

ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY OF THE GABBRA: THE DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIAL
CULTURE ITEMS IN OCCUPIED AND ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS

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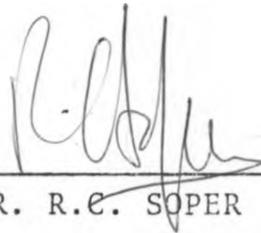
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NAIROBI.

This Research Paper is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This Research Paper has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.



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ABSTRACT

This study presents a site oriented study of Gabbra material culture and its distribution in different settlements. It is based on observations made in inhabited and abandoned settlements and on the material remains excavated from the latter by the author in December and January 1981.

In the inhabited settlements (olla), the various settlement structures and their relative locations were recorded and a complete inventory was made of all traditional material culture items including their names, uses, raw materials for manufacture and where obtained, their makers (men/women, young/adult), where kept, where used and where finally discarded when no longer serving the purposes for which they were made. The different activities carried out in the settlement were also observed, together with the areas involved, the reasons for using these particular areas and the material remains which the activities may generate.

In the abandoned settlements (onna), observations were made of the nature and distribution of cultural material remains, the state of settlements and their structures for purposes of identifying activities and activity areas. These yielded a few materials such as food debris, and material culture objects that were no longer in use.

Observations showed that, although this society has very many material culture items used in performing diverse activities that take place in different activity areas, few of them are left behind in the area of usage once they wear out, break or cease to perform functions for which they were made. The majority are discarded elsewhere and even then there is a tendency for archaeological site disturbing agents to relocate them - a phenomenon that was confirmed in onna visited.

The few remains found undisturbed were complete hearths, from which one cannot only deduce the number of huts a settlement contained and their positions but also one activity area - that of food preparation. The rest of the activities may not be reconstructable. The same may be said of other pastoral societies in the past and the present.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ethnoarchaeological Theory:

This study is a site oriented ethnoarchaeological survey on the distribution, variability, forms and functions of Gabbra material culture viewed from an archaeological perspective with a view to reconstructing recent and past behaviour of the society and possibly that of other pastoral societies on the basis of the remains of the same as seen in abandoned settlements.

In interpreting prehistoric cultural remains, archaeologists have greatly used lifeways of 'primitive' societies (Bushmen of Kalahari, Aborigines of Australia, and others which the western world regards as

leading primitive lives, including the Gabbra) to serve as models; e.g. Gould (1971), Yellen (1977), Gifford (1977), Isaac (1968). Some of these societies and especially the hunter - gatherers which are regarded as "living fossils of the palaeolithic hunter - gatherers ..." (Isaac (1968:253). Ethnographic data obtained from these and other societies, particularly the non-western non-industrial, have continued to be a major source of interpretive models in prehistoric archaeology. This idea of using ethnographic data obtained from

contemporary behaviour for archaeological interpretation and reconstruction began in Europe in the seventeenth century. However, it was not until the middle 1800s to the present that archaeologists have heavily depended on it either consciously or unconsciously. To this, Orme in a recent conference made the following remarks "... it is interesting to note that the majority of contributors do make use of ethnography, some scarcely realizing it, some in a very explicit fashion ..." (Orme 1973:483). Orme's observation clearly shows how the ethnographic present has been used by many archaeologists in their interpretations, though some may not be aware of it. Recourse to contemporary sociocultural behaviour and ethnographic works has always been a tool of archaeologists so as to provide a clearer understanding of the past behaviour of man.

In practice, in almost all cases the interpretation models have been drawn from written ethnographic sources rather than the archaeologist's own observations. But ethnography looks at a society's culture in a generalized manner

Because of this generalized approach to a society's culture, ethnography has not been of much help in answering specific questions that are useful to

archaeologists. This is because ethnographers are not normally concerned with the same problems as archaeologists and hence most things in a society which are of relevance to an archaeologist are hardly found in ethnographic works and sources. Indeed, many ethnographers have not provided systematic documentation of material culture (their forms, functions, raw materials, the makers etc.) in the societies they study whereas it is precisely this which constitutes the bulk of what archaeologists are interested in - archaeological remains. In the words of Yellen, "... it is unreasonable to ask even the most sympathetic ethnographer to produce a meticulous map of an abandoned village, including in the location of each scrap of bone and each small cluster of debris. But for the archaeologists, attention to such fine detail is crucial ..." (Yellen 1977:xi).

From what Yellen has said, one can conclude that data obtained from ethnographers and ethnographic sources are usually insufficient for use in reliable archaeological interpretation. However, these can be of meaning and use to archaeologists if and when collected from an archaeological perspective. If anything, archaeologists should collect their own ethnographic data for use in archaeological interpretation and reconstruction.

Since 1960, however, there has been a shift from this traditional reliance on ethnographers and thus quite a number of archaeologists have taken to the field to carry out research among living peoples with the aim of elucidating archaeological problems. This shift is the more welcome since it will not only bring the traditional reliance on ethnographers and their works to an end, but also avoid the kind of generalizations which are commonly found in such works or sources.

Coupled with the above, is the shift from the traditional archaeology to a more scientific approach, a process which has taken place in the last thirty years. With this came a swing in the archaeological pendulum away from description and typology to more scientific explanations, where the formulation of hypotheses which can be tested in the archaeological record are set.

This new method of research entails archaeologists looking at contemporary societies and their behaviour from an archaeological perspective and the archaeologist acting as an ethnographer. It forms a sub-discipline of anthropology referred to as 'archaeological ethnography' (Gifford 1977, Stiles 1977, 'living archaeology' (Gould 1968, and 'ethnoarchaeology' (Kramer 1979). The latter term 'ethnoarchaeology' has been accepted and it appears to

have somewhat wider currency in anthropological ^{/a} literature than the other terms.

Definition:

This sub-discipline (ethnoarchaeology) of anthropology may be defined as the study of contemporary sociocultural behaviour from an archaeological perspective. This includes amongst others the study of a society's material culture, dietary and settlement patterns and other aspects of behaviour and comparing it with archaeological data. Other definitions have been made elsewhere. One such definition is Stanislawski's which states that "... ethnoarchaeology is the direct observation field study of the form, manufacture, distribution, meaning and use of artifacts and their traditional setting and social unit correlates among living non-industrial peoples for the purpose of constructing better models to aid in archaeological analogy and inferences ..." (quoted in Stiles 1977:88). The above definition however, is very silent on whether this is to be compared with archaeological data.

Giving his own definition of ethnoarchaeology, Gould had the following to say "... living archaeology is the actual effort made by an archaeologist or ethnographer to do fieldwork in living human societies, with special

reference to the 'archaeological' patterning of the behaviour in those societies. Ethnoarchaeology, as I see it, refers to a much broader general framework for comparing ethnographic and archaeological patterning. In this latter case, the archaeologist may rely entirely upon published and archival sources or upon experimental results ... for his comparisons without having to do the actual fieldwork himself. Thus ethnoarchaeology may include studies of 'living archaeology' along with other approaches as well ..." Gould (1974:29 quoted in Stiles 1977:88).

Besides recognising the importance of archaeologists collecting their own ethnographic data for archaeological interpretation and reconstruction (no longer relying on data collected by ethnographers), the above definitions have one thing in common and that is the study of contemporary sociocultural behaviour with a view to devising better models needed in archaeological interpretation and reconstruction.

Like much ethnographic fieldwork, ethnoarchaeological research involves the use of participant observation and interviewing with the archaeologist acting as an ethnographer. For a discussion of methods and applications of this discipline, see Stiles (1977).

It must be understood that in archaeological interpretation and reconstruction, analogies are always used. On this, Yellen quoting Chang had the following to say "... indeed in a broad sense, archaeological reconstruction is analogy with or without explicit ethnological recourse ... since each archaeological object and situation is unique, every archaeological reconstruction uses analogy based on a number of presumptions and assumptions. Ethnological recourse does not make analogy possible, it only renders its results probable or even scientifically true ..." (Yellen 1977:3).

Ethnographic analogy is based on the premise that a particular relationship exists between two or more phenomena in the ethnographic present which can be observed in a similar situation in the past. In the words of Fagan "... analogy in archaeology involves inferring that the relationship between various traces of human activity in the archaeological record is the same as or similar to phenomena found among primitive peoples ..." (Fagan 1978:398). Ethnographic present therefore, acts as a kind of mirror from which the past can be made more meaningful and understandable to archaeologists and the layman. Binford too has a more or less similar view to that of Fagan above, when he says "... one of the main tasks of archaeologists is the interpretation of the past and that the primary means

available is reconstruction based on analogies to living peoples ..." (Binford 1968:268). For a discussion on the different types of aims and limitations of analogy in archaeological reasoning one may look at the works of Yellen (1977), Fagan (1978), Ascher (1971), and Binford (1972).

For the definition of analogy, I will follow Binford. It is defined as "... a relation between two things or of one thing to or with another, consisting in resemblance not of things themselves but of two or more attributes, circumstances, or effects ... it is frequently used to denote similarity or relations and in this consists the difference between the argument from example and that from analogy. In the former we argue from the mere similarity of relations ..." (Binford 1971:273). From this therefore, it must be understood that analogy is not an exact reflection of an entity by a similar one, but rather an inferred relationship based on what is deemed similar between demonstrably similar entities.

Archaeologists have made use of analogies based on the technology, style, and function of cultures as they are defined archaeologically. Indeed, they (analogies) suggest possible interpretations of the past which are then regarded as hypotheses and tested with an appropriate technique.

This idea of using ethnographic analogies has not been without criticisms. Freeman for one has criticised it thus "... the use of analogy has demanded that prehistorians adopt the frames of references of anthropologists who study modern populations and attempt to force their data into those frames, a process which will eventually cause serious errors in prehistoric analysis if it has not done so already ..."

(Freeman 1968:268).

While the criticism which Freeman is making is valid, and alternative techniques of reconstruction are continuously being sought, recourse to ethnographic analogy either implicitly or explicitly will continue. Indeed, this may perhaps continue to be used with any new approaches that may be found.

Whatever criticism we render this discipline, it will continue to be of help in archaeological interpretation and reconstruction. Although this is the case, it should be understood that contemporary sociocultural behaviour cannot be a replica of the past, but rather it sheds some light towards the interpretation and reconstruction of that past.

Although ethnoarchaeology is a new discipline, the past twenty or more years of its existence have seen research into its many aspects being undertaken in different parts of the world. A review of all research topics and publications will not be attempted here. However, a brief survey of some, mainly those concerning Africa and with particular reference to Kenya will be given. This is because one can find many societies in contemporary Kenya whose culture has not been influenced much by contact. Because of this therefore, it is important that ethnoarchaeological research be carried out while they are still holding to their traditional cultures. A number of studies have been undertaken, a review of which can be seen below.

Gifford (1977), working among the Dasanetch of Northern Kenya, looked at the natural processes that affect archaeological sites and their contents. To understand some of these processes and other aspects of life in the past, archaeologists turn to living societies be they hunter - gatherers, agriculturalists, pastoralists, or fishing communities. This obviously depends on the needs of the archaeologist who has to use the nearest analogy to his particular archaeological data - hunter - gatherers for palaeolithic sites, pastoralists for pastoral sites and agriculturalists for agricultural sites. What should be

*the
was
Gifford*

emphasised here is that more research work has been done on hunter - gatherers than the other societies. However, in Kenya research has been carried out among various pastoral societies (Gifford, 1977, Robbins 1972, Hodder 1977, and Hivernel (1979).

In Baringo, Ian Hodder (1977) carried out research on the movement of material culture due to trade, exchange and intermarriage among the Tugen, Pokot, and Njemps, with a view to understanding the pattern of these societies' exchange of the same. Although his paper dwells on material culture, it does point out only those that have found their way into and from each of the three societies. From this, one can single out those that are peculiar to each society. His work however, does not aim to show the different material culture objects and their locations in the different structures these societies inhabit.

In the same area Hodder worked in, Hivernel (1979) looked at socio-economic attributes (characteristics) and the range of economic adaptations possible in Baringo environment. Through her work, one sees how some aspects of a contemporary society can help build models necessary for the interpretation of a society's past.

From Eastern Kenya we get the work of Stiles (1979) who did a brief ethnoarchaeological study among the Boni. In his work, he looked at some aspects of contemporary Boni society such as demography, material culture, subsistence patterns and music with a view to reconstructing the past behaviour of the same society. Stiles' work shows very clearly how contemporary socio-cultural behaviour can help in reconstructing the past. This work is however, a preliminary look at the different aspects of a modern hunter-gatherer society and it does not deal with each of them in a detailed way.

From the above works, one can see that different ethnoarchaeologists in their researches have paid attention to different aspects of ethnoarchaeology, all of which contribute to the interpretation and reconstruction of life in the past. Although some of these researches have touched on material culture, no significant attention has been paid to the distribution of material objects. It is therefore important that the subject of material culture and its distribution within settlements and settlement structures be looked at in a way more appropriate to an archaeological site analysis. The major aim of doing so, is to see if it would be possible to reconstruct present or very recent Gabbra activities on the basis of abandoned materials and hence

how this might contribute to the understanding of past behaviour of pastoral societies from archaeological remains.

Before dealing with the subject of material culture which is the contention of this thesis, it is fitting to give its definition. Material culture is here defined as a society's aspect of culture as manifested in physical or tangible objects or materials which do not only show the technological achievements of that culture but also myths, religion, history, and belief systems. In other words, it is what a cultural group make and produce for use to conquer and tame their environment.

In dealing with the subject matter of this thesis, the following questions are very helpful:-

1. What are the different activities of a society that produce the different material culture objects that are often found in a settlement or settlement structure?
2. What are the different raw - materials employed by the society in the manufacture of their material culture and from where are they obtained?

3. Who within a given society (young/adult, male/female) make what types of material culture - the division of labour of that society?
4. When a society's material culture objects no longer serve the purposes for which they were made, where are they discarded?
5. What is left of a society's material culture when a settlement has been abandoned and in what condition is it?
6. Is it possible to reconstruct specific activities from the remains of these surviving evidence?

Besides approaching the subject of material culture in a way more appropriate to an archaeological site analysis, this research hopes to fulfil the following aims related to the aim of this thesis:-

1. The need for archaeologists to stop relying on data obtained from ethnographers who in most cases make generalisations on the material culture of societies without specifying what its of specific use for the ethnologists.

2. Most ethnographic data that have been used by archaeologists for archaeological interpretation and reconstruction have been obtained mainly from hunter-gatherer societies and little from pastoral communities. Therefore, there is an urgent need to collect data on pastoral societies, though there have been a few studies in Kenya as cited previously.

One hypothesis to be tested by the data obtained in my research has been put forward. The results of this test will have important implications for archaeologists using ethnographic analogy.

- activities and activity areas observed in inhabited settlements can be reconstructed on the basis of material remains found in abandoned settlements.

In order to achieve all the above, I carried out research among the Gabbra, a nomadic, pastoral society inhabiting Marsabit District of Kenya, an area whose geographical boundaries are shown in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Why the Gabbra?

I chose to carry out research among the Gabbra because they are a society inhabiting an area that is still regarded as remote by 'Kenyan' standards and hence have been influenced less by Western Culture. The society's material culture may soon give way to that from the 'modern' world. But before this happens, it is important to carry out some ethnoarchaeological studies and save a lot of trouble to those who might want to do so in the future, when the onslaught of western technology will have penetrated the area.

Relevance of Research to National Development:

In this country, there is an outcry both within and without government circles to understand, revitalise and encourage all aspects of African culture. This study of material culture of the Gabbra will be of tremendous help because it will show what kind of material culture objects the society should be encouraged to produce not only for local consumption but also for export, thus reducing dependency on imported items which in any case may not be as suitable as the locally made. This can be achieved with success if we understand the society's material culture.

That aside, the study will also touch on Gabbra abandoned and inhabited settlements. The knowledge obtained from the study of their behaviour and settlement patterns both in the past and present will help to predict those of the future. Information on this particular aspect is of invaluable help to this country's economic planners in planning for nomadic pastoral societies.

Methodology.

To achieve the desired goal this thesis intends to attain, data was collected and analysed in three stages.

Stage I: In this stage, I visited five different settlements: Alqana Yaa, Buyicha, Sumun Woria Boru, Jillo and Gollo Kalacha - all of them located in various parts of Gabbra area. In each Olla (inhabited settlement) all traditional material culture objects were recorded, including their makers, raw materials used in their manufacture and where obtained, uses, where found or located and used in the settlement, and finally the place where they are discarded when no longer serving the purposes for which they were made. In addition, settlement structures, particularly huts, were measured. It must be noted that there were limitations to entering and making records in as many

Gabbra huts as were visited. Women in whose jurisdiction the huts fell, were not always cooperative in letting one enter and record material culture in their huts. In spite of the generous gifts I gave them, of tobacco, tea leaves, sugar and a few shillings, still some were adamant in refusing to let me do the recording or take photographs of their huts. However, a total of twenty huts in the five olla were studied. An inventory and a distribution table of all material culture found in all the huts visited was made (see Chapter Three).

Stage II: In this second stage, a visit to abandoned settlements known in Gabbra as onna was made. A total of seven onna were studied, designated A,B,C,D, Kalacha, Sumun Worja Boru I & II (see Chapter Four). The designations A,B,C,D, are purely used here for the purpose of analysis, and hence have no ethnographic connotations. This was done mainly because my informant did not know their names except B - Nabudo Mamo). It is only in the last three that he knew of the former occupants and their names. All of these onna were of different ages.

In onna A,B,C,D, surface observation and recording of the nature and distribution of both material culture and economic remains were made (see Chapter Four Section A).

In Kalacha, Sumun Worja Boru I & II (SWB I & II) excavations were carried out. This was done in one square metre grids in and around the hut sites to discover activity areas and their contents as revealed by material culture and economic remains. Excavation procedure is described in Chapter Four.

In stage III, sorting out of different excavated cultural material remains was done, a process which was carried out according to the different raw materials and also by onna (see Chapter Four Section B).

CHAPTER TWO

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the geography of Gabbra area and the second one gives a brief account of the history and the way of life of the society.

Geographical Background

Although the concern of this thesis is the distribution of cultural materials according to activity areas within Gabbra settlements, this cannot be done without giving a chapter, albeit small, to the geography of the area the Gabbra inhabit. Indeed, one cannot profess to grasp the history of a society with any degree of success without having an intelligent understanding of its geographical background: geology, relief, climate, vegetation, soils, land use and population.

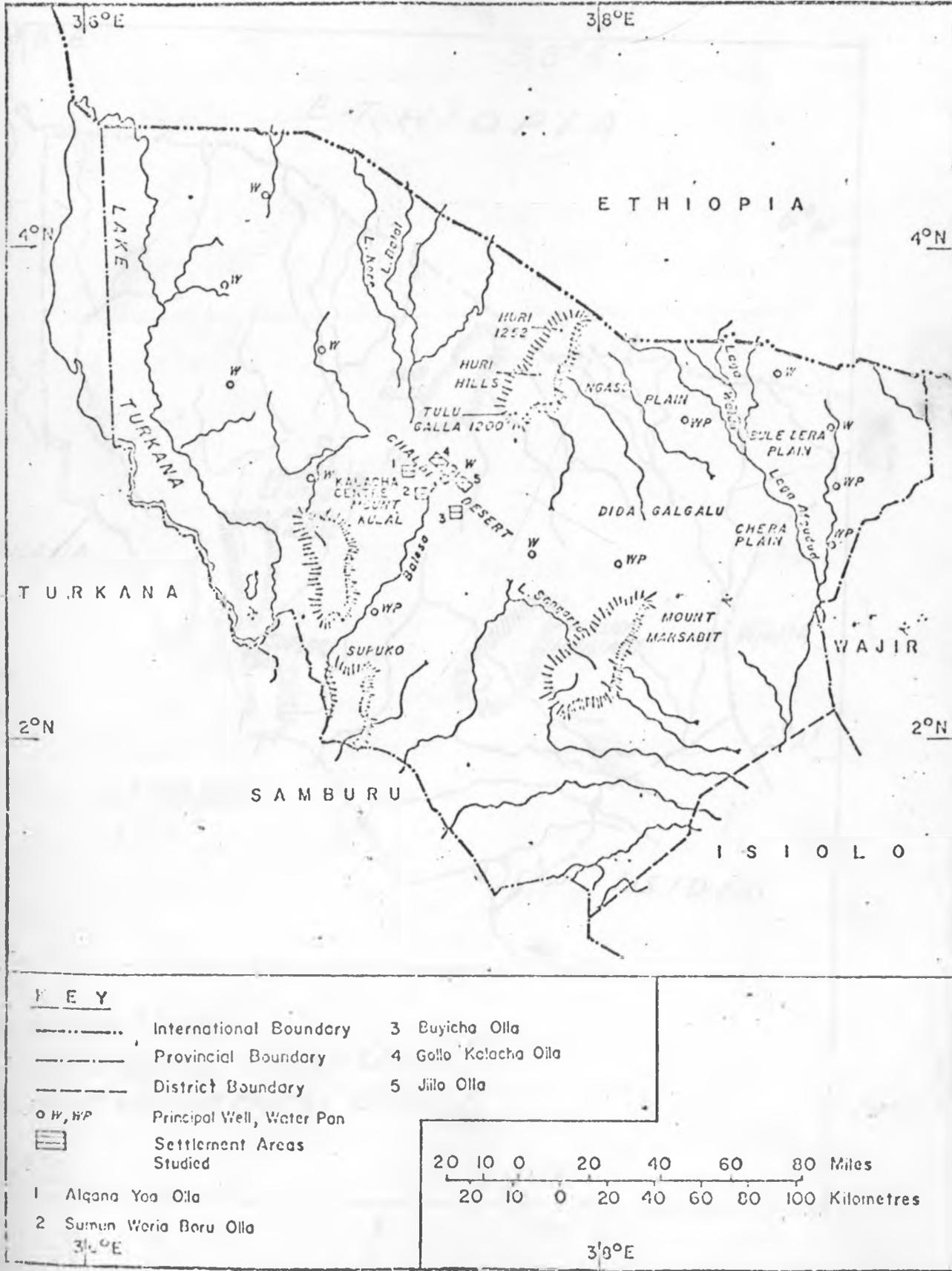
Either singly or in combination, geographical factors the world over "... have influenced the course of history and provided the stage on which events have been taking place ..." (Ojany 1973:20). They also influences the type of material culture a society needs.

The Gabbra inhabit the northern half of Marsabit District, in an area whose precise boundaries are hard to draw. This is because they are constantly moving in search of pastures and water for their animals and thus the bounds keep fluctuating from time to time. However, geographical features have been used to indicate roughly where the society's boundaries lie.

