texts.

Considering the frequencies of chart #6 again, the high and similar frequencies of "Social negative" (14%) and "Objectives world" (13%) deserve some more attention.

Lomax⁹³ has pointed out that a "tight correlation" between these two categories appears to be typical for "societies where an exclusive control is established over the world of things and human products by an elite, property-owning group...". This description would, of course, match the situation of the last few Gedeo generations, and would explain the high frequency of words of these two categories "Objective world" and "Social negative" - a deep frustration lining the two to each other.

Sample phrases and words of the frequent categories

To illustrate some of the categories, and to show how they are represented in the Gedeo song collection, some words and phrases will be listed for each of the seven most frequent categories:

Action and movement: "going to Bule town", "going to the market", "going to [various places]".

⁹³ Lomax 1968: 209

Aggression, negative attitude - "may they be defeated", "they are fierce warriors", "fighting", "a spear is a man's property", "hitting women", "oh you feudals", "we dislike [name]", and the well-known song: *Tee Lawwe, Dilla aagge k'awwe*, "be careful, guns have come to Dilla town."

Body - food: "ensete food (*kooc'o*)", and others, cabbage, eating, and others, "Maize food", "meat sauce (*wet'*)", "coffee", "milk", "honey drink (*t'ejj*)" and others, *body shape*: "If I'd grow like a pumpkin", "bald head", "dressing", "dark red man", "looking like a dove", etc. - *family*: many terms for members of the family occur in the songs, often with the endearment suffix *-yyo*.

Community - The pronoun "we" is frequent in phrases such as "we harvest and go home", "we are working with hoes", "we are pounding coffee", "we work like men", etc. The names of people of the group or of others from outside the group, also occur frequently.

Objective world, agricultural: "plants in the backyard", "trees and shrubs", etc. "flowers", "farm, grass", "dry leaves" and many others - *animals*: donkey, cattle, goats, horses, lions, monkeys, mules, - *natural phenomena*: rain, quiet lake, echo, etc.

Social negative - difficulties, hunger, poverty "Oh the trouble I have", "There is no breakfast", "There is no flour on the grinding stone", "my husband has no property", "hunger", "she left him".

Work: "people dislike those who don't work", "we are digging a ditch", and references to many other types of work.

4. Summaries

4.1 A Survey of relations between song style and culture traits

When the Gedeo songs were studied, it was assumed - or hoped - that their analysis would not just add some details to the scanty knowledge of Southern Ethiopian music, but that these "songs" could also be seen as a "mirror" of old patterns of this culture and could be better understood in their deep relation to vital rules of social behaviour. There was the assertion of the socio-economist that "the musical code simulates the rules which a society has agreed upon",⁹⁴ and there was evidence from musicology that "There is ... a close relation between song style and cultural pattern".⁹⁵

The analysis of Gedeo song styles will now be compared with the regularities that have been discovered by Lomax and his team.⁹⁶

Gedeo songs allow for some degree of polyphonous singing (cf. 2.212 above). This polyphony can be viewed as the musical reflexion of role relations within an agricultural society: Gardening cultures like the Gedeo culture tend to assign an active role to women. Women have a vital part to contribute to the overall agricultural "polyphony" of productive activities.

The basic form of Gedeo singing is the solo / chorus alternation (cf. 2.223), with occasional overlap or with a common climax. According to the insights from

⁹⁴ Attali 1977: 59

⁹⁵ Lomax 1968 (especially in chapter 6), advocates "Song as a measure of culture".

⁹⁶ In the following paragraphs, chapters 6 and 7 of Lomax 1968 (pages 117-203) will be used extensively.

cantometric statistics, there is a tendency for age grade cultures at the level of "peace groups" with an "essentially egalitarian structure" to sing in this particular way.

The sound of individual voices has been described above (2.123). The tonal cohesiveness of the choir sound is particularly relevant here, because its "cohesiveness" is a measure of coordination in work teams and in overall production procedures. Choral groups of Gedeo singers number from four to twenty or more. They sing in rhythmical coordination and, unless the work forbids it, they will touch each other for better integration. The voices of two solo singers or of the whole group will melt into one sound - but only to a certain degree: the rasp of the individual voices resists full integration.

It has been found that this degree of "Tonal cohesiveness" is typical for a culture like the Gedeo culture, with its forms of work groups, with its gardening-and-animal-husbandry patterns and the types of cooperation this demands. The choir has the typical size, form, and sound - except for the higher degree of "rasp" which resists full immersion and which claims some individual independence.

There are several characteristics of a musical inventory and style which allow to measure the degree of "complexity" of this musical tradition: the number of instrument types, the degree of melodic "embellishments" and "melisma" (roughly: the number of tones per syllable), the size of intervals, and the "word load" or "wordiness" of texts.

In Gedeo music, the number of instruments and instrument types is relatively small - about six different terms for instruments have been recorded - three of them are loans from Amharic.⁹⁷

Secondly, "embellishments" and "melisma" do not exist in Gedeo music. Thirdly, the semitone is rare, and fourthly, as has been said before (3.22), texts are not "wordy" or loaded with information.

All of these features are typical of cultures with clear, simple production processes, where no systems of dominant leadership, or complex systems of political organizations are traditionally needed, since work tasks are not complex and can be handled by cooperative groups without multi-levelled hierarchies of local leaders.

4.2 Some conclusions

So most of the musical forms of Gedeo songs have those features which are characteristic of an agricultural society of little complexity and specialization, with "Groupiness", age grading, and no strongly dominant leadership, where work teams integrate in a somewhat democratic form, with a certain degree of harsh individuality being brought into the community.

But where is the musical echo, or the reflexion of the history of the immediate past? Suppression and dominance by an alien elite which has claimed control over land and property and has imposed labour services?

The sound of the music itself does not speak of this. Only in the words do we find an echo of the recent history with this deep-felt fear, resignation or resistance or anger. Not too deep-felt, though: Below the surface of the text, these very same songs reveal a somewhat different attitude. The analysis of the musical style suggests that there is a basic attitude of solidarity, and that there is a group structure in which even the somewhat harsh individuals are happily integrated.

⁹⁷ The types are: *kiraara* (Amharic *krar*), *masinqo-t* (Amharic *mesenqo*), *malakata-k* (Amharic *meleket*), *baaranga-k* (Amharic/Italian *tromba*), *suusu'le-t* (Amharic *washint*), and *okole-t* (Amharic *kebero*).

As far as the "work songs" are concerned, it should be noted that they share the same basic forms and elements of musical style which are also found in the other songs. There are at least four types of work songs, differing in their basic functions from each other and five or six classes could be distinguished by structural criteria.

Rhythm does, of course, play an important role in these work songs - but in the last analysis the strongest relation between work and song⁹⁸ is not the one between *rhythm* of work and *rhythm* of music - but the general euphoria of singing as a work team.

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⁹⁸ Cf. v. Hornbostel 1950: 345 where he stresses that a general "inciting" impulse may operate as well as simple rhythmic coordination.

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