



The Hamer People

Just recently, I came back from a work visit to *Hamer* area some 800 km in the south west of Ethiopia (North Omo). I think we all are familiar with the name *Hamer*, we might have read the book of Kiibremarkos “*Kebuska Bestejerba*”. Perhaps, you all may have heard of the Evagandi dance of the Hamers. But for me, I am



telling you hearing or reading about them in a book and sensing them in person in their place is really different. We just spent a single day with them, it is the beginning of raining season in the area and most of the rivers lack bridge and we were told, once the rain starts we may get stacked long and thus we hurry to beat the rain.

However with this single day I develop attitude and affection to this people, may I say I fell in love with them!

We start our journey from Konso the “Terrace land” we travel through the “Weito” dessert and arrive in a small town called Aretu were we encounter two amazements. We find very comfortable ecologically suitable lodge in the middle of the dessert, it is like and oasis. It’s like a must to stop in the lodge for any one who is driving on that line. The other wonder that you face is the grace full and very long Buska hills it is alarmingly grace full artistic and very long, it sounds as if it hiding and protecting the Hammers from the rest of the world, really a good title for the hammer book ‘*Behined the Buska*’ “*kebuskaw bestejerba*”. Having our breakfast in the lodge we drive for more than an hour to find a relatively fare slope to cross the hill, Buska, then we drive back to the Hammer villages. They have two villages call them “towns” they are called Turme and Dimeka. The towns are inhabited mostly by new comers and few government facilities the Hammers are not common there they came to the town for marketing, mostly live inside the bush and few in the town peripheries.





Here it starts the wonder: you fill as if you are viewing a documentary or a cinema on the ancient man. You will see ladies dressed with got skin just below the abdomen, men having a small piece of

textile only on their organs “Gildem”. First you may be embarrassed by the sharp and amazing breast of the Hammer ladies, and then you will be absorbed the amazing beauty of both male and women and their strong muscular body (Hammers are very neat and with strong and full body in contrast other rural areas of Ethiopia). Then will question yourself how such primitiveness in the 21st century. Then again you will wonder how the hammers care for their beauty the number of decorations all over their body. The males are highly sensitive to their beauty they put all the staffs of beauty starting from the head to the leg.



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to
you

Unfortunately the males don't be involved in the routine lifework all the burden of take caring the house and the kids fell on the women. The men normally take care of their body, decorations and the hair and may be get prepared and build muscles to jump the row of cutlets so as to get the bride. When you get closer to them, you will discover their hidden beauty, their strong culture together with the charm in their face no doubt they will totally



absorbed you and immediately falls in love with them, you just want to stay and learn more about them.



Normally they don't mind your presence; you find them doing their routine daily life. So, you are curious will need to have picture for memory and you have to approach asking a permission for photography, they will become very serious and ask you for a money depending the

number of pictures you took. Then they will immediately forget every thing and start laughing with you showing you love and affection. They don't speak Amharic; you will be pleased with happiness if you find one who tries a little. A



small kid helped me translating to communicate (Kid). The kid about 10 or 11 is amazing he speak about five languages: Amharic, Oromifa, Konso, Hammer, Tsemay and Earbore. With the kid translating a man invited me to the down village so that he will color my body with the ornamental mud (Man). And a lady with small Amharic begged as to the house so that we will drink milk, when we argue that we are in hurry she showed us her home from a distance and asked a promise to visit her in our second trip and she will serve as fresh cereals. All this make you forget their primitiveness, their nakedness and remoteness and you love them you want to stay long.

Any way, the other thing that you note in the area is the high flow of tourists. It is good and interesting to know about this people as a tourist, but as a citizen as a brother it is



different. I challenged myself, asking what will be our role for this people, helping them to build a school,



Clinic, Clean water etc by fund raising or volunteering for months or a year so as to teach in the small schools, work in the health centers or remote institutions. Or just to take their picture and show them to tourists as we do for our lions, endemic fox and our historical places? Do you think they may ask or challenge as one day as an irresponsible citizens for doing nothing. What do you think? If you have a little impression let me have fractions from your time and learn from your opinion.

Mountains of Love and regards

Ashenafi Ke-Adisaba