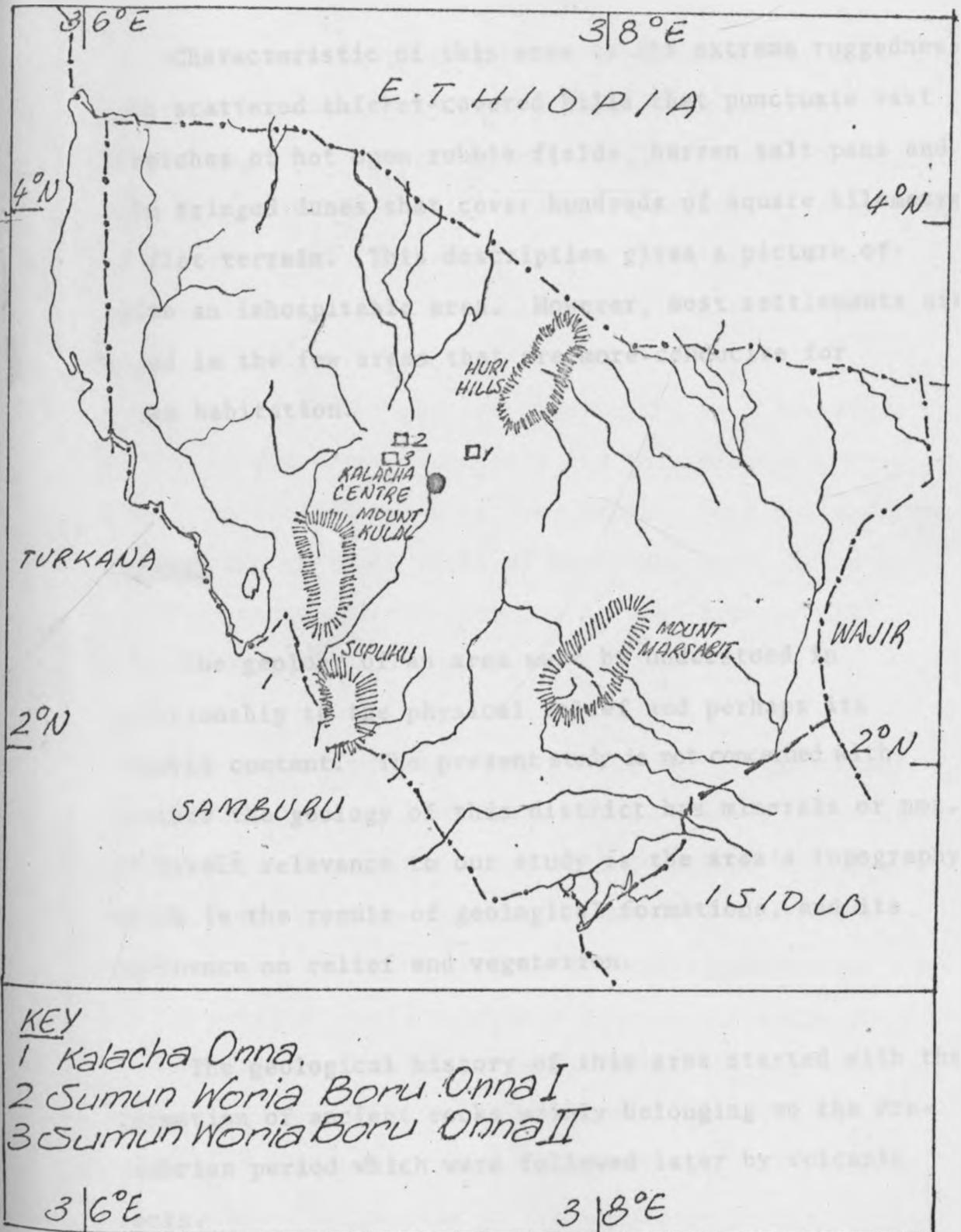
According to Robinson, the area of the Gabbra "... is bounded to the south by Marsabit Mountain and the Chalbi desert, to the west by Lake Turkana, to the north by Megado escarpment in southern Ethiopia and to the east by Bula Dera plains just east of Marsabit-Moyale Road ..." (Robinson 1979:1).

Apart from the section that is in southern Ethiopia, most of this area is under the administrative unit of Marsabit District which was once part of what was known as NFD (Northern Frontier District) in colonial Kenya (see map 1). This area as Turton says "... lies in a belt of lowland savannah that forms an extension of the Somali plains ..." (Turton 1970:10).

Map. 2. MARSABIT DISTRICT : PHYSICAL FEATURES AND SETTLEMENT AREAS STUDIED.



Map 3: MARSABIT DISTRICT: ONNA (ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS) STUDIES.



Characteristic of this area is its extreme ruggedness with scattered thicket-covered hills that punctuate vast stretches of hot open rubble fields, barren salt pans and palm fringed dunes that cover hundreds of square kilometres of flat terrain. This description gives a picture of quite an inhospitable area. However, most settlements are found in the few areas that are more conducive for human habitation.

Geology

The geology of an area must be understood in relationship to the physical relief and perhaps its mineral content. The present study is not concerned with whether the geology of this district has minerals or not. Of direct relevance to our study is the area's topography which is the result of geological formations, and its influence on relief and vegetation.

The geological history of this area started with the formation of ancient rocks mainly belonging to the Pre-Cambrian period which were followed later by volcanic rocks.

Most of the area is covered by volcanic rocks which were formed during the Tertiary and Pleistocene periods.

Associated with these geological formations are the volcanic cones which are often thick and water bearing at depth.

These include Mts. Marsabit, Kulal, Ndoto and the Hurri-Hills.

These volcanic rocks are interrupted in a few areas by patches of Quaternary sediments and the Mozambique belt.

Quaternary sediments are of four types: those derived from Pre-Cambrian gneissic rocks of Ol-Doinyo Mara, Nyiru and the Ndoto mountains comprise the largest area. This covers about one third of the district.

Also associated with this geological formation are the old lake beds of L. Turkana and L. Chalbi. The latter forms a large depression lying to the east of the former between North-Horr and Marsabit. This old lake Basin is not a uniform structure; and is further divided into: the exposed original surface between Kalacha and Lugga Balal; saline/alkaline alluvial materials overlying the eastern and northwestern edges of the desert. Most of this consists of low, stabilized sand dunes, at least some of which probably originated as alluvium from middle to late pleistocene sandstones and shales just south-east of Maikona. An extensive area of such sand dunes also occurs

along the southern edge of the Chalbi desert.

The Mozambique belt consists of metamorphic rocks that cover a wide area of East Africa. In the Gabbra area, this belt is confined to the north-eastern and south-central parts of the district. In all, the geology of this area has greatly influenced the area's terrain by raising the elevation of other sections which in turn govern water resources and vegetation and hence influence human settlements.

Relief

Most of Marsabit district consists of an extensive plain, which is occasionally broken by isolated low lava plateaus and gneissic hills and mountains. Prominent among these are volcanic cones such as Marsabit, Kulal and the Hurri-Hills. These cones rise in isolation, Mt. Kulal to the west, Mt. Marsabit to the east and the Hurri-Hills to the north of Kalacha. These are by no means the only mountains in this area. Others include Nyiru, Ol-Doinyo Mara and Ndoto range - all of which form the south-western boundary of the plains. These ranges and Mt. Kulal rise to greater elevations (3010, 2260, 2885 and 2335m respectively) as compared to the Hurri-Hills and Marsabit

mountain measuring 1885m and 1865m respectively . These latter two have plateau like summits, long gentle slopes and massive bases. At the western edge of the Chalbi desert lie the Asie Hills, a low outlier of Mt. Kulal with an elevation of only 1165m.

Besides the hills and mountains which mark the relief of this area, there is also "... the Chalbi desert which forms a depression covering an area of 948 km² and has an elevation lying between 435m and 500m ..."

(Herlocker 1979:10). It lies between the Asie Hills and Mt. Kulal to the west and a volcanic escarpment to the east, extending south from Kalacha to Maikona. It consists of barren salt flats, the remains of a former lake. Today, after heavy rains the plains will become temporarily flooded to a shallow depth. In some of these plains and in the highland areas grow grasses and browse which Gabbra stock feed on.

Generally, relief influences climate and vegetation which in turn influence Gabbra settlement patterns as well as the location of raw materials they use in everyday life. Relief and geology also govern the distribution of water resources.

Climate

Generally, most of Marsabit district lies within a larger climatic region in East Africa affecting Somalia, Northern Kenya and Eastern Ethiopia (Herlocker 1979:2). Here the climate is influenced by different air-masses: the north-east and south-east monsoon winds, which blow over the area at different times of the year and control the rainfall.

The north-east monsoon wind which originates from the Indian Ocean is relatively cool and moist, and although this forms the main source of the main rains in Kenya, rainfall in this area is notorious for its irregularity from year to year. The influence of monsoon winds has created two rainfall seasons "... the GANNA and AGAYA, the former being the long rains and the latter is of relatively short duration ...". (Robinson 1979:1). The long rains Ganna fall between April and June and the short rains from October to November. Generally, rain tends to fall in torrential but limited convectional storms.

In the three years upto the time of this study in September 1980 - January 1981, hardly any rain fell at all. If any, then it was very little and did not fall according to the pattern of seasons mentioned above (Anderson, H. Pers. Comm).

Rainfall in this area is very low and has been estimated to be between 159 - 250mm per year (Morgan 1973, Robinson 1979). This is to be compared with estimates of evaporation from an open water surface (by Permann method) in excess of 2600mm per annum (Morgan 1973). Although rainfall figures for the whole district are generally low, those of high altitude areas are slightly higher than of lower ones. For instance North Horr, the only station below 1333m elevation with long term rainfall records, has a mean annual rainfall of 150mm, while Marsabit mountain at 1965m elevation averages 944mm annually (Edwards et al 1979). This difference in rainfall figures comes about simply because "... of orographic lifting of air masses, by large mountains within the study area, which leads to instability, cooling and subsequent rainfall ..." (Herlocker 1979:2).

The very small amount of rain falling in any one given year coupled with very high rates of evaporation results in desert or semi-desert vegetation.

This type of climate necessitates the Gabbra moving their settlements and animals seasonally to areas where they not only get water but also sufficient grass.

Drainage

The area has a subterranean drainage system emanating from thick water bearing lavas centred on mountains Kulal and Marsabit and the Hurri-Hills and leading to the Chalbi desert. The perennial springs found at the base of lava formations along the edge of the Chalbi are probably related to this phenomenon. In the absence of surface water and to supplement the few perennial springs, wells have been dug to provide water for the inhabitants. These have been constructed near such places as North Horr, Roba Gade (situated northwest of Kalacha) and around Maikona. The majority of these wells are less than 15m deep.

The distribution of permanent water resources is very uneven and waterpoints are often far apart.

To transport water from these points to settlements, camels are employed which can cover long distances with little or no water. Large storage containers are also used to avoid making constant travels to fetch water.

Vegetation

Rainfall of less than 250mm per annum cannot support any vegetation other than a thin cover of thorn and desert grasses that reach a foot or so (during the rainy season) in height. In areas of higher elevation such as the Hurri-Hills, this grass forms a complete cover, elsewhere it grows in tufts separated by bare patches of soil, stone, or volcanic rock. Evergreen forest occupies mountain summits where rainfall is highest. The common vegetation types within this area are "... annual grassland, dominated by: Aristida adscensionis and A. mutabilis; dwarf shrubland dominated by Duosperma eremophilum and Indigofera spinosa: and shrubland, dominated by Acacia reficiens. The last three species are the most abundant woody plant species within the study area ..." (Herlocker 1979:62).

The area's vegetation provides the Gabbra not only with pastures for their animals but also wood and fibres needed in making material culture items and for constructing bomas and huts as well as providing firewood.

Soils and Land Use

Soils are derived from two parent materials, Precambrian basement rocks or recent volcanics. Apart from the stone-covered lava plateaus whose soil is volcanic, almost half of the area is in the Chalbi basin, an area that is sandy with many areas having white unvegetated boji (remnants of lake deposits). Soils in the north of the Chalbi desert are saline and these areas mark the site of a former lake. However, in other parts, soils are porous and sandy and in the dry season are easily shifted by winds.

Being sandy coupled with low unpredictable and unreliable rainfall, the area is quite unsuitable for the growing of food crops. In some few places however, especially higher altitude areas such as the Hurri-Hills where there is no sand and soils are black and rich in humus, small shambas of immigrant Konso growing maize and

native wheat (teff) are seen. Cultivated shambas are also seen around Marsabit Town.

What one can say is that, except for a few areas, the whole region the Gabbra inhabit only supports pastoralism. The Gabbra do not practice agriculture partly due to the environment which does not easily permit full scale agriculture and partly due to the traditional customs and attitudes which favour pastoralism.

Population

The Gabbra who numbered 15,890 and 23,410 in 1969 and 1979 census respectively, are by no means the only society inhabiting Marsabit district. Other societies are: the Rendille and Samburu to the south, Borana and Sakuye to the east, Dassanetch to the northwest and El-Molo to the west along the lake shore.

The Turkana are currently moving into traditionally Rendille and Samburu areas to the southwest around Loiyangalani on lake Turkana. According to the latest population census of the district, the Borana number

30,444, Rendile 19,856 and Sakuye 1,168. This can be compared with the population statistics for 1969 which were: Borana 13,432, Rendile 17,686 and Sakuye 191. Looking at the figures, one sees a very high increase in the population of each society. The Gabbra increased by almost half, Borana two and a half times and Sakuye six times what it was in 1969. This drastic increase may be explained by many factors. Either these figures were inflated or they were not properly enumerated in 1969. I suggest the latter case; because these societies are conservative in their outlook, hence cannot divulge the exact number of people in a household, a phenomenon found among many African societies.

In the last census, the people were perhaps more enlightened as to the importance of giving the correct figures, thus giving us a true picture of the area's population statistics. Besides, this area has witnessed an influx of people from other districts such as Samburu, Garissa, Turkana and even some from Southern Ethiopia.

THE GABBRA

The study of a people's material culture cannot be of any meaning without considering their history and ways of life. In this section therefore, I hope to show who the Gabbra are, their origins, settlements and the activities that have produced the different material culture found in the settlements.

A Brief History

It is not the intention here to give a definitive history of the Gabbra, as doing so would be overstepping the bounds of this thesis, let alone duplicating the work of other scholars. In this thesis, I have largely drawn from the works of Goto (1972), Torry (1973), Turton (1973), Stiles (1980a) and Legesse (1973). Unfortunately - the latest history on this society by Sobania and Robbinson, both of whom did extensive research among the Gabbra, is not yet available.

The Gabbra are related linguistically and culturally to the Borana and they and other related groups of people have been generally referred to as Borana. It is not surprising, therefore, to find in some ethnographic and historical works (Goto (1972), Legesse (1973) and Turton (1970) to name but a few) that most southern

Galla societies inhabiting northern Kenya are referred to as Borana. In the words of Goto "... Boran is a corporate term embracing principally three major groups of Boran speakers: the Gabbra, the Sakuye, a pastoral society living to the north eastern side of Gabbra country in Marsabit district, and Boran Gutu (Boran proper) ..." (Goto 1972:28). Also included are small groups of Boran speakers such as the Watta, a semi-pastoral hunter-gatherer society living amongst the Gabbra in Marsabit and possibly extending across the border into southern Ethiopia, and the "Ndorobo" who are often heard of in Gabbra and/or Boran oral traditions. The latter society is said to be found living in the hills between Marsabit mountain and Wamba in Samburu district to the south.

According to linguistic classification, the Gabbra language is part of southern Galla which belongs to the Eastern Cushitic language sub-family whose homelands extend from the southern highlands of Ethiopia across the Horn and over much of North-eastern Kenya, where various Galla and Somali groups have expanded in recent times. Their movement into the latter area took place as late as the seventeenth century. As regards this, Ehret had the following to say "... The Galla did not invade East African areas till the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nor did their influence penetrate far into the area ..."

(Ehret 1974:34).

Generally, historians agree that the Galla people originated in south-western Ethiopia in the highland area to the southwest of lake Abaya. Their movement out of this area started in the 16th century going in all directions except the west. The origin of the Gabbra themselves is not clear. Most of them explain their origins through a myth. According to Stiles who had an opportunity to record the myth among the Gabbra and Watta, the myth goes like this ...

"... A man had three sons. The first born was named Watta, the second Boran and the third Gabbra. When the father was old, he was walking one day assisted by his sons and then he stumbled and fell. Watta, the first born jumped over his father and stood laughing at him from a distance, Gabbra the third born covered his eyes. Boran took hold of his father and helped him to rise. The father then gave Gabbra his timid son, the camel the strong animal. The Boran who helped him to rise and was strong, he gave him a weak animal, the cow. Watta who laughed, he cursed him and his children and said that all offspring of Watta would have no animal of their own, but that they would have to live from wild

animals, as a laughable thing. That day, the three brothers separated to take up the pursuits that the father had given them ..." (Stiles pers.comm.).

Although this myth is found among the Gabbra, Boran and Watta, it is silent on the direction from which they came, neither does it tell us much of what their father might have been (in terms of economy) though he was apparently a pastoralist. I strongly suspect that this myth is a rationalisation to try and explain in terms of economy what each of the three societies practices. Like many myths, this is not useful for historical purpose.

Despite the fact that the Gabbra, the Boran and Watta do have close cultural and linguistic ties, the three do not share a common immediate origin except for a small section of the Gabbra who claim Boran origin.

According to Goto (1972) who did extensive work on Boran oral traditions, each of the Gabbra sections or phratries (see below) called the Dibbe Shanaan (five drums) has its own drum and it is likely that each of these as Goto contended has a different origin.

Ethnographically, a phratry is a higher order of social division that is composed of several clan groupings. The five Gabbra phratries are not territorial* though they may have been in the past. One often finds members of more than one phratry living in the same Olla and sharing the resources within the vicinity.

The Alqana phratry who live in geographical proximity to the Boran proper, in their oral tradition claim a common origin with the Boran. This sounds credible especially as these two have very close cultural ties not found among other Gabbra phratries. This phratry is supposed to have descended from the Qallu (religious leader or diviner) of the Sabo moiety of the Boran. In spite of any affinities these two share, they still view each other as separate and distinct.

Of all Gabbra sections, the Galbo and Odolla phratries are closest to the Somali and Rendile respectively and oral traditions of both phratries support this. Among the Rendile, there is found a group known by a similar name which claims kinship ties with Gabbra Odolla. This

* Gabbra phratries do not claim exclusive rights to a particular area or territory. Instead they (members of all phratries) share resources between and in their respective settlements.

occurrence has been explained elsewhere (see Stiles 1980a) but what is not clear is whether this group originated from the Gabbra or Rendile. Close scrutiny of the Odolla clan of the Rendile on the basis of the dibbe (drum) which is supposed to be one of the five Gabbra drums signifying the five phratries, suggests a Gabbra origin rather than Rendile. However, this does not rule out the fact that a few groups of people among the Gabbra Odolla claim Rendile origin "... including one Alqana clan called Helmale or Sale ..." (Stiles Pers. Comm).

As regards Gabbra origins from Somali, oral traditions show some Gabbra as a branch of the Gurreh Somali who came to live alongside the Boran and adopted the latter's language and most of their customs.

The Galbo phratry assert their origins to be the Somali. Torry, in his study of the Gabbra observed that sections of the Gara, Galbo and Odolla phratries trace their origins to Somali speaking peoples. This argument is supported by Somali customs and names found common to both societies which are supposed to be of Arabic origin. That aside "... Gabbra names for the days of the week also resemble Arabic ones and probably the Somali version of the Arabic Calender ..." (Goto 1972:34). Also found is

the similarity of Muslim and some Gabbra names. This argument rather than supporting the phratries that claim Somali origins, shows the more general relationship between Gabbra and Somali.

In the absence of Islamic conquest of the Boran and Gabbra, the only plausible explanation of such an occurrence is cultural diffusion through population movements, however small this may have been. Like the phratries named above, Sharbana also claim Somali origins and have general affinities just quoted.

From the above therefore, it can be seen that the origins of the Gabbra phratries, and even clans within phratries, are multiple and therefore there is no single source for all the Gabbra. Like many African societies, the Gabbra are a conglomeration of people having different origins. It is therefore important to understand that many different elements; Boran, Sakuye, Watta, Somali and Rendile have contributed to what are presently known as the Gabbra.

Social and Political Organization

Gabbra social and political organizations are complicated and intricate, so much so that they cannot receive adequate treatment in a work of this nature and salient features only will be mentioned here. For a full discussion, one can look at the works of Legesse (1970), Goto (1972), Stiles (1980a), Torry (1973) Turton (1970) and Robbinson and Sobania (in press). In my case, I relied mostly on the first four works cited above.

Social Organization

The Gabbra like the Boran, organize themselves through kinship ties based on divisions that range from the highest - gosa (moiety) to the lowest - mana (family). The highest or the largest divisions in this social system "... are the two halves gosa (moieties) known as Jiblo and Lossa ..." (Stiles 1980a), though Goto (1972) and Torry (1973) in their works do not mention the existence of these moieties. This system of dividing the society into two halves is also known among the Boran, Gabbra's closest cousin; and generally among the southern Galla inhabiting northern and eastern Kenya.

This social division is not territorial and therefore, a moiety does not occupy a separate and distinct territory different from that of the other.

Gabbra moieties, like those of the Boran and Orma are exogamous. It therefore means that when a man meets a woman, he has to find out to which moiety she belongs. Moieties are very particular about matters pertaining to the whole society. Because of this particularistic nature of moieties, any deliberations affecting the whole society must be attended by a representative from each moiety. Other than performing political and ritual tasks, the moiety division is not reflected in material culture. Both moieties are represented in all phratries the next social division of the Gabbra.

According to Stiles (1980a) and Torry (1973), the Gabbra have five phratries. But Goto (1972) says that the Gabbra have only three, a number which he obtained using evidence obtained from only one section of the society*. The five phratries: Alqana, Gara, Galbo, Sharbana and Odolla "... are corporately called the Dibbe Shanaan

* Although the Gabbra have five phratries, only three, Alqana, Galbo and Gara inhabit Marsabit (Kenya); the rest are in Ethiopia.

literally five drums after the fact that each phratry is supposed to have a sacred drum for use in various rituals, that is kept in the Yaa (headquarters) of each phratry. The Odolla phratry lost its drum to the Rendile ..." (Stiles 1980a:7).

Among the Boran who have the same number of phraties and moieties as the Gabbra, three phraties belong to one moiety and the remaining two to the other. The situation appears to be different for the Gabbra. In the words of Stiles, "... both Gabbra moieties are represented in all phraties, but the clans that comprise each phratry belong to only one moiety ..." (Stiles 1980a:8). Contrary to Torry's assertion that each phratry occupies a customary grazing tract, many phraties were found (Oct. 1980) occupying and sharing the available resources within their settlements and vicinity areas.

Coming after the phratry is balbal (clan-literally door) which is the next Gabbra social division. Gabbra clans therefore belong to both moiety and phratry. Members of each clan regard themselves as having one founding father. It is not clear how many clans are found in a phratry.

Clans have corporate activities such as the digging, maintenance and regulation of wells and other sources of water. A clan has no territory to which it can lay claim as rightfully its own as all land belongs to the entire Gabbra. One therefore finds different Gabbra clans living together in same settlement areas. Since each clan identifies itself with a founding ancestor, then all members regard themselves as brothers and sisters and therefore marry from outside the clan.

The clans are further sub-divided into sub-clans called wara (family) or sometimes called mana* (house). Writing generally of the Boran family, Legesse (1973) had the following to say "... ideally the family contains one adult male, one or several wives and unlimited number of children ..." (Legesse 1973:18).

Among the Gabbra families, responsibilities are differentiated for males and females. Outdoor activities, such as building animal enclosures as well as collecting raw materials required in their construction are regarded as strictly for males, whereas the construction of houses

* Mana (hut/house). This is a family unit consisting of a mother, her children and the man of the house.

and whatever goes on inside them - indoor or domestic activities - are feminine. The division of labour will be seen below when describing the manufacturing processes of material culture objects. Besides this, the men lead and participate in ritual activities, though by no means exclusively performed for them. Although one can see different material culture objects that are made by men and women, no difference may be seen in those that are made by different moieties, phratries, clans or families.

Political Organisation

The Gabbra have neither kings nor chiefs and political and religious organisation are based on the luba age grades into which the males are organised. Each of the five Gabbra phratries has luba the number of which differ from one to the other. It should be understood that only males are members of a luba which therefore means that political and religious authority is controlled by men.

According to this system of organisation, a luba principally holds office for seven years and hands it over to the next in a cyclical order according to the number of luba in a phratry. In the case of the Gara

phratry for example, "... there are only three of them and therefore power goes from Afat to Wakor to Barbar and back to Afat ad-infinitum ..." (Stiles 1980a:10a).

The men whose age set is in power, wear special turbans and are called the dabella or abiyal. Among the Gabbra, it is not clear whether every man within a luba is a dabella or only some few who are chosen as councillors as is the case among the Boran.

However, what is known is that the dabella are charged with the task of interpreting law as well as making important decisions governing politico-religious activities in the phratries to which they belong.

In each luba are found two secular leaders called hayyu. In the words of Stiles "... the hayyus do not wield absolute authority but act more as mediators of public discussions and spokesmen for the consensus decisions ..." (Stiles 1980a:16). This system of political organisation may go far back in time to the period when the Gabbra evolved into a distinct group of people.

Besides the hitu (turbans) which the dabella wear, it is difficult to distinguish each luba on the basis of any other material culture objects.

In spite of the changes that have taken place both political and social among many African societies since the advent of colonial rule, the Gabbra upto the present still retain their social, religious and political institutions, although the last one has slightly been modified by the introduction of chiefs.

Olla (Settlements)

Gabbra live in settlements known as olla* or sometimes manyatta. These settlements are usually far from one another, though during the dry periods, they will concentrate around wells. Apart from permanent settlements at Kalacha, Maikona, North Horr, Sololo and Dilo which also serve as market and shopping centres, most Gabbra olla keep changing sites after every three or four months in pursuit of good pasturage.

* An olla is a unit of huts whose members or people choose to live together. They may or may not be kinsmen. It does not have a set number of people.

This pattern is repeated several times in a year. Similar settlements are found among the Rendile and Samburu, but unlike those of the Gabbra which have no enclosures surrounding them, those of Rendile and Samburu have.

Each olla is an aggregate of simple huts that vary in number from two to twenty five. Of the olla visited, Alqana Yaa had twenty five huts, Buyicha had sixteen, Gollo Kalacha and Jillo had four each and Sumun Worja Boru eleven (for location of settlements studied, see map 2 above).

Huts in all these settlements were built in a crescent running from north to south, but in the case of the Yaa (phratry headquarters) huts make a double consecutive crescentic shape. Where members of more than one phratry live in an olla, huts are built in an order that reflects the numerical arrangement of these phratries. In the words of Stiles "... if people of more than one phratry occupy the same Olla, they group together from north to south by phratry following the order of Sharbana, Galbo (or Jalle), Gara, Odolla and Alqana ..." (Stiles 1980a:7). Apart from the phratry headquarters such as Alqana Yaa, each Gabbra settlement takes the name of one of the founding members of that

particular olla.

The size of an olla depends on the availability of forage in the area a settlement is located. Apart from Alqana Yaa which had twenty five huts, the other olla visited were comparatively small in size. The Yaa was big in size not only because it was situated in an area with adequate forage for its animals but also because it was the phratry headquarters where many people tend to live together. Though the other olla were found in areas with adequate forage and near wells, they were found to be smaller in size than the Yaa. Perhaps this was so because of the large herds of cattle and camels, and flocks of sheep and goats which each Gabbra man has, which make it quite unwise for many of them to live together and have their animals compete for limited forage.

However, to conserve forage around the camps, Gabbra split up stock into 'dry' and lactating herds. Those animals which are required for milk, that is the lactating herd, are usually left at home in the olla, where the family normally resides. The 'dry herds' of the stock with animals reared for meat and possibly for exchange purposes, are taken to graze in the fora (camps where animals are taken to graze during the dry seasons), where young unmarried males take care of them. Herds in the

fora may stay away for considerable lengths of time though particular animals may be driven back to the olla as may be required by their owners. (I did not visit any fora). This phenomenon of splitting their stock into two and taking some to graze far from settlements or homes is found among the pastoral Pokot and Borana, and possibly other pastoral societies.

According to John Ogolla (personal comm.) and Stiles (1980a), both of whom mapped the olla in which I recorded material culture, the human occupation area of Yaa Olla can cover about 6000m^2 and with bomas included may cover anything over $10,000\text{m}^2$. A small olla of 4 huts may cover 600m^2 and with bomas may cover $2,500\text{m}^2$..." (Stiles 1980a:16 and 17). Sizes vary from one olla to another one.

Olla are located in areas that do not waterlog during the rainy season. The Gabbra say that waterlogged areas hinder the movement of camels, which move with difficulty in muddy places. Other factors come in as well, such as the availability of water and forage for their animals, forage being the most essential. Some of the olla and onna were seen to be situated in areas where forage was abundant yet water was unavailable. One such place is the Hurri-Hills where settlements obtained water from

Kalacha, a distance of about forty five kilometres.

In other areas such as Roba Gade and North Horr, the Gabbra have constructed wells to provide water to nearby olla. These wells are circular, and measure not more than fifteen metres deep and between two and four metres in diameter. One well was measured, and was found to be about 8 metres in depth.

It must not be thought that the Gabbra dig wells whenever a new settlement is made. Besides being an arduous task, the construction of new wells is time consuming and diverts them from everyday chores of herding. In any case, if they embark on the construction of a well, this may not be ready before they shift camp elsewhere. However, it was noted that there was a well at Roba Gade and two more were being constructed. Perhaps this was a central point from which different olla watered their stock. This therefore shows that the Gabbra travel long distances from their olla to fetch water for domestic purposes and to water their animals.

It may be also noted that some of the Olla studied were near to zones containing significant numbers of Dadach (Acacia tortilis) trees. This is not surprising considering their importance in boma construction.

No distinction can be made between the material culture of one settlement and that of another except for the Dibbe (drum). All of them were similar while many of the material culture objects in olla, such as bleeding arrows, milking containers and a few others may also be found in fora.

Structures

The only structures found in Gabbra olla are mana (huts) that house the people, mona (animal enclosures), hafa (sleeping platforms), sometimes small enclosures for kids and lambs and, in case of the Yaa, the nabo (ritual structures).

The Mana (hut)

The mana is the Gabbra dwelling unit in which members of a household reside*. It is a portable dome-shaped structure about three metres in diameter and can be dismantled at a moment's notice.

* Members of one family dwell in one mana. However, a man may have as many huts according to the number of wives he has.

Everything that was used in its construction but the hearth stones and dried shrubs which formed part of the wall is taken to the next olla.

The mana has a framework of poles firmly fixed about thirty centimetres in the ground and bent at the top to make the roof. Thin sticks are tied horizontally and at intervals with cowhide thongs to these poles (see diagram A below).

On top of this framework of poles rests a covering of dasse (sisal mats), ithile (goat or sheep skins) and sometimes old pieces of cloth. These are held in place by ropes tying everything down and dried shrubs are used to cover and surround the part of the hut that touches the ground. This helps to ward off sand particles that may be blown by the wind, which would otherwise have entered the huts. All Gabbra huts are similar and all have their doors facing the west. The reason for this is to guard the wind from blowing dust and sand into the houses as the wind blows from east to west (see photo in page 58 below).

The fact that the Mana are simple and portable, coupled with the availability of pack camels upon which they are loaded, allows the Gabbra to achieve the residential mobility demanded by their way of life. In fact as Torry says "... the type of tent (hut) they possess is construed by them as trade marks or symbol of distinctiveness of their ecological adjustments vis-a-vis those of their non-camel breeding neighbours ..."

(Torry 1973:175). Indeed the Gabbra like other societies with a nomadic way of life tend to make less permanent structures. A similar phenomenon can be seen from the Kung hunters of Kalahari desert in Botswana who erect small windbreaks of grass and sticks to protect themselves from the prevailing winds and provide shade in the hot months. When time for shifting camp comes, they abandon the structures, unlike the Gabbra who take theirs to a new settlement site.

Each Gabbra hut has a wall which divides the house into two rooms: the bada (sitting room) and the dink (sleeping or bedroom). Different activities take place in these two sections of the hut. (see activity and activity areas below).

In the dink (bedroom) are found two sirir (beds), one to the north for the man, and one to south for the wife. The sirir are wooden structures found only in the sleeping room. (A full description of this will be given in Chapter Three). Two sirir are found in every Gabbra hut.

The bada (sitting room) is the section of the Gabbra hut that is directly in the front of one as he/she enters the house. In the bada, directly opposite the woman's bed and near the door is the sessum (hearth) with three oval or sometimes spherical ibid (hearth stones) arranged in opposition to one another. In between two of these ibid is a small stone called lubu. The lubu is a small oblong stone which is of ritual significance to the woman of the house.

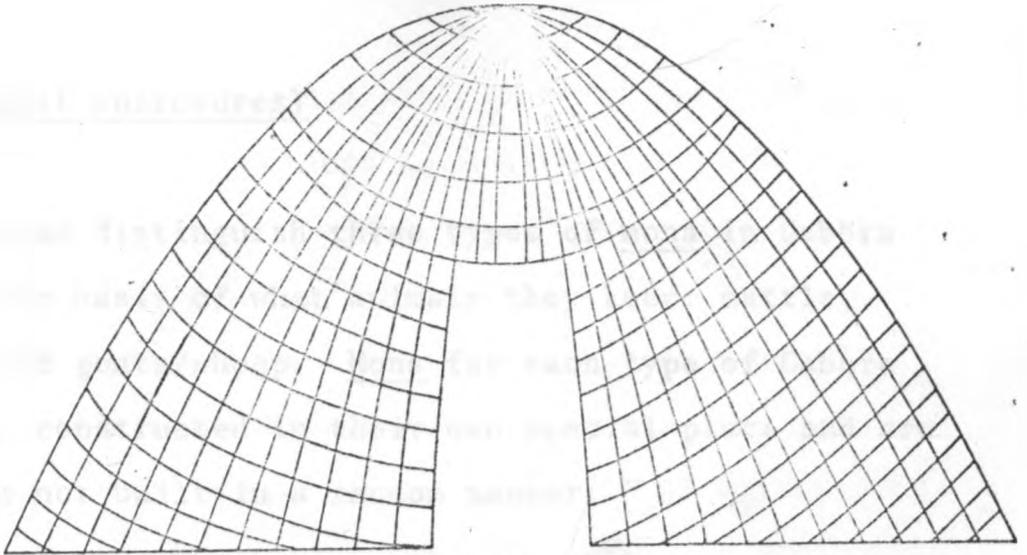
The sizes of hearths vary considerably, but roughly cover an estimated area over 600 sq.cm. The making and arrangement of ibid (hearthstones) is a task exclusively reserved for women.

On the right hand side of the door as one faces the west, are found small stones arranged in small circles to hold the bute (water containers) in position. One or two and sometimes three circles are found in one hut each holding a bute in position (See diagram B, below)

Photograph of a Gabbra Hut



DIAGRAM A



Door

Diagram A shows a sectional view of a Gabbra hut before it is covered with dase, ithile or calico sheets.

DIAGRAM B

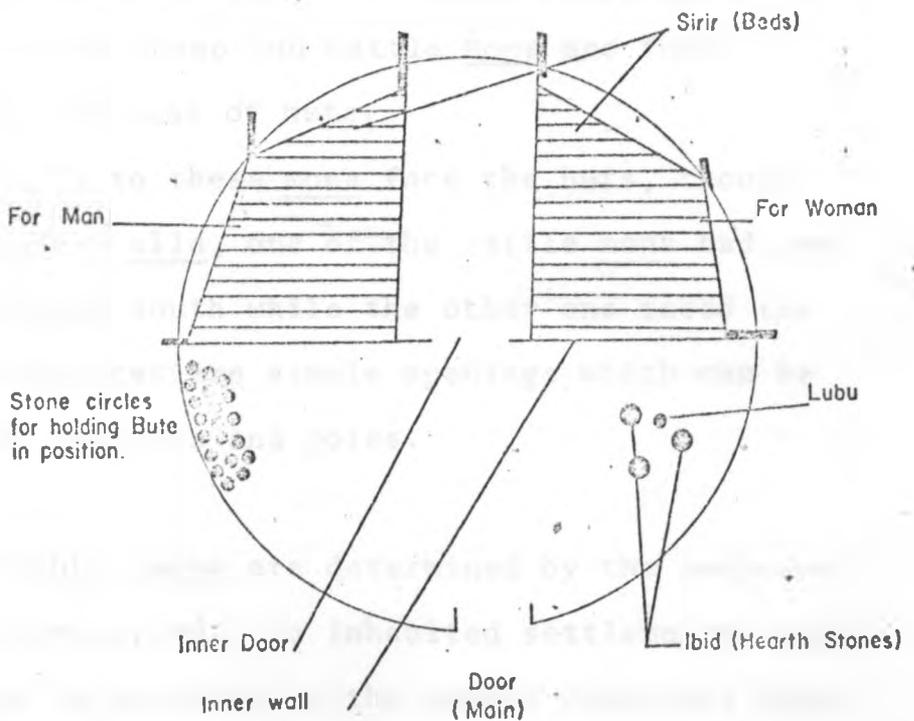


Diagram B shows the divisions of a Gabbra hut, showing the position of bed, hearth, doors and Bute stands.

Mona (animal enclosures)

One can distinguish three types of mona in Gabbra olla on the basis of what animals they keep: cattle, camels, and goats/sheep. Mona for each type of Gabbra stock are constructed in their own special place and are therefore not built in a random manner.

Camel enclosures may be built anywhere within the olla but not in front of huts. Most of these were found some metres behind the huts and all of them adjacent to one another. With the Gabbra, as may be the case with many pastoral societies, goats and sheep share the same mona. Goats and or sheep and Cattle Mona are found anywhere but to the east of huts.

The entrances to these mona face the huts, though in Sumun Worja Boru olla, one of the cattle mona had one of its gates facing south while the other one faced the huts. These entrances are simple openings which can be closed by a few branches and poles.

Sizes of Gabbra mona are determined by the number of stock to be accommodated. In inhabited settlements, exact sizes could not be obtained as the owners would not allow measurements to be taken. However, in onna whose mona

- 61 -

were still intact, single measurements of their diameters were taken. These diameters were estimated to be 14m, 9m and 12m for cattle; 7.5m and 6.0m for sheep and 11m for camels (see Fig.4:4 Chapter Four page 215). The above measurements must not be taken as a standard measure of the diameter of all Gabbra mona. Diameters vary from one olla to another. Depending on the number of animals the occupants of an olla have, they will construct enclosures to house them all. Quite often, two or three neighbours of kin-related people will pool their stock in one mona.

Most if not all pastoral societies construct enclosures purposely to keep their animals confined and it serves furthermore for keeping predators out.

Whether mona are also found in fora (dry season grazing camps) I do not know, for I did not have the opportunity to visit one. However, if the purpose of having them is the same as in the olla, then no doubt some are found in fora. As regards the number of animals in a Gabbra mona or which a man owns, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find out. This is because not all animals a person has are found in the olla. Large numbers of a man's stock are most of the time away in fora. It is also important to understand that it is a cultural taboo

The Nabo (Ritual Structure)

Besides the mana (hut) and mona (kraal) structures, Gabbra olla have yet another important structure, the nabo (ritual structure) although it is confined to the Yaa (phratry headquarters).

The nabo is made from poles and branches of Acacia tortilis which are used to make strong walls. Unlike the mana which is covered with skins, sisal mats and sometimes cloth, the nabo is never covered. This oval shaped structure has two openings. In the words of Stiles "... the nabos of all phratries except the Odolla are open at the north and south ends ..." (Stiles 1980a:10). The size of this structure could not be obtained as the owners could not allow us to take any measurements. No activity other than different Gabbra ceremonies and prayers takes place in this structure.

Hafa (Sleeping Platform)

Hafa are sleeping platforms found outside the huts and are used by young girls for sleeping on. These platforms are raised wooden structures made up of four forked poles firmly fixed in the ground in a rectangular

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Hafa (Sleeping Platform)

Hafa are sleeping platforms found outside the huts and are used by young girls for sleeping on. These platforms are raised wooden structures made up of four forked poles firmly fixed in the ground in a rectangular

pattern. Two long poles are placed on top of the forked ends of the longer sides of the rectangle. On top of these two poles, small sticks are firmly secured with sisal rope or thongs to make a platform. This structure was found in Sumun Worua Boru olla. It measured 70cm above the ground, was 117cm long and 46cm wide. Whether there were others larger than this, I do not know, for this was the only one I found in all the olla visited.

Activities and Activity Areas

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to look at the various types of activities and activity areas, for it helps us to understand the next chapter which deals with the material culture objects, as products of these activities. Most, if not all activities and activity areas within olla, are associated with domestic or household chores. Included in the activities are tasks such as the preparation of raw materials for making material culture objects and assembling some for construction. Material remains derived from these activities are described in Chapter Five.

Preparation of Food

Apart from the bleeding of animals and butchering which are accomplished by men, the other tasks of food preparation and storage are performed by women. These include inter-alia milking and storing of milk products, preparation of beverages, roasting of coffee beans, pounding of maize and preparation of its products as well as cooking.

Milking

Milking is Gabbra's most important food related activity. Except for camels which are milked by young unmarried males, the other animals, cows and goats are left solely to the women and young girls. This activity is performed within the olla in respective animal enclosures, though it is also done in fora* (dry season camps).

* Neither women nor young girls are allowed to go to fora.

Milk Products.

Gabbra women prepare fats or oil from milk which is stored in containers for young girls and women to smear their bodies. The preparation of this is done in huts, preferably in the bada (sitting room).

Bleeding and Butchering

Blood of cattle and camels is a major source of nutrients to the Gabbra. The bleeding of these animals is a task performed by men, a phenomenon also found among the Maasai and the Kalenjin, though among the latter it is no longer practised. This activity is carried out both at the olla in respective animal enclosures and also in fora. Blood is mixed with milk to produce one of Gabbra's important foods.

Butchering is a task that is exclusively reserved for men. It is performed inside the olla, but in no precise spot. Sometimes, this is carried out in front of huts or by the side of mona always nearest to the huts.

When this is over, the women do the drying of meat and hides as well as preparing meat products such as fats and soup for drinking. All these, unlike butchering and skin drying, are carried on inside the huts.

Preparation of Beverages

The Gabbra make a beverage from the seeds of dadach (Acacia tortilis) tree. The seeds are boiled, brewed and taken as tea. However, this has presently been substituted by tea leaves bought from the nearest market centres. Like other foods, the preparation of beverages is carried on inside the hut, specifically in the bada. This activity is exclusively done by women and young unmarried girls.

Coffee Roasting

The Gabbra roast and eat buni (coffee beans) rather than making it into a drink. Roasting of this commodity is done by women using sufuria or where available okote fara (clay pot) in the bada. Once the beans are ready, they are mixed with fats and soup and ladles are used to convey this mixture from the kori (bowl) to the mouth.

Besides being a regular food, it is also eaten for certain rituals, for example the birth of a child, but only by men.

Pounding of Maize and the Preparation of its Products

The pounding of maize and the preparation of its products into edibles - ugali, and uji (gruel)-is exclusively a woman's task. Maize, when obtained either from market centres or possibly from parts of southern Ethiopia, is pounded into flour in a mortar by using a pestle. This task is carried on inside huts but specifically in the bada.

Wood Working

Wood Working is yet another important activity performed in a Gabbra olla. It involves the assembling, preparation and modification of wooden raw materials from which material culture items are made. Some of the raw materials are either obtained locally, e.g. dadach (Acacia tortillis), or from other available species of wood obtained mainly from forest regions of Marsabit mountains or from the Hurri Hills to the north.

Woodworking or carving is not a full time activity, so there are no professional craftsmen among the Gabbra. It is an exclusively male domain though not all men do it. Although most wooden objects are made by married men, on very rare occasions single men make one or two items, but strictly for their own use. This activity is performed in the settlement though in no precise spot. However, wood-carvers prefer carving their objects under any nearby tree and occasionally at the back or front of a hut depending on where the hut has cast its shadow.

Smithing

The Gabbra have traditionally relied on Konso or Watta tumthu (blacksmiths) for their metal objects. The tumthu make and trade their metal objects for Gabbra goats, sheep, and even milk. The Gabbra themselves do not engage in the forging of metal, a task which they regard with contempt. Presently, some few of these blacksmiths have come to live amongst the Gabbra. Most the tumthu's work is carried out in a special place under a tree.

One tumthu (blacksmith) who lives among the Gabbra is known to operate from Kalacha, which is more of a cosmopolitan centre than a true Gabbra manyatta. The fact

that he was not allowed to stay in any other olla than Kalacha which is a shopping centre anyway is a clear indication of Gabbra's disdain for blacksmiths.

Leather Making

The drying of skins and the preparation of hide products is carried out by women except the making of gaathi (skin rope) which is done by men. It is carried on in the olla by the side of the huts and sometimes in goat or sheep enclosures.

Basketry

Among the Gabbra, the art of basketry is a woman's domain though both men and women lend each other hands during the gathering of raw materials which are obtained far away from settlements.

All the above Gabbra activities are carried out within the settlement and some within the different settlement structures - thus showing us the behaviour patterns of the Gabbra, which also indicates that human behaviour is patterned.

Where each activity is performed, some have left traces either during the process of manufacturing, or otherwise, all of which are important to archaeologists in understanding the behaviour of this society. Because of the diverse nature of Gabbra activities, one does expect to get a wide variety of material culture as will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

MATERIAL CULTURE

In this Chapter, I first give an inventory of all material culture objects using their local names and their English equivalents (in brackets), arranged in alphabetical order. Below the inventory is a table showing the number and location of each material culture item in each of the huts visited. Thereafter, is a description of each material culture object showing the processes of manufacture, the makers, the type of raw materials used, where found in hut, where it is used and where discarded when no longer serving the purpose for which it was made. All these are important for archaeologists in reconstructing activities and activity areas in abandoned settlements and possibly reconstructing the past behaviour of the Gabbra.

INVENTORY

- | | | |
|------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. AFARE | - | (fan) |
| 2. ARRAR | - | (skin bag) |
| 3. BEEDO | - | (skin rope) |
| 4. BIDI | - | (basketry container) |
| 5. BILAH* | - | (knife) |
| 6. BILBIL* | - | (metal cow bells) |

* The asterisked items are those that will survive longer in the archaeological record.

| | | | |
|-----|-----------|---|-----------------------|
| 7. | BUDA | - | (horn container) |
| 8. | BUDUNU | - | (mug) |
| 9. | BUTE | - | (water container) |
| 10. | CHANCHAL | - | (wooden framework) |
| 11. | DABOOLA | - | (lid) |
| 12. | DAKARA* | - | (axe) |
| 13. | DAMELA | - | (milk container) |
| 14. | DASSE | - | (mat) |
| 15. | DIBBE | - | (drum) |
| 16. | DIMBIBO | - | (sieve) |
| 17. | DOOL | - | (skin container) |
| 18. | DUYUM | - | (pipe) |
| 19. | EJARS | - | (ceremonial sticks) |
| 20. | EKIBERE | - | (stirrer) |
| 21. | GAATHI | - | (skin rope) |
| 22. | GODA | - | (milk container) |
| 23. | GOMBOSARE | - | (dog food receptacle) |
| 24. | GORF | - | (milk receptacle) |
| 25. | GORFO | - | (skin attire) |
| 26. | GUBE | - | (bow) |
| 27. | GUUBA* | - | (metal rod) |
| 28. | HABUBI | - | (funnel) |
| 29. | HAATH | - | (rope) |
| 30. | HAFUFO | - | (sisal gag) |

* The asterisked items are those that will survive longer in the archaeological record.

| | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|---------------------------|
| 31. | HARA | - | (brush) |
| 32. | HORORO/DHANIS | - | (walking stick) |
| 33. | KADABHE | - | (forked stick) |
| 34. | KALIM* | - | (metal beads) |
| 35. | KARA | - | (stool) |
| 36. | KARSA* | - | (whetstone) |
| 37. | KATEL | - | (arrow/tobacco container) |
| 38. | KIIL | - | (fat container) |
| 39. | KOBHE* | - | (tyre sandals) |
| 40. | KOKE/KORE | - | (wooden bell) |
| 41. | KORI | - | (wooden bowl) |
| 42. | KOTO* | - | (adze) |
| 43. | KUDAM | - | (charm) |
| 44. | KUNNI | - | (container) |
| 45. | LAWE* | - | (bleeding arrows) |
| 46. | MAANO | - | (wooden structure) |
| 47. | MALMAL* | - | (headgear) |
| 48. | MARA | - | (skin gag) |
| 49. | MARJUMA | - | (stool) |
| 50. | MOOKA | - | (spoon) |
| 51. | MOIYE | - | (mortar) |
| 52. | MUKOTO | - | (handle for adze) |
| 53. | MUTA* | - | (awl) |
| 54. | MWIKO | - | (twirler) |

* The asterisked items are those that will survive longer in the archaeological record.

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|---|--------------------------|
| 55. | OTO* | - | (gouge) |
| 56. | OKHOLE | - | (skin bucket) |
| 57. | ROKICHA* | - | (bracelet) |
| 58. | SABAKE | - | (wooden frame for loads) |
| 59. | SEEPAN | - | (skin strap) |
| 60. | SIRIR | - | (bed) |
| 61. | SOROR | - | (wooden milk container) |
| 62. | SUKA | - | (handle for axe) |
| 63. | SUUP | - | (skin bag) |
| 64. | UCHUM | - | (fire making equipment) |
| 65. | ULE | - | (herding stick) |
| 66. | WARAAN* | - | (spear) |

Illustrations of each of these items are shown below their descriptions - below. Although dimensions of each item are given in the text, the illustrations are not drawn to scale.

* The asterisked items are those that will survive longer in the archaeological record.

The above table shows the distribution of material culture items found in twenty huts in five different Gabbra settlements. A total of 1099 items were seen out of which 47.6% were in bada and the rest, 52.4%, in the dink. If all of them enter the archaeological record and the conditions for their preservation exist, then archaeologists excavating the area would recover them. But it is unlikely that all these items can stay for long in the archaeological record since the majority - 89.9% are of organic materials which perish quickly. However, chances are high that only 10.1% (material culture items made of inorganic raw materials including those whose components are part organic and part inorganic) of all items will enter and remain for long in the archaeological record.

The society's material culture objects differ in a number of respects: the raw materials used in their manufacture such as wood, basketry, metal and leather, the makers whether men or women, and finally the purposes for which the different objects were made. Below is a classification of the society's material culture by function beginning with the implements that are used in preparation of other cultural items. Illustration of each item is seen below its description. Although dimensions are given in the text, scales are not shown in the drawings.

1. CUTTING, GOUGING AND SHAPING IMPLEMENTS

A society that makes use of wooden utensils and objects require special implements for cutting, carving, gouging and shaping these objects. In the making of all wooden objects, the Gabbra use the dakara (axe), koto (adze), oto (gouge) and perhaps other informal objects that have a sharp edge.

(a) Dakara

The dakara (axe) has a triangular shaped metal head with one end tapering to a sharp point. This sharp point is firmly fixed into the bulbous end of the wooden handle - suka, which measures about 50 cm long (see fig. below).



The axehead dakara being of metal is made and shaped by a tumthu* (blacksmith), whereas the suka (handle) is made by Gabbra themselves. A typical Gabbra axehead measures: cutting edge 7 cm. wide,, length 11 cm, and thickness 0.5cm. Nine out of twenty Gabbra huts visited had the dakara, all of them found in the bada. Two of the nine huts had two dakara each, the rest had one each.

The dakara has quite a number of uses. Gabbra women use worn out or old ones to cut wood, whereas men use the good dakara to cut and prepare timber and sometimes in the digging of wells. When no longer serving the purposes for which it was made, the dakara can be discarded anywhere in the compound but usually in the debris area located to the front of huts.

(b) Koto (adze)

Like the dakara, the koto (adze) is made by a tumthu (blacksmith). One end of the koto has a sharpened edge measuring 2.5 cm wide and 3 cm long for cutting, and the

* Blacksmiths are not found among the Gabbra society. Those found are immigrant Konso who have settled among the Gabbra and share a kind of symbiotic relationship with them.

other end has been folded such that it forms a socket into which a wooden handle can be firmly fixed (see figure below).



It has a mukoto (handle) made from any suitable tree branch that has the shape of a hook. One section of the handle is longer and measures about 40 cm long and the shorter one measures about 18 cm long. It is the shorter portion that holds the metal piece whereas the long one makes the handle. This is shaped according to the size of the iron piece. It was found in ten huts out of twenty. In six cases this item was found in the bada and four in the dink.

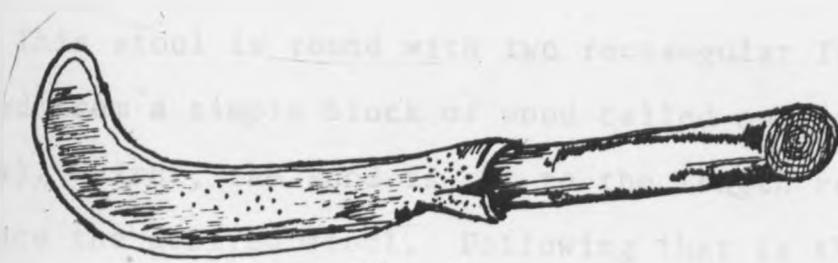
The koto is used in carving all wooden objects, for example the marjuma, soror and many others. It has no particular place for keeping, but in most cases it is either found below the bed or sometimes near the door.

When no longer in use it is discarded anywhere in the olla, but usually in the debris area.

(c) Oto (gouge)

The oto (gouge) is a simple yet indispensable implement of the Gabbra. It is like the koto with one end folded to make a socket into which a short wooden handle is firmly fixed - leaving a blade sharpened on both edges on the other end.

For a typical oto the blade measures 16 cm long and 4 cm wide. The wooden handle measures 10 cm long and 3 cm in thickness (see figure below).



Five huts had this implement and out of these four had it in the bada and the other one had it in the dink.

Woodcarvers use the oto for scooping out the inside of a wooden utensil after it has been shaped with an adze. The oto is therefore used as a scraper for scraping smooth wooden utensils and implements.

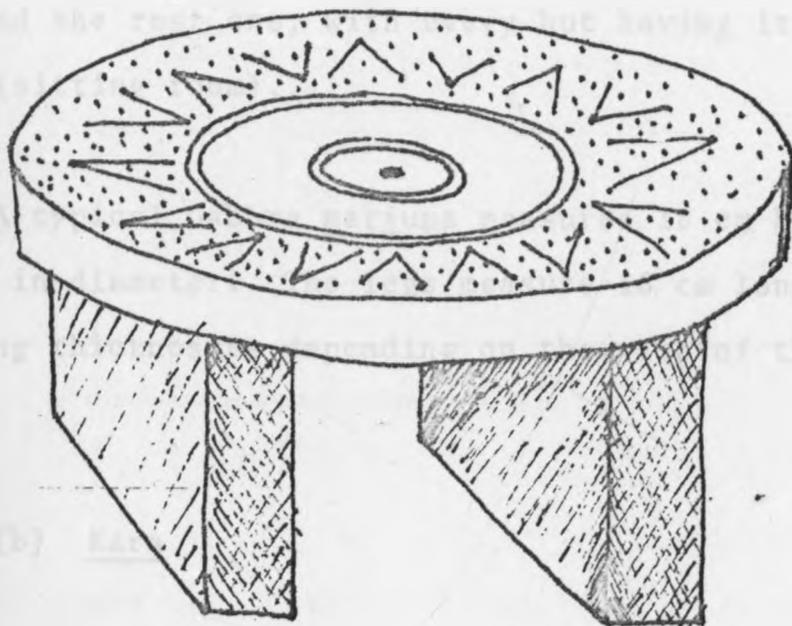
2. STOOLS

Only two types of seats are used by the Gabbra: marjuma and kara wooden stools, of which the former alone is properly a woodcarving, and is most popular. At least one marjuma may be found in every Gabbra hut.

(a) Marjuma

This stool is round with two rectangular legs. It is carved from a simple block of wood called sukela (*Delonix elata*). First, the wood is cut to the length required to produce the desired stool. Following that is the removal of the bark and initial rough shaping of the cylindrical log, both jobs done with a small axe. With the top and surfaces of the cylindrical log levelled, the carver slowly works his way round the cylinder with a koto and through the middle, producing a hollow dividing two vertical pieces from which the legs are carved in the shape of elongated rectangles. The top is round and

basin like (see figure below).



The carving of this wooden object is a task reserved for men - mostly the man of the house - and this item is regarded as a man's seat used in the sitting room and perhaps elsewhere outside the hut. However, women occasionally sit on it. When the man of the house dies, his marjuma is broken and left on top of his grave. One

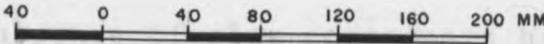
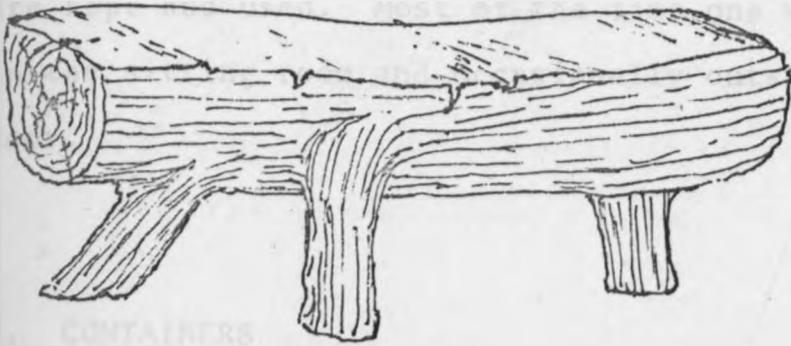
would expect at least one marjuma in every Gabbra hut but it was found that out of the twenty huts visited, two did not have it, of the eighteen, one had three, nine had two and the rest one, with every hut having it in the bada (sitting room).

A typical Gabbra marjuma measures 18 cm high and 20 cm in diameter. The legs measure 15 cm long but with varying thicknesses depending on the wish of the maker.

(b) Kara

The Kara is a simple three legged stool made from a tree branch with truncated limbs, though on very rare occasions this may be carved from solid wood like the marjuma. Where this is not made of solid wood, it is made from a branch which has three or four conveniently placed lesser branches. The latter are cut short and act as legs. The upper surface of the main limb, removed and smoothed, makes the actual seat. In fact, this item can be made by any man who finds a branch of the right size and shape. Most huts have at least one kara. Fourteen huts had one kara each, and one had two of them.

The rest had none at all (see figure below).



A Gabbra kara measures about 15 cm high and 20 cm long. The diameters of the legs vary depending on the size of the tree branch from which it was obtained.

Gabbra men use the kara as a pillow or headrest when sleeping outside their beds, and the women will sit on it when preparing foods in the sitting room.

These two Gabbra stools are found in different sizes and shapes, most of which are dictated by the shape and size of the log in the case of marjuma, and branch with the kara. The maker's tastes also lend a hand in determining these aspects. These stools are the only

material culture items used for seating in any Gabbra hut. The Gabbra are not very particular as to where these two are kept and used. Most of the time one would find them in the sitting room and occasionally outside huts near the door.

3. CONTAINERS

The absence of clay containers has been compensated for by those of wood, skin, and basketry. These containers vary in their sizes and shapes depending on the maker's preference and the different raw materials used in their manufacture. These are here grouped into categories based on the raw materials used. These are:-

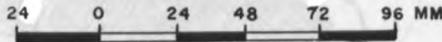
- (a) Wood
- (b) Skin/leather
- (c) Basketry
- (d) Gourd
- (e) Horn
- (f) Others: plastic, wooden framework, maano, chanchal, mortar etc.

(a) WOODEN CONTAINERS

Gabbara wooden containers have various uses, such as: eating, drinking and storing of fats and milk, in addition to those used in the transportation of water. All these containers can be seen below:-

(i) Budunu (mug)

The budunu is carved by men from a suitable tree trunk cut to length with an axe before debarking it. From one end, the carver with the use of an adze cuts out part of the wood leaving a hollowed out container. With the help of an oto (gouge) he smooths both the inside and outside of the budunu. From the top (mouth) the outside is carved to taper down to the bottom, forming a neck from which the base expands to an almost equal diameter to the top rim. Both the inside and outside of this item are smooth and it has no decorations at all (see figure below).



In all the huts visited, only five had the budunu. In three cases was this in dink and two cases in bada.

A Gabbra budunu measures about 12 cm high and has a mouth with a diameter of 10 cm and an internal depth of 6.5 cm.

The budunu serves as a mug used for drinking liquids from. It is mainly used to drink a mixture of fats and coffee. Presently, one finds some tin cups in use. This may account for the reason why not all huts visited had a budunu.

(ii) Kori (bowl)

The kori is carved from sukela (*Delonix elata* (L)) wood. It is made by the same technique as for the budunu and both have similarities especially in the ringed bottom. Unlike the budunu, which has a narrow top (mouth) the kori has a broad one (see figure below).



A typical Gabbra kori has an opening 12 cm in diameter, is 14 cm high, and 12 cm deep and has a base 8 cm in diameter.

It is used to contain and drink a mixture of coffee, butter fat and milk which is sometimes ladled into budunu (wooden cups). Apart from this mixture, the kori is also

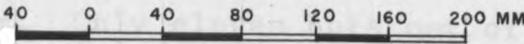
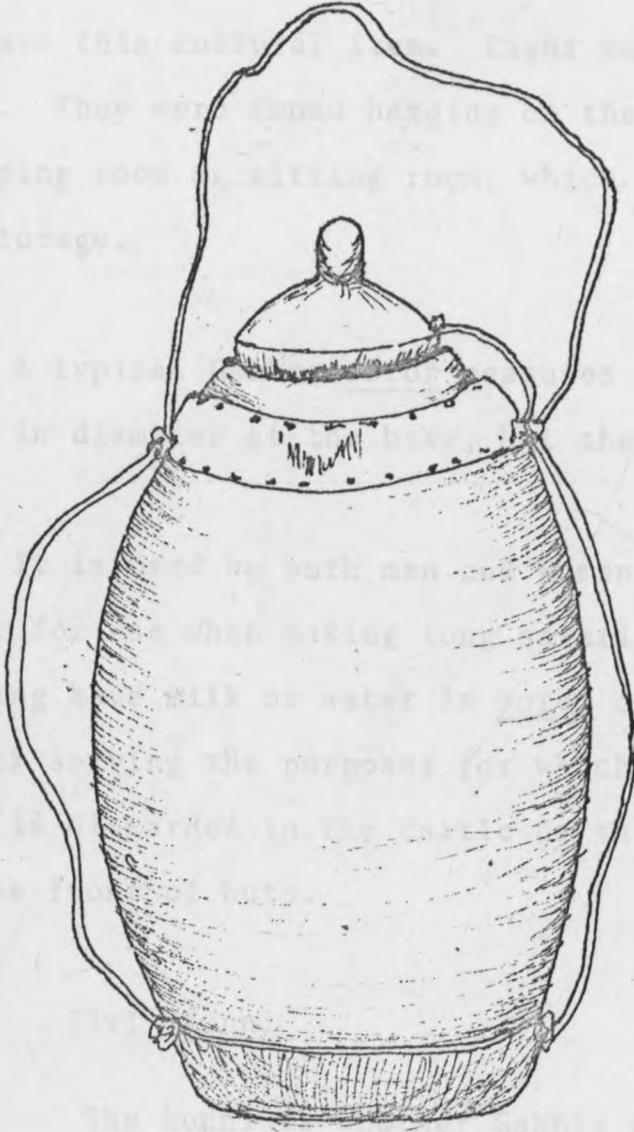
used for drinking soup and porridge. Meat either roasted or boiled is also eaten from the kori. Eleven out of a total of twenty huts were found to have this cultural object. Out of these, four huts had two kori each, and the rest had one. Four huts had this item in the sitting room, the others had them in the sleeping room. These were found either hanging on the wall or else on the floor resting against the wall. When no longer in use, it is discarded in front of the huts.

(iii) Soror (milk-container)

The soror is a wooden container made from the agarsu (species unknown) tree, cut to required size with the dakara. With the help of a koto (adze) and oto (gouge) a man carves out the centre of the log, leaving an oval gouged out shape with both ends open. Of these two openings, one forms the mouth, and the other is sealed with basketry leaving the object a complete container.

The outer part is strengthened with cowhide, laced on when wet to ensure a close fit when dry, to make the container less susceptible to cracks and breakages. It has a lid made of solid wood which is joined to the rest of the container with cowhide thongs. The soror in most cases has straps which make it easy for carrying or hanging

in the hut (see figure below).



Seventeen out of a total of twenty huts were found to have this cultural item. Eight huts had two soror each. They were found hanging on the wall either in sleeping room or sitting room, which is their usual place of storage.

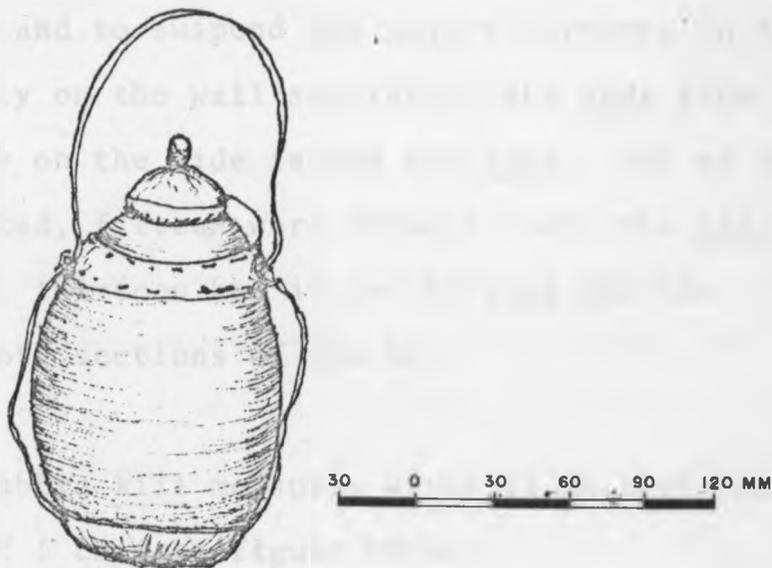
A typical Gabbra soror measures about 20 cm high and 8 cm in diameter at the base, but the size varies.

It is used by both men and women for storing milk or water for use when making long safaris. Children when herding have milk or water in soror containers. When no longer serving the purposes for which it was made, this item is discarded in the cattle or sheep boma, or sometimes to the front of huts.

(iv) Kunni

The kunni is another Gabbra wooden container made by the same technique, raw materials and by the same makers as the soror. Only eleven huts out of twenty had this item. Out of these, one hut had this item in both sections of the hut, nine had it in the bada and one had it in the dink.

The kunni may be called a small soror because of its small size. A typical Gabbra kunni measures 15 cm high and has a base (bottom) 8 cm in diameter (see figure below).



This item is used by Gabbra children to drink milk from. Not many are found in Gabbra huts because cups have replaced them. When no longer serving the purpose for which they were made, they are discarded in the front of huts.

(v) Kiil (fat-container)

The kiil is another wooden container carved by men from a cylindrical log of any suitable tree. It is made by the same technique as the soror, in the form of a cylinder open at both ends. Of these two ends, one makes the mouth and the other is sealed. This material culture

item has its base and mouth/lid made of cowhide stretched on and bound down with thongs when wet to ensure a close fit when dry. It has a narrow leather strap which serves both as a handle and to suspend the object anywhere in the hut but preferably on the wall separating the bada from the dink, usually on the side facing the dink. Out of the twenty huts visited, fifteen were found to have the kiil. Of these fifteen, thirteen had it in the dink and the rest had it in both sections of the hut.

A typical Gabbra kiil measures about 11 cm high and has a diameter of 5 cm (see figure below).



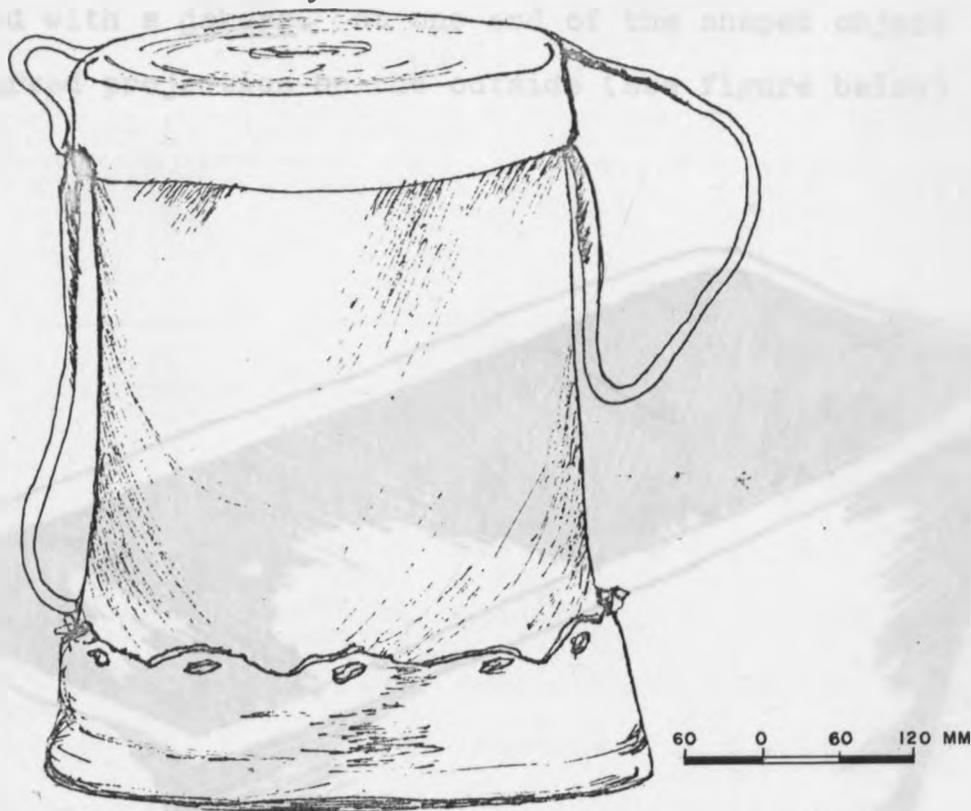
It is used for storing fats for use by women and young girls for smearing their bodies. When out of use, the kiil is thrown into the debris area, which is usually to the front of the huts.

(vi) Dibbe (wooden container and drum)

The Gabbra make two types of dibbe, one a wooden container and the other a ceremonial or ritual drum. Though I did not see the drum, according to my informants these two types of dibbe are similar in all respects but use and size. The ritual dibbe is bigger in size than the dibbe container. Both are made by men from a suitable tree trunk cut to size and, with his koto and oto, the carver gouges out the centre of the wood from one end to the other leaving it open on both ends.

In the case of the "drum" as my informant told me, both ends are covered with a wet skin and laced with thongs to ensure a close fit when dry. As for the dibbe container, this cannot be said to be complete without the bottom covered with skin, and top with skin lid. It has a handle made of plain narrow cowhide strap or a plaited one. These straps are joined to the top and base of the dibbe and make it easy for carrying or hanging on the wall (see figure below). Twelve huts had this item and out of

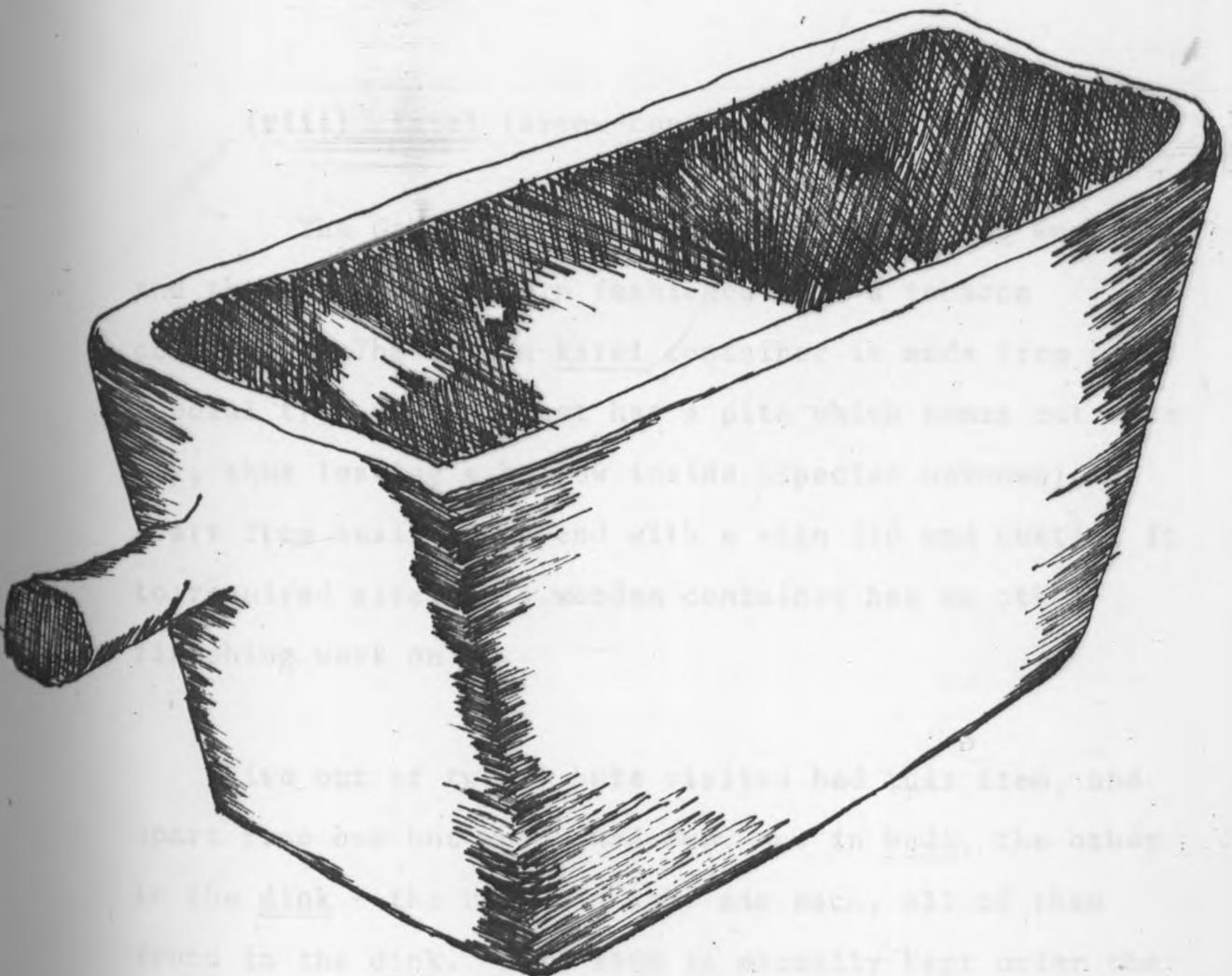
these, six had it in the dink, two had it in the bada, and the rest had it in both sections of the hut. Most of them were found hanging ^o in the partition wall and others were hanging about 30 - 40 cm just above the woman's bed.



Because the dibbe drum was not available the size cannot be given - but for an average dibbe container, the measurements were 19 cm high with mouth and base diameters of 8 cm high with ~~mouth and base diameters~~ of 8 cm and 12 cm respectively.

(vii) Gombosare (dog's food container)

The gombosare is a rectangular wooden container that is specifically made for use by dogs for drinking milk or sometimes blood. It is made from any suitable wood which is first cut to required size. The top is first levelled with an axe and then the carver hollows out the inside. The rectangular sides are then shaped with a dakara. At one end of the shaped object is a small curved projection on the outside (see figure below)



This item is not in the distribution table* because it was found outside the huts. Three out of a total of twenty huts visited had it. It is normally found outside the hut two to three metres away from the door,

An average gombosare measures 24 cm long, 10 cm wide and has a height of 14 cm and a depth of 7.5 cm.

(viii) Katel (arrow-container)

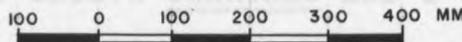
The Gabbra have two types of Katel, one wooden and the other of cowhorn fashioned into a tobacco container. The wooden katel container is made from a special type of wood that has a pith which comes out when dry, thus leaving a hollow inside (species unknown). Apart from sealing one end with a skin lid and cutting it to required size, this wooden container has no other finishing work on it.

Five out of twenty huts visited had this item, and apart from one hut which had two, one in bada, the other in the dink - the rest had only one each, all of them found in the dink. This item is normally kept under the man's bed.

* Items in the distribution table are those which were found inside huts.

An average katel (arrow-container) has a length of about 60 cm, and a diameter of 8 cm (see figure).

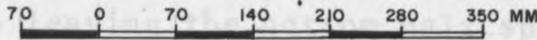
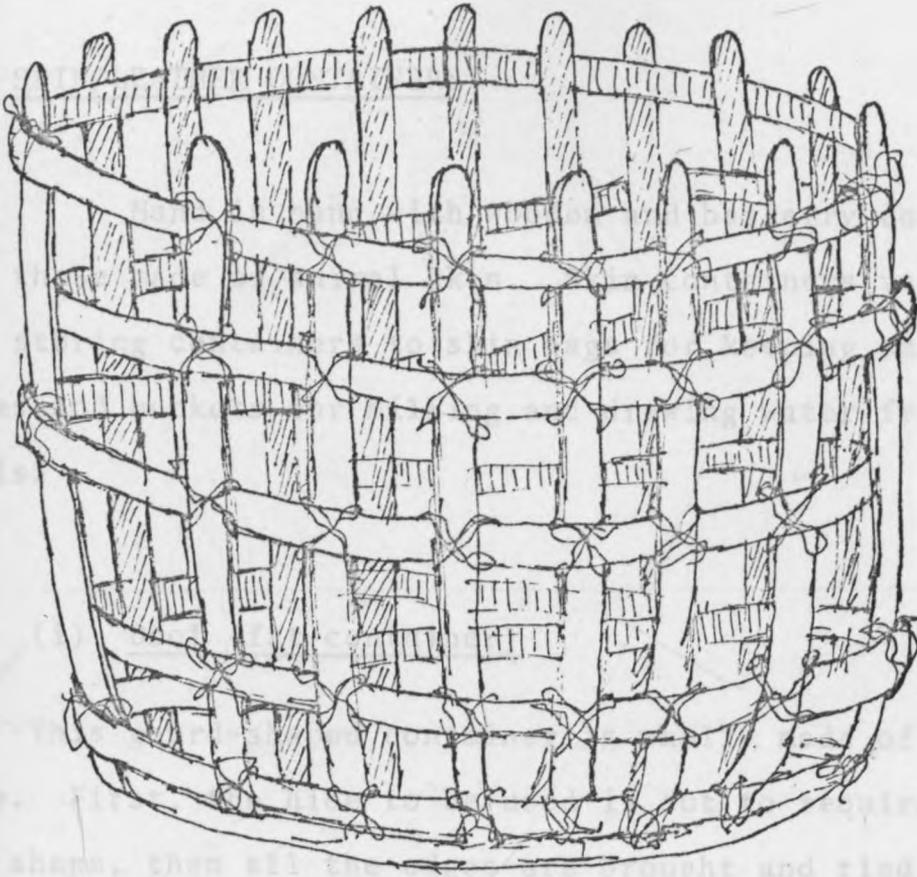
The katel is used for keeping the lawe (bleeding arrows), duyum (pipe) and uchum (fire making equipment).



(ix) Chanchal (wooden Basket)

The Chanchal is a wooden framework container made by women from thin pliable branches of shrubs which harden when dry. These are tied together into an inverted U-shape with thongs. This item is found usually numbering two or three in every Gabbra hut. It was found in sixteen huts and in four cases were they found in dink, four in bada and the rest in both sections of the hut. Most, if not all, were found hanging on the wall either in the dink or bada. This item was not found well distributed in all olla - as none was found in Gollo Kalacha. Perhaps the uneven distribution of this item lies in the fact that its functions have been taken over by some other items like jute bag or sack.

An average Gabbra chanchal has a height of 35 cm, a base 12 cm in diameter and a mouth (top) 25 cm in diameter (see figure below).



Small household items such as ladles, spoons and sometimes tin cups find their safe keeping in the chanchal. In some cases, one may find a chanchal being used as a container for roasted meat and bones for later use or for fat containers such as the kiil or dibbe*. When no longer in use, it is thrown into the debris area in the front of huts.

* Sometimes the kiil and dibbe may not have skin straps for hanging and hence find their safe keeping in the chanchal.

(b) SKIN/LEATHER CONTAINERS

Hand in hand with wooden and basketry containers are those made of animal skin. Skin containers vary from fat storing containers to skin bags for keeping small items and buckets for milking and drawing water from the wells.

(i) Dool (fat container)

This gourd-shaped container is wholly made of camel hide. First, the hide to be used is cut to required size and shape, then all the edges are brought and tied together to make one knotted end, which forms the neck and mouth, thus leaving the bottom half spherical. Some dool do not have necks. They are made by women from skins which are still very wet to maintain the gourd like shape when dry. They have lids made of wood (see figure below).



Of the twenty huts visited, only twelve had this item. Apart from three huts which had it in the bada, the rest had them in the dink. This item is usually found in the dink.

Although one may find dool of many sizes in Gabbra huts, a typical dool has a height of 21 cm and an opening with a diameter of 6 cm.

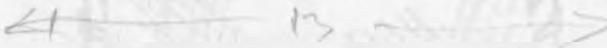
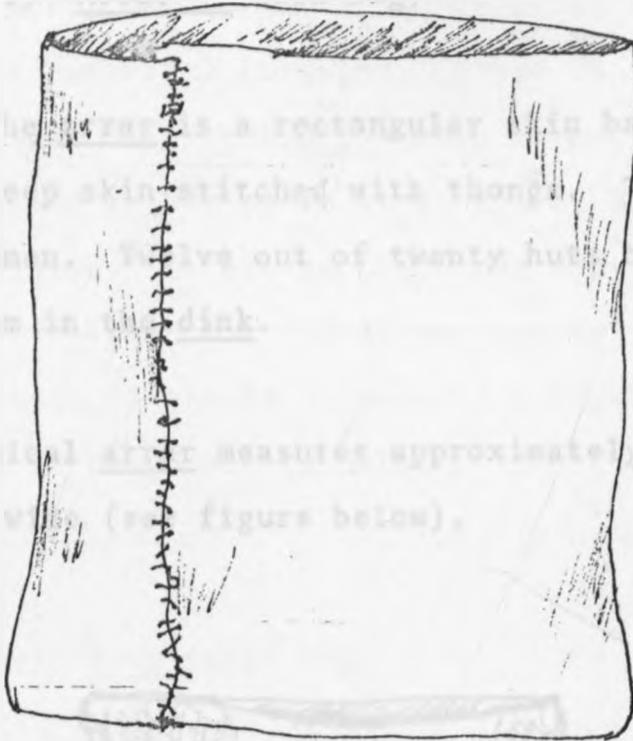
The dool is used for keeping animal fat for women and young girls to smear their bodies.

(ii) Okhole (bucket)

The Okhole are buckets made of giraffe skin cut into required size and stitched together with thongs to make a cylindrical container that has a capacity of about five litres. They are made by Watta and sold to the Gabbra, though the Gabbra do sometimes make some for themselves.

This material culture item was found in eighteen huts. Of these, three huts had it in both sections, five had it in dink, and the rest had it in bada. The total number of okhole in all bada were twenty seven, with twelve in dink. Perhaps the huts which had none, had theirs taken to the wells at the time I visited them.

Okhole may be found in different sizes, but an average Gabbra okhole measures 19 cm high, and has a base 13 cm in diameter (see figure below).

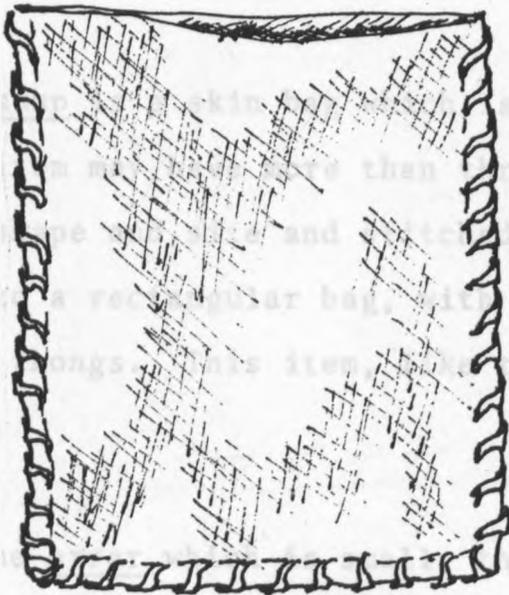


Okhole are used to milk cows and goats besides drawing water from wells. When no longer in use, the okhole is sometimes converted into sandals for young boys and girls. This is a task the men perform.

(iii) Arrar - (skin bag)

The arrar is a rectangular skin bag made from goat or sheep skin stitched with thongs. This item is made by women. Twelve out of twenty huts had the arrar, all of them in the dink.

A typical arrar measures approximately 42 cm long and 30 cm wide (see figure below).

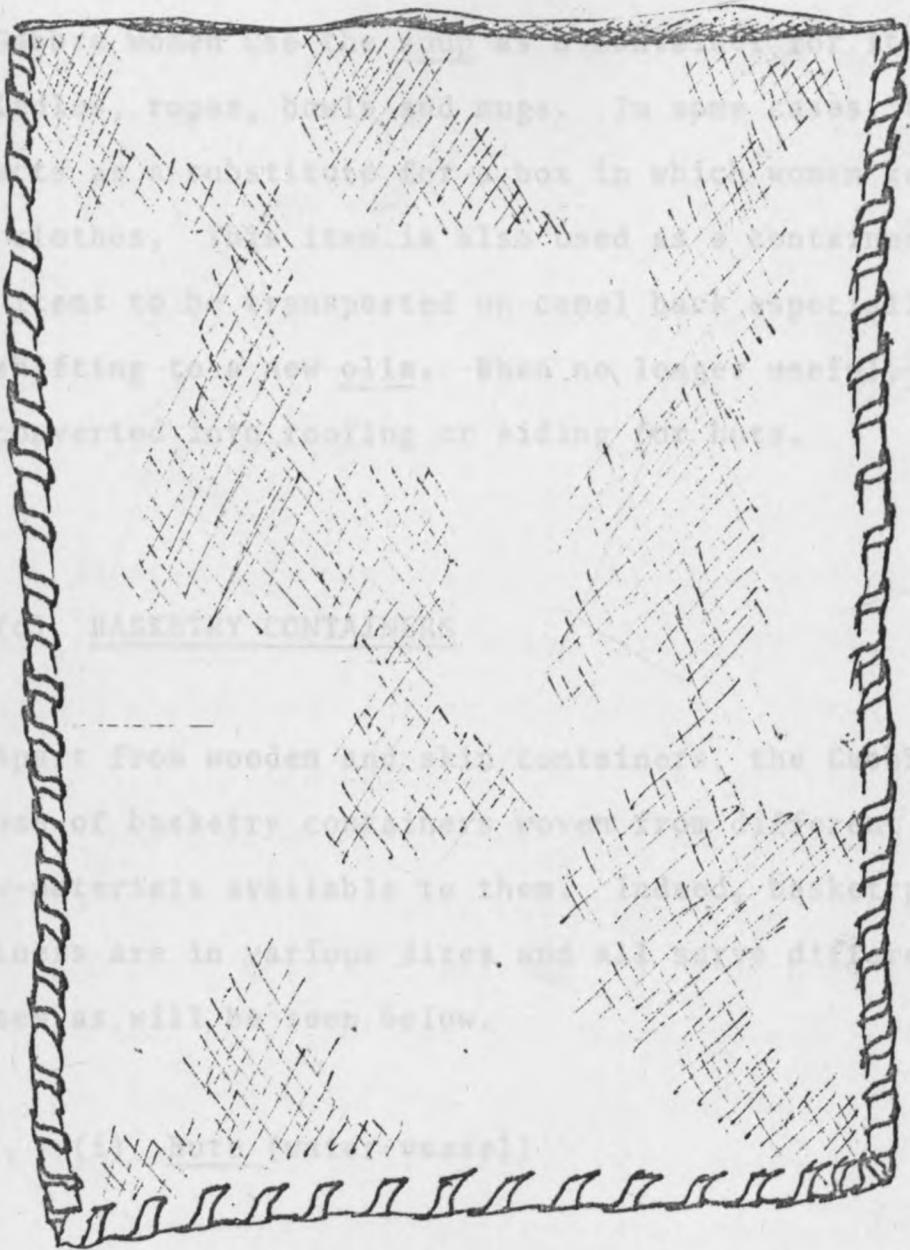


The Gabbra use the arrar for storing and keeping tobacco for betrothal purposes. A man who has a son ready to marry fills the arrar with tobacco and takes it to his in-laws to be, where it is shared among the people of the manyatta. It has no other use other than being a tobacco container for and during special occasions. When no longer in use it is discarded anywhere but preferably in the front of huts.

(iv) Suup (skin bag)

The suup is a skin bag which is rectangular in shape. This item may have more than three goat or sheep skins cut to shape and size and stitched together, and later made into a rectangular bag, with all but one side stitched with thongs. This item, like the arrar, is made by women.

Unlike the arrar which is small, the suup may be more than twice as big. It measures about 100 cm long and 60 cm wide (see figure below).



120 0 120 240 360 480 MM

The Gabra is the biggest container the Gabra
make. This elaborate gabara is woven by
men from the roots of the hobole (wild asparagus) tree.
It takes up to one and a half years to complete. It is
made by the core and lapping method. The core or the warp
is first made from the beiled roots of a different plant,
erga (species not known). Then, with the help of a zula

Gabbara women use the suup as a container for items like ladles, ropes, bowls and mugs. In some cases, the suup acts as a substitute for a box in which women keep their clothes. This item is also used as a container for small items to be transported on camel back especially when shifting to a new olla. When no longer useful, is then converted into roofing or siding for huts.

(c) BASKETRY CONTAINERS

Apart from wooden and skin containers, the Gabbra make use of basketry containers woven from different types of raw-materials available to them. Indeed, basketry containers are in various sizes and all serve different purposes as will be seen below.

(i) Bute (water-vessel)

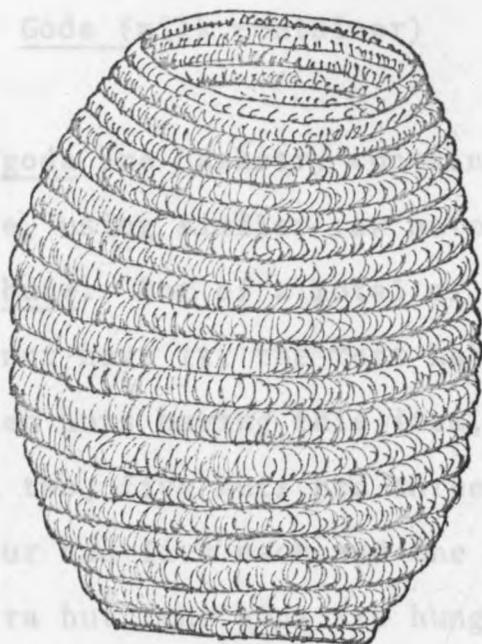
The bute is the biggest container the Gabbra make. This elaborate urn-shaped stiff vessel woven by women from the roots of the hokole (wild asparagus) tree, can take up to one and a half years to complete. It is made by the core and lapping method. The core or the warp is first made from the boiled roots of a different plant, ergams (species not known). Then, with the help of a muta

(awl) the hokole weft strands are used to bind the successive coils of the warp in the required shape. The over-lapping hokole strands produce a very close texture.

When ready, the bute containers are made watertight by burning a stick inside which exudes a smoky resin that seals the inside of the vessel.

In all the olla visited, only four out of twenty did not have the bute. It would be surprising to find a Gabbra hut without one for it is a necessary item. Perhaps at the time I visited the four huts, the bute had been taken to the wells to fetch water. It has a special place in the hut where it is stored and this is the bada at the corner where the partition wall and the main wall intersect. Of the sixteen huts that had this item, two had three bute each, five had two each, the rest had one each. Where there was no bute one may find a substitute in modern plastic jerry cans (but this is still very rare), a phenomenon that was casually observed in Kalacha centre which is a metropolitan olla among all those visited.

The bute, which has a capacity of about thirty litres, measures about 80 cm high and 50 cm in diameter (see figure below).



160 0 160 320 MM

The bute is used for transporting and storing water for domestic use. Because of its large size and capacity it cannot be carried for any distance by humans and so camels are used. When no longer in use, it is left in the debris area in the front of huts.

(ii) Goda (milk container)

The goda are basketry containers made on the same principle, using similar raw materials and made by women as the bute. Out of a total of twenty huts visited, only one did not have it, the rest had at least one each. In the nineteen huts having this item, one had a single goda, one had two, five huts had three each, seven had four each, four had five each and one had seven of them. In every Gabbra hut, the goda are hung loose on the wall between and above the sirir (bed structure) in the dink.

This oval shaped basketry container has a capacity of about five litres. Though they may vary in size, a typical Gabbra goda measures about 21cm high and has a mouth (opening) of 8cm in diameter (see figure below).

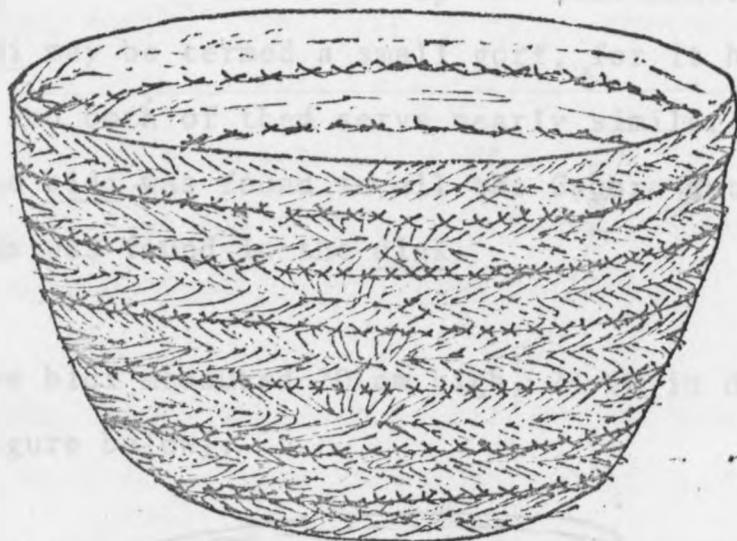
This item is specifically used for keeping milk in the hut for future use. The man of the hut has his particular goda in which his share of the milk is kept. This is not different in shape from the other goda. When no longer serving the purpose for which it was made, the goda is discarded in the cattle mona though some are thrown into the debris area in the front of huts.



(iii) Gorf (camel-milking bowl)

This is a hemispherical container made by the same technique as the goda. Of the twenty Gabbra huts visited, four had one gorf each, twelve had two each, and three huts had three each. This item is usually found in the bada though on very rare occasions may be found in the dink.

A typical Gabbra gorf measures 25 cm high, with a mouth (opening) 30 cm in diameter (see figure below).



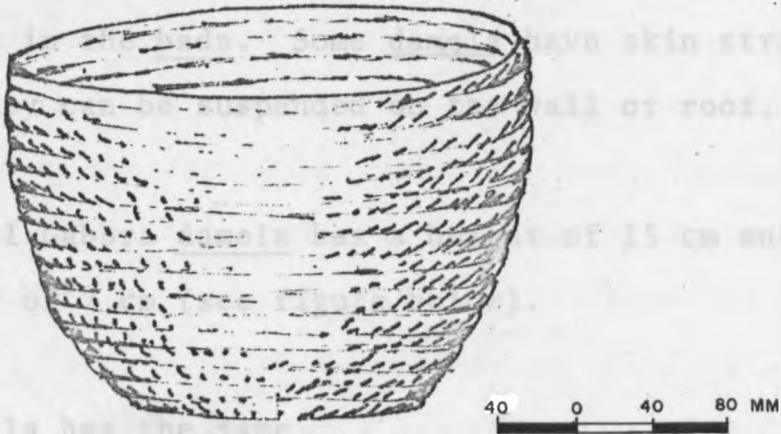
60 0 60 120 180 240 300 MM

This material culture object is used for milking camels only, an activity carried out in the camel enclosure by young unmarried males. When no longer serving the purpose for which it was made, it is strictly discarded in the camel enclosure.

(iv) Bidi (milk container)

The bidi container is made on the same principle as well as raw material and by the same makers as the gorf. The bidi may be termed a small gorf, for it has a similar shape, and both of them serve nearly similar functions. Only one bidi was found in all the Gabbra huts visited, and this was found in the dink.

The bidi measured 20 cm high, 24 cm in diameter (see figure below).



The bidi is solely used for keeping camel milk after milking. It is in this container that the milk is either distributed to individual persons in the family for the day's use or is transferred into goda for future use.

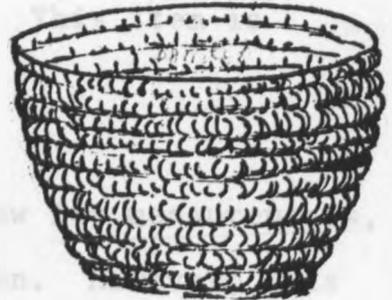
(v) Damela (milk container)

The damela is a bowl-like container made from the split leaves of the Doum Palm tree, using the core and lapping method. The core is first made from split leaves, then with the help of muta (awl) leaf strands are used to build the successive coils of the warp or core to the required size and shape. The overlapping Doum Palm leaf strands produce a very close texture.

In the twenty Gabbra huts visited, only eight were found to have the damela; six huts had it in the dink and the other two in the bada. Some damela have skin straps from which they can be suspended on the wall or roof.

A typical Gabbra damela has a height of 15 cm and a base diameter of 7 cm (see figure below).

The damela has the same functions as the bidi above. Perhaps these two containers are in complementary distribution, though this is not fully supported by the distribution table. When no longer in use it is discarded in the camel or cattle mona. It is never burned.



(d) CALABASH CONTAINERS

The Gabbra make little use of calabash containers or other items made from calabashes. However, two or three are known.

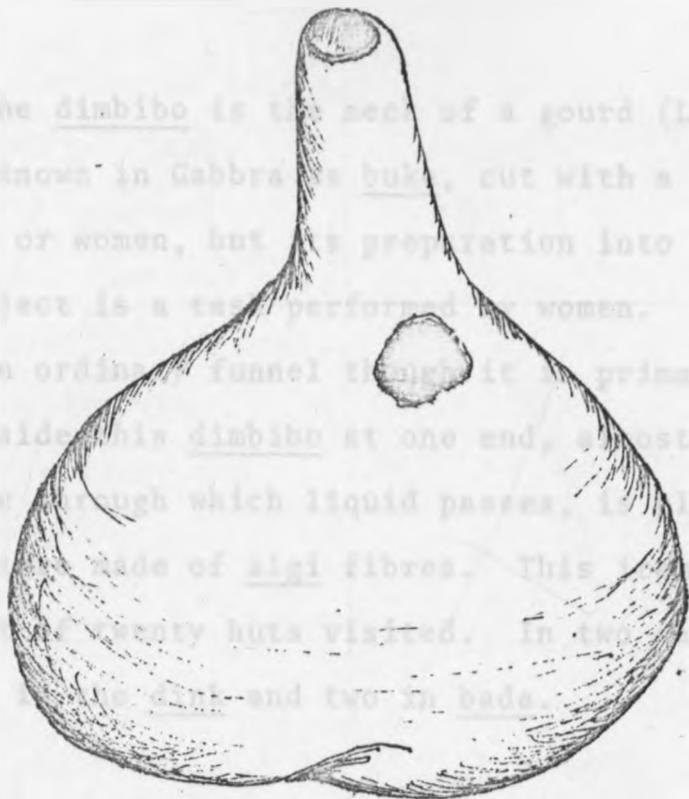
(i) Habubi

The habubi is a kind of calabash container with two openings: one at the side and the other at the tip of the neck. Growing around Marsabit, a calabash of any body shape with a long neck is picked when ripe and left to dry after which the openings are made and the seeds removed, leaving the container empty and ready for use. Not more than one of this cultural item may be found in each Gabbra hut. Four out of twenty Gabbra huts visited had the habubi, all of which were found in the dink, normally in the wooden framework container - chanchal, found hanging from the wall or roof. This item is prepared by the women.

Because the shape could not allow for measurements, the size of the habubi cannot be given. However, this item has a capacity of about one litre which shows that it is small sized item (see figure below).

(111) Dimbibo (Gabra)

The dimbibo is the neck of a gourd (Lagenaria siliquosa) known in Gabbra as buki, cut with a knife by either men or women, but its preparation into a medicine delivery object is a task performed by women. It has the shape of an ordinary funnel though it is primarily a larva. Inside this dimbibo at one end, a soft fibrous material is placed through which liquid passes, it is covered with a layer of algae fibres. This is used to convey liquid to the huts visited. In two cases one is used in habubi and two in bada.



The side of a dimbibo is decorated by one of the gourd lines which it is cut. However, a dimbibo can be straight or it can be curved. It is decorated with a line and a lower part of it is decorated with

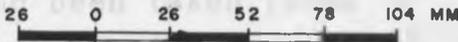
The Gabbra specifically use the habubi as a kind of instrument for conveying medicinal liquids to the mouth of sick calves or young goats. It is mostly used in mona. When no longer in use, it is discarded in the debris area in the front of huts.

(ii) Dimbibo (sieve)

The dimbibo is the neck of a gourd (*Lagenaria Vulgaris*) known in Gabbra as buke, cut with a knife by either men or women, but its preparation into a material culture object is a task performed by women. It has the shape of an ordinary funnel though it is primarily a sieve. Inside this dimbibo at one end, almost blocking the passage through which liquid passes, is placed a net-like structure made of algi fibres. This item was found in four out of twenty huts visited. In two cases was this found in the dink and two in bada.

The size of a dimbibo is dictated by that of the gourd from which it is cut. However, a typical dimbibo has a height of 17 cm, a mouth 13 cm in diameter, a neck 9 cm long and a lower opening 2 cm in diameter (see figure below).

The dimbibo is used as a funnel to strain goat, cow's or camel milk. Hairs that may have accidentally fallen into the milk during the process of milking are trapped by the alqi sieve.



(e) HORN CONTAINERS

Like the Maasai and the Kalenjin speaking peoples, the Gabbra also make use of fashioned cow horn containers. Some of these are whole or cut cowhorns. Usually a cowhorn is fashioned by making a skin lid and bottom covering for it. The bottom is covered by a skin lid and stitched with thongs to ensure a close fit when dry. With the help of a muta (awl), small holes are

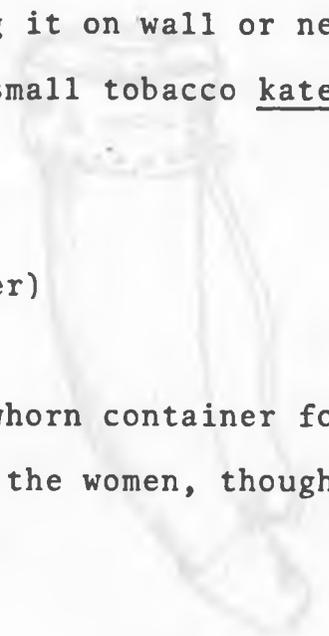
made, from which the lid is attached to the horn by thongs. It has a leather strap for suspending it on wall or neck of a man, especially in the case of small tobacco katel.

(i) Katel (tobacco container)

The katel is a fashioned cowhorn container for tobacco. This fashioning is done by the women, though sometimes men also perform this task.

Seven Gabbra huts had this material culture object and in each case in the dink. Perhaps, in the huts where this katel was not seen, they had been taken (some people do take theirs along with them wherever they go) by the owners, or were kept in skin bags where they could not be seen.

These containers vary in size with an observed range of between 8 - 13 cm in height and 6 - 8 cm in mouth diameter (see figure below).



This type of katel is used for keeping tobacco that is for daily use, by either men or women. When no longer in use it is thrown into the debris area.



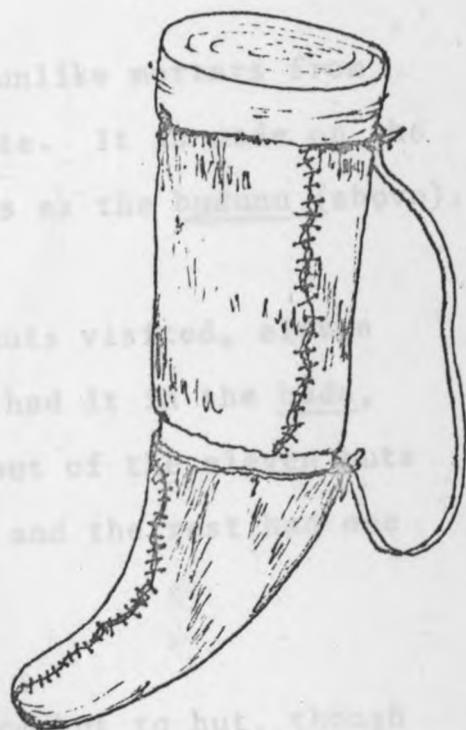
(ii) Buda

The buda is also a cowhorn fashioned into a container. It is fashioned in a similar manner as the katel (above). But unlike the katel which has no covering, the buda is almost covered with skin stitched with thongs when wet to ensure a close fit when dry. It has a leather strap that is used to suspend it on the wall in the bada. Fashioning of this cultural item is a task reserved for women.

The buda was seen in only one hut, in Gollo Kalacha. Perhaps this rarity can be explained by the fact that other cultural items used for storing fats may have been substituted for the buda, where there was none.

The buda like the katel, has its size dictated by the size of the horn to be used. The one observed had a height of about 15 cm and the opening has a diameter of 6 cm (see figure below).

The buda is used for storing fats, a task performed by women. However, the fat stored in this container is used by both men and women for smearing their bodies during ceremonial days. The buda may therefore be called a ceremonial fat container. It differs from the katel by use and by its skin covering.



(f) OTHERS

In this category are found material culture items that are similar to containers, but not used for storage purposes. These are the moiye, (mortar), maano (framework for incense) and the dibbe (drum). The maano and the moiye will be described because they were found in Gabbra huts.

(i) Moiye (Mortar)

The Gabbra moiye (mortar), unlike mortars from some other societies, is small in size. It is made on the same technique and by the same makers as the budunu (above).

Out of total of twenty Gabbra huts visited, eleven had the moiye. Out of these, eight had it in the bada, and three had it in the dink. Two out of the eleven huts having this item had two moiye each and the rest had one each.

The size of a mortar varies from hut to hut, though the variation is not pronounced, perhaps reflecting individual personal choice or interest rather than function - since all of them serve the same function.

Though there is size variability, a typical Gabbra mortar measures 29 cm in height, and has a depth of 23 cm. It has a pedestal base with a diameter of 15 cm. The top (opening) has a diameter of 16 cm (see figure below).



The moiye is solely used for pounding maize and millet when available, an activity that is performed by women within the hut, but mainly in the sitting room.

(ii) Maano (incense burner frame)

The maano is a wooden incense burner frame made on the same technique but more elaborately than the chanchal (above). In the twenty Gabbra huts visited, fourteen had the maano, and all of them were found in the dink mainly in the corridor between the man and the woman's bed.

Below this frame, is incense in the form of a gum/root or bark of a tree (fito and biress) placed on top of hot charcoal inside the burner which is now an old cup, though previously made of clay.

The maano may be larger in size than the chanchal, an object of similar structure. A typical Gabbra maano has a height of 35 cm and an opening having a diameter of 27 cm. The base has a diameter of about 15 cm (see figure below).



70 0 70 140 210 MM

The maano is used by married women to dry and perfume their clothes and to squat over to perfume their own bodies, particularly after childbirth and intercourse.

4. SPOONS AND TWIRLERS

The mooka (spoon/ladle), ekibere and mwiko (twirlers) are simple albeit essential kitchen items, that can be made by any Gabbra man.

(i) Mooka (spoon/ladle)

The mooka (spoon/ladle) is normally carved from a straight branch of a suitable tree, cut to required size with an axe. The carver (man) first removes one side, making a flat surface, and then gouges out the shallow bowl at one end of the branch. The remaining part that forms the handle is given a fine, good finish with an oto.

Nine out of twenty huts visited had the mooka. Five of the huts had this item in the dink, three had it in the bada, and one hut had one in each section.

The length of spoons and ladles varies between 30 cm and 45 cm (see figure below).



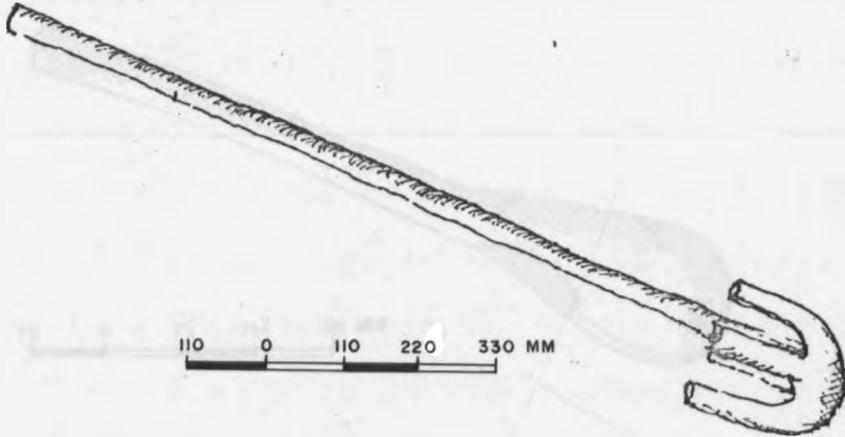
Spoons and ladles are used for conveying liquid food from containers such as the kori to the mouth and are also used during the preparation of fats and in the dishing of soup.

(ii) Ekibere (twirler)

The ekibere (twirler) is a cultural object made from wood by men. It is in two pieces - the twirler and the handle. The twirler is made from solid wood shaped in an open U and sometimes there are two of these placed on top of one another at right angles to each other. In the centre is made a small hole through which the handle is firmly fixed.

Ten out of twenty huts visited had one ekibere each. In four huts it was found in the bada, and in the other six, in the dink. This item may be found hanging on the roof or wall, or inside a chanchal in the sleeping room.

Although the ekibere varies in size from hut to hut, a typical ekibere has a head or top piece measuring 10 cm long and a handle 45 cm long (see figure below).

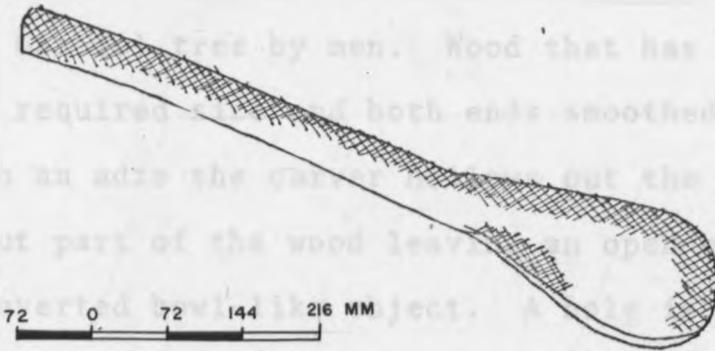


The ekibere (twirler) as its name suggests, functions as a twirler for mixing soup, curdled milk, ugali or porridge. When no longer in use it is discarded in the debris area.

(iii) Mwiko

The mwiko is yet another type of twirler made from wood by men. A suitable piece of wood is cut into required size, and thereafter shaped on both sides to achieve a flat oval and the other into a round handle. Ten out of twenty huts visited had the mwiko. Nine of these huts had the mwiko in the bada section, and the remaining one had it in the dink. Five of these huts had both mwiko and ekibere.

A typical mwiko measures 37 cm long and has an oval end measuring 9 cm long. The length of handle is 28 cm long with a diameter of 3 cm (see figure below).



The mwiko is used in twirling and making ugali. This item is also found among many Kenyan societies, serving the same purpose as in Gabbra huts.

5. KOKE/KORE AND BILBIL (BELL)

Gabbra bells are of two forms: wooden and metallic. These are Koke/kore and bilbil, the former is made of wood whereas the latter is of iron.

(i) Koke or kore (wooden camel bells)

Koke/kore are alternative names for a Gabbra bell made and carved from solid wood of the sukela (*Delonix elata* (L) Gamble) tree by men. Wood that has been chosen is cut to required size and both ends smoothed with an axe. With an adze the carver hollows out the koke/kore, gouging out part of the wood leaving an open mouth to form an inverted bowl-like object. A hole is made at the top, through which a string is tied holding two small arps (sticks) that dangle, hitting on the sides to produce a tock-tock sound. The same hole holds the strap from which the koke/kore is suspended on the animal's neck.

Out of the twenty huts visited, only five had the koke/kore, four in the bada and the remaining one in the dink.

A typical Gabbra koke/kore has a top measuring 2 cm wide and 7 cm long, and a height of 13 cm. It has a narrow elliptical opening measuring 15 cm long (see figure below).



Tied to the camel's neck, the koke/kore makes noise thus showing the position and direction of camels when herding. When no longer in use, it is thrown anywhere but mainly in the camel or cattle enclosure.

(ii) Bilbil (metal cow bell)

The bilbil is a metal bell, made by a tumthu (blacksmith). It is made from a rectangular piece of iron folded into two equal halves. The end of each of the two halves is slightly curved to make a semi-circle which when they are joined make an elliptical mouth. The other edges that form the sides are brought into contact, thus leaving it a container-like object with an open mouth.

A hole is made at the top, from which a metal arp is suspended. This hole also serves as the point from which a skin strap to be suspended from the animal's neck is tied.

The bilbil has a height of about 10 cm and a top about 8 cm long (see figure below).



The bilbil is tied to the neck of a leading animal bull or cow, so as to lead the others to pastures. It is specifically used to help one locate their position when herding.

6. STICKS

The Gabbra have different sticks for different purposes such as herding, ceremonies, walking or for other activities. They are found in different sizes as will be

seen below. Gabbra sticks have no carving on them, the only forms of decoration are the bulbous ends of some of them.

(i) Ule, Hororo, Dhanis (walking sticks)

Gabbra sticks are made by men from straight carefully selected wood. This is then debarked and the ends are trimmed nicely with an adze or knife. Sixteen of the twenty huts visited had this item, six in the bada, three huts had it in both bada and dink, and seven in the dink. There is no obvious difference between sticks known by the three names.

Gabbra sticks are found in different sizes; however, a typical Ule/Hororo/Dhanis, has a circumference of 7 cm, and a length of 150 cm and above (see figure below).



These sticks are used by both the old and young. Whereas the older people use them as walking sticks, the younger ones are often found using them during herding or driving animals. When a man dies, his sticks are placed on top of his grave. Sticks may break at any time if not handled with care and when this happens are discarded anywhere, be it within the settlement or outside.

(ii) Ejars (ceremonial sticks)

Ejars is a special ceremonial stick mainly made from ejerisa (*Olea africana*) tree though it is hard to distinguish it from other forms of sticks. The only thing that distinguishes it from other sticks are the small pieces of animal skin tied to one end of each ejars. These pieces are normally cut from a spotted skin of a goat or sheep a man has slaughtered. Nine out of twenty Gabbra huts had ejars and all of them were found in the dink. Of the nine huts, two had one ejars each, one had two, three had four each, two had six each and one had three.

The number of ejars in any Gabbra hut is dictated by the number of live sons born into a family; thus each of a man's sons has one ejars. Ejars belonging to the sons of one mother are kept in their mother's hut. If found

in the archaeological record, they help in showing the number of boys in a Gabbra household/family. would

These ceremonial sticks have their special place for keeping in the hut. They are kept hanging horizontally on two strings suspended from the roof just above the goda in the bedroom. Several of them, depending on the number of sons born into that family are found together. Where not found, perhaps there are no sons belonging to that hut.

A typical Gabbra ejars has a circumference of 8 cm and measures 1 metre long (see figure below).



These special sticks are used during ceremonial days only; especially ceremonies pertaining to rain, such as the sorio, which takes place in October or November each year.

(iii) Kadabhe (forked stick)

Unlike other sticks, or material culture items which require a lot of hours to make, the kadabhe requires neither arduous labour nor skill to make. This item is made and used by women unlike other wooden items which are made by men. It has a split from one end to the middle forming a fork. Eighteen huts had it and apart from one hut which had two of them the rest had one each. Each of these huts had this item in the bada.

An average kadabhe has a circumference of 7 cm and measures 75 cm in length (see figure below).



The kadabhe is used to lift charcoal from the fire for cleaning milk receptacles and storage containers. Excess charcoal in the containers is normally removed by an old cloth fragment called sosso held in position by the kadabhe.

7. DUYUM (PIPE)

The Gabbra make use of a type of pipe called duyum. This is a short pipe made from a type of wood whose pith dries out leaving a hollow centre. The Gabbra then cut this into required lengths and use as ready pipes. This object is usually made by men. Of the twenty Gabbra huts visited, only three had the item and all of these were found in the dink. Two out of the three huts had two duyum each; and the other had one. It is usually kept with lawe (bleeding arrow) in a katel.

A typical duyum has a circumference of 3.5 cm, and a length of 36 cm (see figure below).

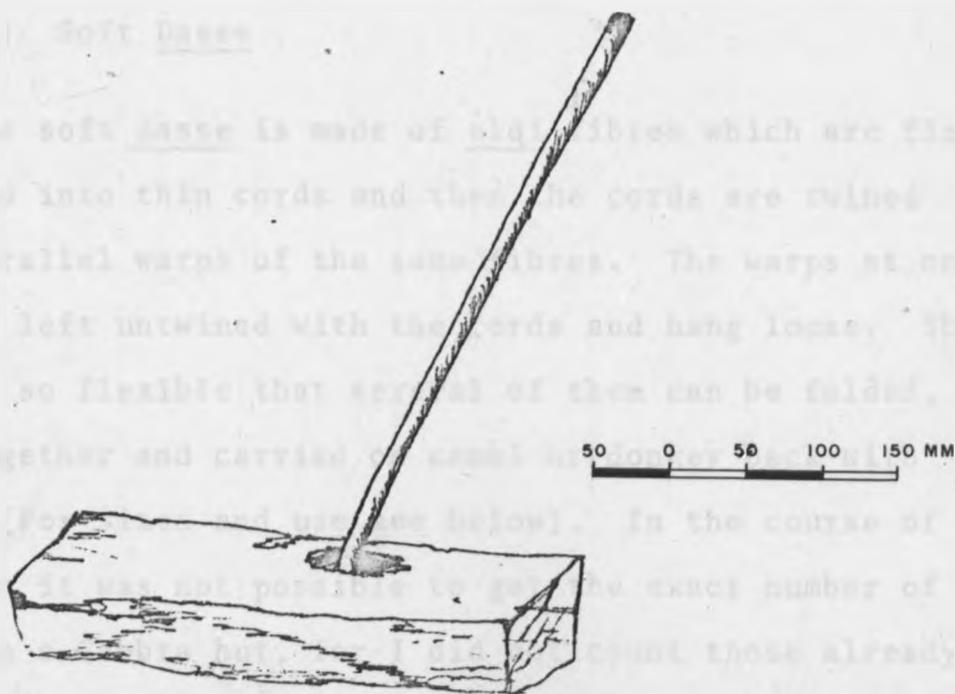


This item is used for removing water from curdled milk, especially when preparing cheese and yoghurt.

8. UCHUM (FIRE MAKING EQUIPMENT)

Like many African societies, the Gabbra have fire making sticks known as uchum. This equipment consists of a straight drilling stick and a flat board, sometimes referred to as male and female respectively. These two items are made by men and both are kept in the katel, with the bleeding arrows. Only three out of twenty huts visited had a set of fire making equipment; all of them in the dink.

A typical Gabbra drill measures 43 cm long and has a diameter of 1 cm, whereas the drilling board or flat stick measures 25 cm long and 11 cm wide (see figure below).



They are used to start a fire by swiftly rubbing the drilling stick into the flat one. When no longer in use they are burnt or used as firewood.

9. DASSE (MATS)

The dasse mats are of two types; the soft dasse made from the fibres of alqi plant, and the hard type made from split leaves of the Doum palm tree, meti/marara. These two are distinguished not by their functions but by the types of raw materials used in their manufacture. Both types of dasse are made by women.

(i) Soft Dasse

The soft dasse is made of alqi fibres which are first prepared into thin cords and then the cords are twined over parallel warps of the same fibres. The warps at one end are left untwined with the cords and hang loose. This item is so flexible that several of them can be folded, tied together and carried on camel or donkey back with ease. (For sizes and use see below). In the course of research it was not possible to get the exact number of dasse in a Gabbra hut, for I did not count those already in roofs and sides of huts.

(ii) Gela Dasse

The gela dasse is distinguished from the soft one by the raw materials of its manufacture. Unlike the soft dasse, the gela dasse is made from split meti or marara (leaves) of the Doum Palm tree, which are twined over parallel warps.

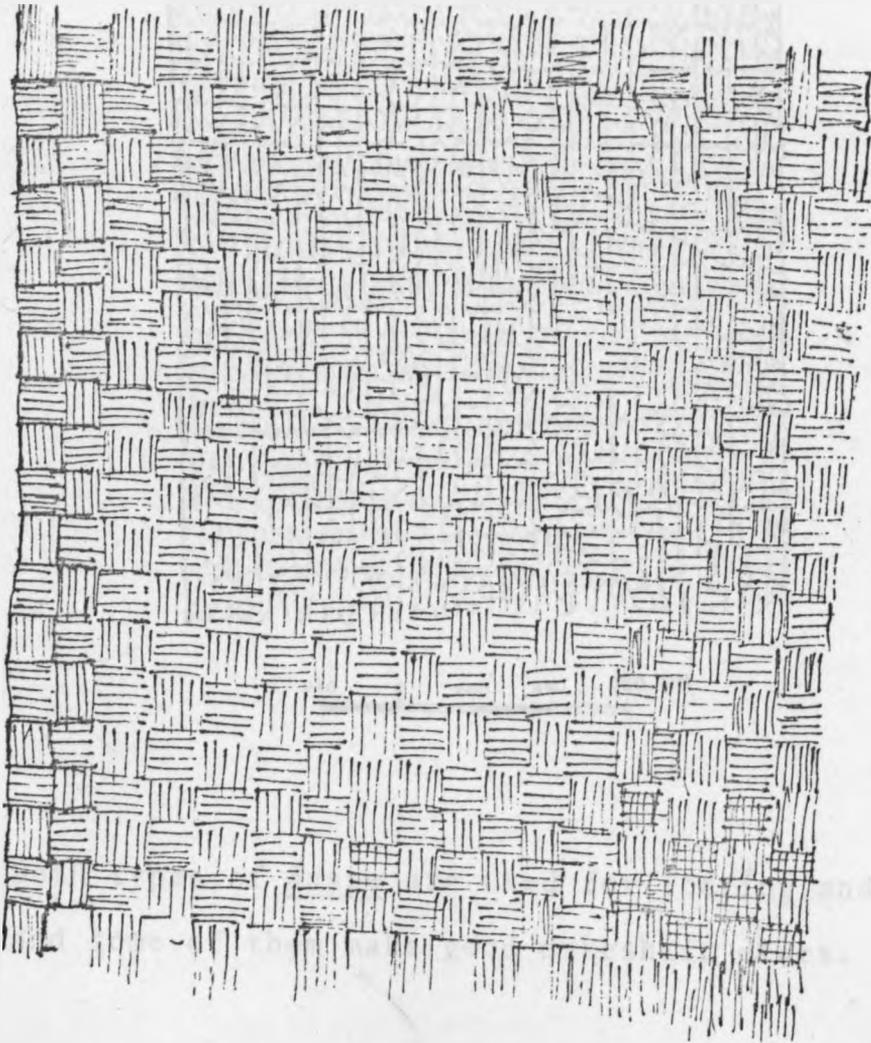
The gela dasse is fairly flexible and the edges are similarly smooth, apart from one end where the fibres are not twined and thus hang loosely. Because of its flexibility the gela dasse can easily be folded and carried with comfortable ease either on camel or donkey back.

These material culture items have no particular place where they are made. They are usually made in the sitting room or outside the hut near the door or under the shade of a nearby tree. They are made by women.

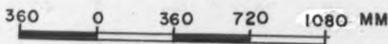
In fact, every Gabbra hut has quite a number of dasse but those which were recorded and put in the distribution table are those found still being made or waiting to be used. These were found in two huts, and each had one dasse. Each of these dasse was found in the dink. It was not possible to count the number of those used in roofing and

siding of each hut.

A typical dasse has a width of 120 cm and is 180 cm long (see figure below).



Handwritten note:
dasse
120 cm
180 cm





240 0 240 480 720 MM

Both types of dasse are used for roofing and siding huts and some of them make good makeshift doors.

10. BINDING MATERIALS

The Gabbra make considerable use of binding material and are able to provide anything from threads as fine as European cotton to ropes capable of holding a large bulk of goods. Two types of rope the society use are skin and fibre. Different ropes made from these two raw materials are never used indiscriminately. Instead, the Gabbra take into consideration the uses to which the rope or thread is to be put and choose and prepare their material accordingly.

While a certain amount of use is made of animal sinews and twisted strips of hide, (camel, cow, goat and sheep), the Gabbra obtain some, if not most of their ropes and threads, from fibrous plants.

Generally speaking, it is possible to draw a distinction between the uses to which hide and plant ropes are put. Hide ropes are used where a certain amount of rigidity is desirable and pliability is not essential. These ropes have found use in the making of bed structures (sirir), roofs, and tying bute on to camel backs.

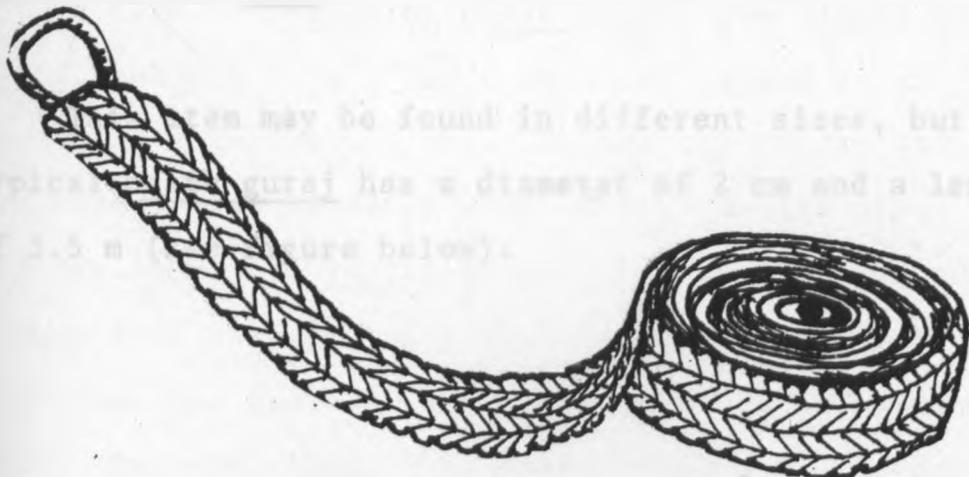
Fibrous ropes are used in tying simple luggage that is never transported for long distances. It seems that hide ropes are used in jobs which do not require continual

tying and untying, whereas in such cases, fibrous ropes are used.

(a) BEEDO, GAATHI AND HAATH (HIDE ROPES)

(i) Beedo: The beedo is made from twined camel sinews with hide cords twilled over them. The twined sinews make four parallel lines twilled over by camel thongs. Ten out of twenty Gabbra huts had the beedo. Two out of ten huts had one beedo and the rest two each. It is usually found in the dink.

Of all the ropes that the Gabbra make, the beedo is the biggest, measuring 7 cm wide and about 2.5 cm thick with a length of 370 cm. This is the size of a typical Gabbra beedo (see figure below).

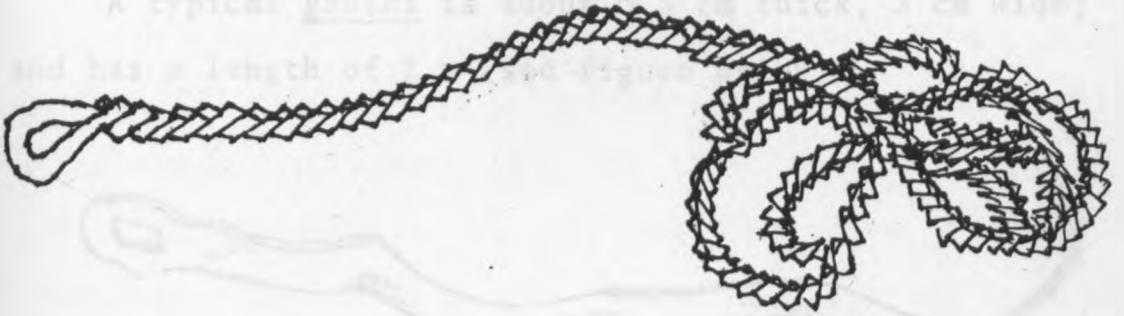


This item is made by women and is used to tie various goods on to camel backs. This is done mostly when transporting heavy luggage for long distances, especially when people are shifting camp to a new olla. When not in use, the beedo is normally found under the bed in the dink.

(ii) Haath Guraj

The haath guraj (hide rope) like the beedo is made by women from thin camel hide thongs woven into rope of any size and length required. Of the twenty Gabbra huts visited, fourteen had this item, and out of these seven had them in both sections of hut, two huts had it in the bada, and the rest had theirs in the dink. This cultural item may thus be found anywhere in the hut, but mostly in the dink.

This item may be found in different sizes, but a typical haath guraj has a diameter of 2 cm and a length of 3.5 m (see figure below).

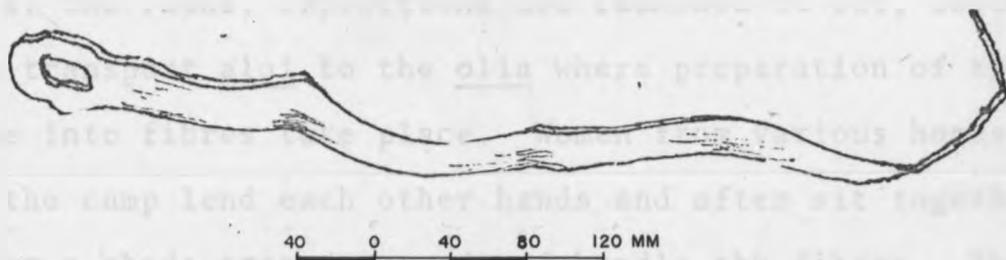


The haath guraj has similar uses to the beedo. It is used to tie heavy loads on to camels to supplement the beedo and in other cases as a substitute. Not only are the haath guraj needed to tie loads to be transported long distances, but also short ones as well. For example, the bute for carrying water is securely tied onto the camel back with this type of rope.

(iii) Gaathi

Unlike the beedo or haath guraj, the gaathi is never woven, but cut from a cow's skin and tanned to give it the smooth surface that it has. It has one of its ends slit, to provide easy leverage when tying. Unlike other types of skin rope, the gaathi is made by men. Of the twenty Gabbra huts visited, only four had gaathi. One hut had only one, two had two, and the fourth hut had four of them. In most cases, this item is found in the bada.

A typical gaathi is about 0.5 cm thick, 3 cm wide, and has a length of 2 m (see figure below).



The gaathi is used to tie a cow's hind legs during milking. This is because some cows cannot stand still to be milked without their legs being tied. The same practice is also found among Kalenjin speakers who, like the Gabbra, use a similar type of skin rope. It has no other purpose.

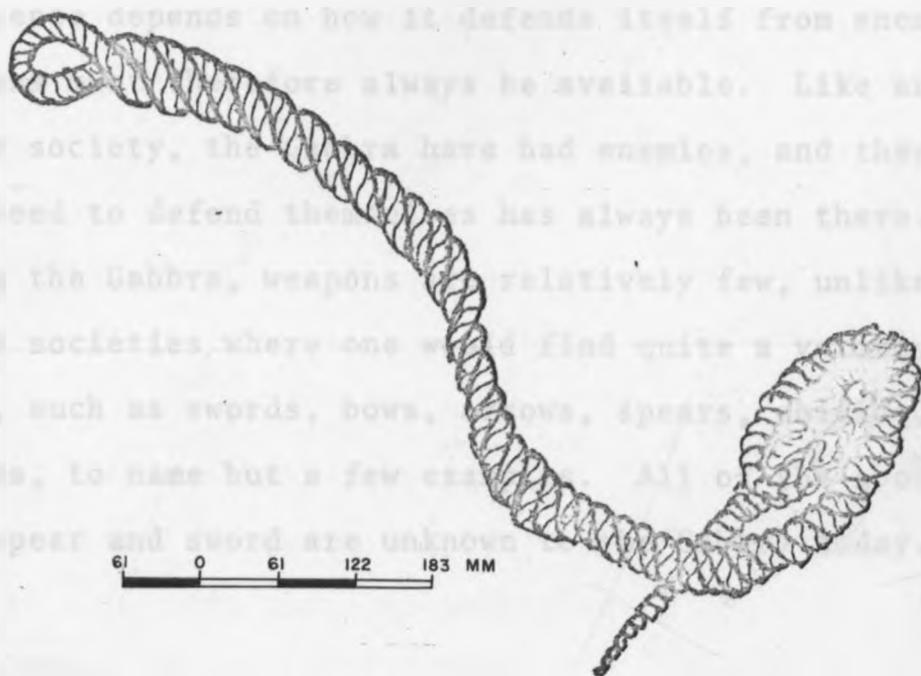
(b) HAATH ALQI (FIBROUS STRINGS AND ROPES)

Fibrous strings and ropes are considered as the most efficient form of cordage. Though efficient and pliable, they require a lot of time and energy to prepare. Made from the fibres of alqi (sisal like plant), it is the duty of women to produce them. Haathi alqi are found in different sizes, each having its own functions to fulfil. Before looking at how they are made, it is important to know how the raw-materials are obtained and prepared.

The alqi plant, a species of indigenous sisal, grows in the hill country far from habitation areas. Shortly after the rains, expeditions are launched to cut, collect and transport alqi to the olla where preparation of the same into fibres take place. Women from various homesteads of the camp lend each other hands and often sit together under a shade tree to pound and bundle the fibres. The ready fibres are then twisted into thin cords and these are further retwisted to produce thicker rope.

Of the twenty Gabbra huts visited, only two did not have even one haath alqi. Of the eighteen huts which had the item, eight had it in both sections of the hut, six had it in the bada, and the remaining four had it in the dink. There is no place for keeping it and one might therefore find it anywhere in the bada or in the dink.

Although this item may be found in different sizes, a typical Gabbra haath alqi has a diameter of up to 2 cm and a length of up to 3.5 m (see figure below).



The alqi ropes are found in various thicknesses and all of them are used for tying luggage onto camel backs to supplement the skin and sinew ropes. In most cases, the alqi ropes are used in jobs that require to be tied and retied every now and then. They are much favoured because of their pliability.

11. WEAPONS

Many if not all societies since time immemorial, have incorporated weapons as part of their cultural paraphernalia. Indeed, this has to be so when a society's continued

existence depends on how it defends itself from enemies. Weapons must therefore always be available. Like any other society, the Gabbra have had enemies, and therefore the need to defend themselves has always been there. But among the Gabbra, weapons are relatively few, unlike other societies where one would find quite a variety of them, such as swords, bows, arrows, spears, shields, knives, to name but a few examples. All of the above but the spear and sword are unknown to the Gabbra today.

(i) Waraan (spear)

The components of a waraan are: double edged blade, sharp pointed and socketed butt, and a wooden shaft. The first two are made of iron by Konso blacksmiths and exchanged for milk, meat, goats, or sheep from the Gabbra (see figure below).

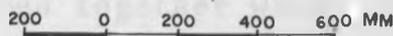
The blade has the shape of a broad leaf with pointed tip. It has a socket into which the wooden shaft can be fixed. The blade is 7 cm wide.

The shaft is made by Gabbra men, and is slightly sharp at both ends, for fixing into the socketed blade and

butt. This wooden shaft has a diameter of 2 cm and is about 1 m long.

The butt has a sharp point and a socket into which the shaft can be fixed. This butt measures 30 cm long and has a diameter of about 2 cm but tapers towards the sharp tip. All these measurements are those of a typical Gabbra waraan. Four out of twenty Gabbra huts had one each, in two cases in the dink and other two in bada. Normally, this item is found in the hut mainly in the sitting room, resting between the partition wall and the main wall, and sometimes outside the hut but by the sides.

The spear is solely used as a weapon and is therefore used during the herding of animals both in olla and fora. It is the men and young unmarried boys who use the waraan. One therefore expects to get not



less than one of this item in most Gabbra huts; one for the man of the house, and the others for his grown up sons, depending on the number he has. In all the huts visited however, few spears were found. This may have been because some if not all were being used in dry season camps by the older boys.

(ii) Bilah (knife or sword) and Bilaat (sheath)

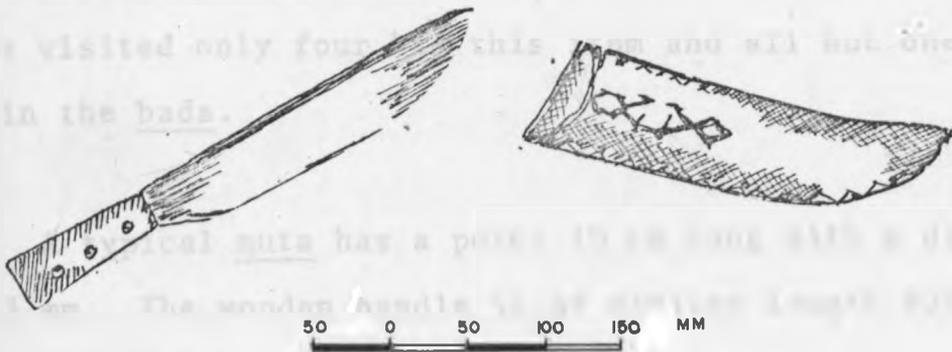
The bilah is the Gabbra name for both knife and sword. Like other metal implements, the bilah is made by a tumthu. During the course of my research, I did not come across the sword. The only sword I saw was one which a colleague of mine bought from a trader in one of the small trading posts. Here, I will therefore give descriptions and sizes of a Gabbra knife which may also be a Gabbra sword.

The bilah has a straight back and a curved sharp edge. The handle is formed by two pieces of wood rivetted together through the tang. Most bilah have sheaths called bilaat.

The bilaat is made by the tumthu to fit the bilaat. It is made from two pieces of hide stitched together with leather thongs with the aid of a muta (awl).

Of the twenty huts visited, only three had this item and all of them were found in the bada. One of these huts had two bilah and the other two had one each. The bilah are usually kept in the sitting room, though on rare occasions in the dink but inside the chanchal or suup.

A typical bilah has a handle measuring 9 cm long with a diameter of 1.5 cm. The blade measures 15.5 cm long and has a width of 3 cm. Each bilah has a bilaat (sheath) whose size and shape corresponds to that of the knife or sword blades (see figure below). It is used to encase the knife and also the sword.



The bilah knives are used for slaughtering and cutting meat and other small things in the house, whereas the swords are used as weapons.

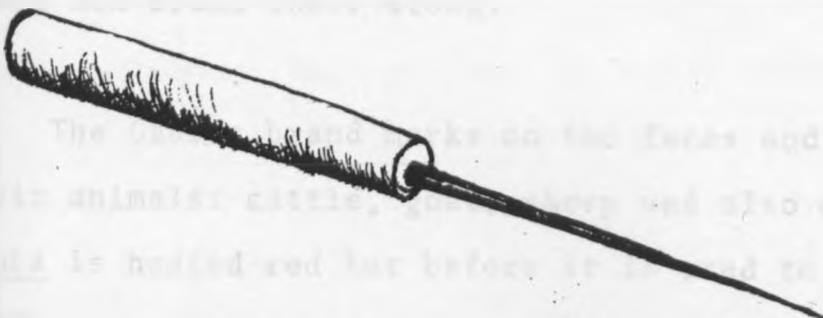
12. METAL RODS FOR PIERCING AND MARKING

The Gabbra make use of sharp pointed metal rods of various sizes for piercing and marking. Like any other material culture item made of iron, the muta and guuba are made, sold or exchanged by blacksmiths for Gabbra animals and food.

(i) Muta (awl)

Made of scrap iron bar or metal rod, this has one of its ends sharpened to a point used for piercing. The blunt end is firmly fixed into a wooden handle. Of the twenty huts visited only four had this item and all but one had it in the bada.

A typical muta has a point 10 cm long with a diameter of 3 mm. The wooden handle is of similar length but has a diameter of 3 cm (see figure below).



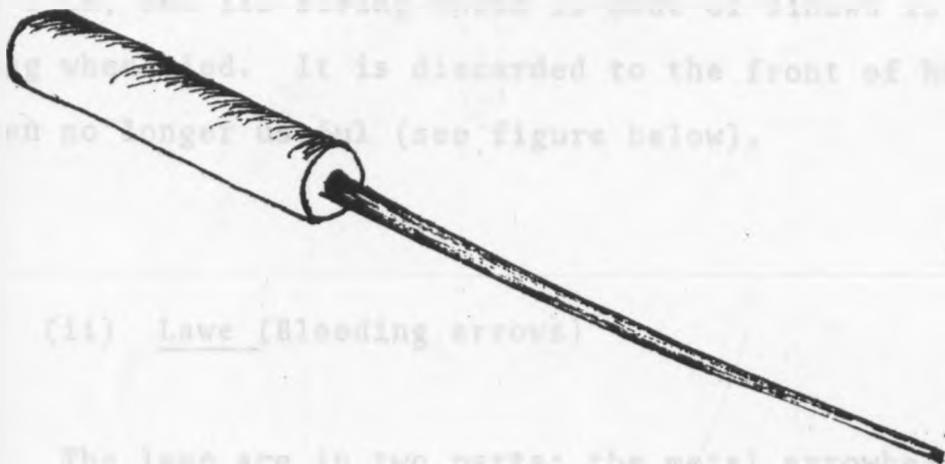
The muta is used by Gabbra women for making small holes in skins when sewing them together. Skins aside, it is also used in the making of items like bidi, gorf, bute and others that require the piercing of holes. An item like a muta does not wear out easily, especially when used with basketry materials. Because of this, therefore, it is rarely discarded. It is only the handle that is thrown away when no longer useful.

(ii) Guuba (branding iron)

The guuba is a metal rod similar to the muta in shape, but longer, the iron part measuring 42 cm and 1.5 cm in diameter and the wooden handle 18 cm and 4 cm in diameter. This item is made by a tumthu. Four out of all huts in Alqana olla had the guuba. One hut had two of them, both in the dink and the others had one each, all in the bada. Perhaps in the other settlements, the guuba had been taken to fora (dry season grazing camps) where sometimes Gabbra young men brand their stock.

The Gabbra brand marks on the faces and bodies of their animals: cattle, goat, sheep and also camels. The guuba is heated red hot before it is used to mark different animals, that are required to be branded (see

figure below).



(ii) Lawe (Bleeding arrows)

13. BLEEDING EQUIPMENT

Gabbra bleeding equipment consists of the gube (bow) and lawe (bleeding arrows). Apart from the metal arrow head which is made by a tumthu, the arrow shafts and bow are made by Gabbra men.

(i) Gube

Gube is the bow with which the Gabbra shoot the bleeding arrows. Only two out of twenty huts had one gube each, found in the dink. Perhaps in other huts they had been taken to the fora where they are used by young men to bleed their animals.

A typical gube has a length of 71 cm. and a diameter of 2 cm, and its string which is made of sinews is 52 cm long when tied. It is discarded to the front of huts when no longer useful (see figure below).

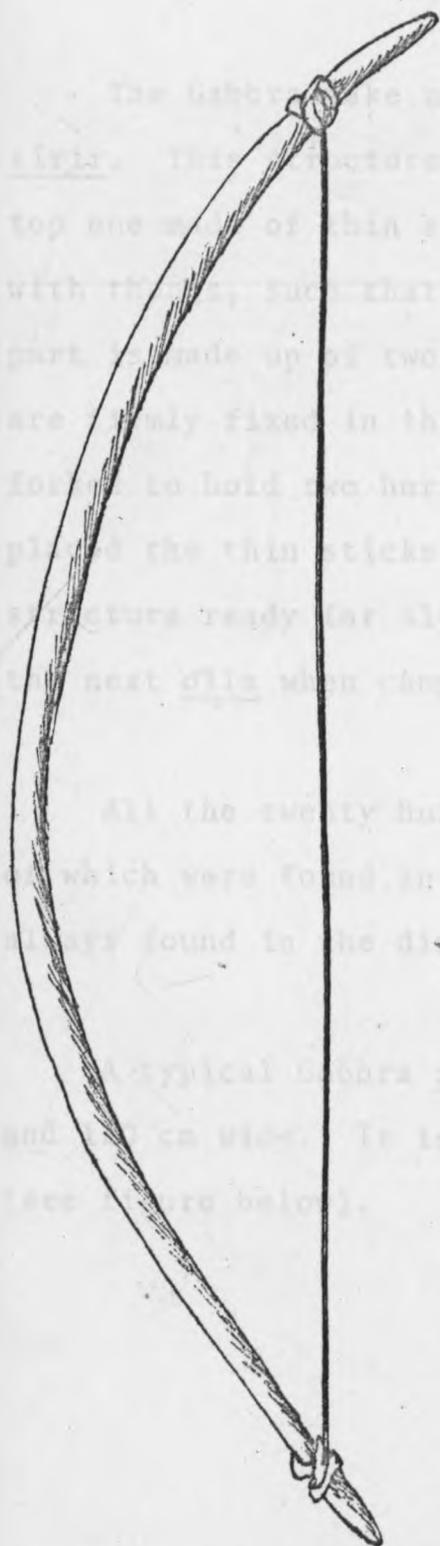
(ii) Lawe (Bleeding arrows)

The lawe are in two parts: the metal arrowhead and the wooden shaft. The metal part has a rounded end made by a tumthu and sold to the Gabbra who make the wooden shaft for it. The metal head is then hafted into one of the shaft, and tied with thongs.

Of the twenty huts visited, only five had this item and all of them in the dink. This item is usually found stored in a katel.

A typical Gabbra lawe has a sharp edge of blade measuring 2 cm long, and 1 cm wide. The shaft measures 50 cm long and has a diameter of 0.7 cm (see figure below).

The lawe is shot with the gube into the animal's neck to obtain blood that is mixed with milk to provide a good nourishment to the Gabbra. When no longer in use it is discarded in the debris area.



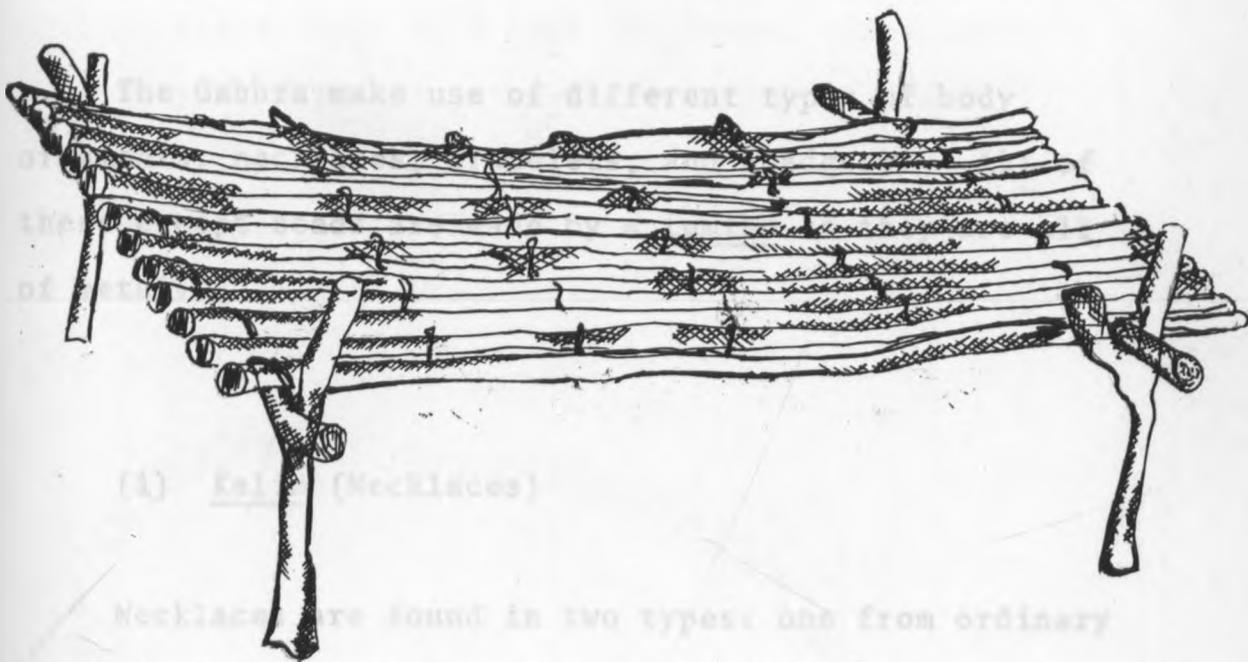
104 0 104 208 312 MM

14. SIRIR (BED STRUCTURE)

The Gabbra make use of raised bed structures called sirir. This structure made by women is in two parts, the top one made of thin sticks cut to one length and secured with thongs, such that it can be folded. The other part is made up of two types of poles: four of the poles are firmly fixed in the ground and have their top ends forked to hold two horizontal poles, on top of which are placed the thin sticks tied together to make a mat like structure ready for sleeping. The top part is carried to the next olla when camp is shifted.

All the twenty huts visited had two sirir each all of which were found in the dink. Indeed, this item is always found in the dink.

A typical Gabbra sirir measures about 190 cm long and 120 cm wide. It is about 30 cm above the ground (see figure below).



(A) sirir (Necklaces)

Necklaces are found in two types: one from ordinary

beads (not very much in use) and the other from

the same beads as being in shape of geometric figures

the main use of the sirir is sleeping. Two are found

in every Gabbra hut, one to the north for man, and the other to the south for the woman of the house (see page 59 above).

When people shift camp, they carry the top portion and sometimes poles for use in the next olla. Where bed poles are left behind, these are usually burnt.

15. ORNAMENTS

The Gabbra make use of different types of body ornaments: necklaces, bracelets, and headgear. All of these except beads are made by a tumthu as they are all of metal.

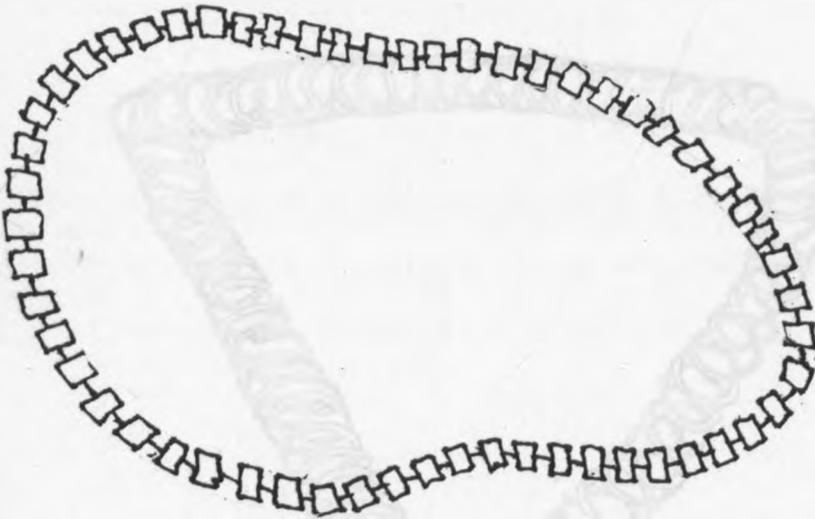
(i) Kalim (Necklaces)

Necklaces are found in two types: one from ordinary beads (not very much in use) and the other from rectangular aluminium beads known in Gabbra as kalim. The kalim beads are strung on sheep or goatskin thongs or sometimes a fibre string and are made by a tumthu from old cooking pots which are melted and cast in a piece of angle iron; the resultant triangular shaped bar is hammered flat and cut into narrow bars which are then cut into small squares with a chisel. With a hammer and a punch, a hole is made in the centre of the bead for threading. The beads are smoothed with a file, then strung on thread and are then ready for sale, and exchange. This is done by the blacksmiths.

Of the twenty huts visited, only two were found to have this item (string of aluminium beads). These strings

were found hanging in the dink. Where they were not found, perhaps these items were with the women. They are purposely used to adorn the necks of Gabbra women.

A typical Gabbra kalim bead measures 0.5 cm wide and 0.7 cm long (see figure below).

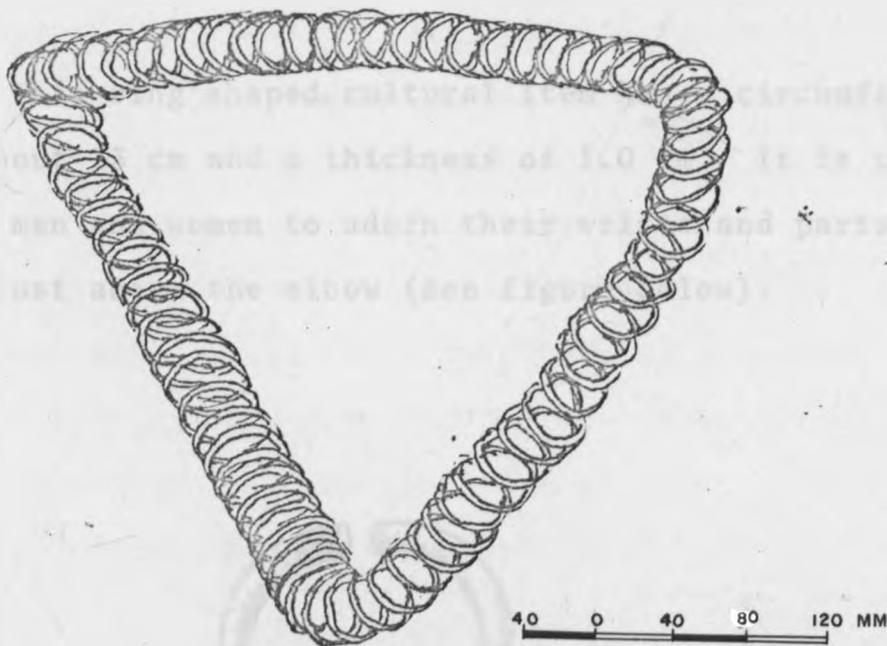


(ii) Malmal (headgear)

The malmal is used by Gabbra women as an ornament to decorate the head. Like other metal objects the malmal is made by a tumthu (blacksmith) from old aluminium containers, cut into thin pieces which are then coiled over a piece of cord bent into a triangular shape. About two hundred of these make a complete malmal. Three out of

twenty huts were found to have this cultural item, all of them in the dink.

The malmaI is about 20 cm long on the long sides and 15 cm. on the short side, and has a thickness of about 1 cm (see figure below).



The malmaI is used by women to decorate their heads. It is unlikely to be thrown away and will not normally go out of use.

(iii) Rokicha (bracelet)

The rokicha like other metal objects are made by a tumthu from old aluminium cooking pots which are hammered to required shape and size and bent round a tree branch to give a round ring shape. Of the twenty huts visited, only seven were found to have this item. Two of these huts had it in the bada the rest in the dink.

This ring shaped cultural item has a circumference of about 33 cm and a thickness of 1.0 cm. It is used by both men and women to adorn their wrists and parts of the arm just above the elbow (see figure below).

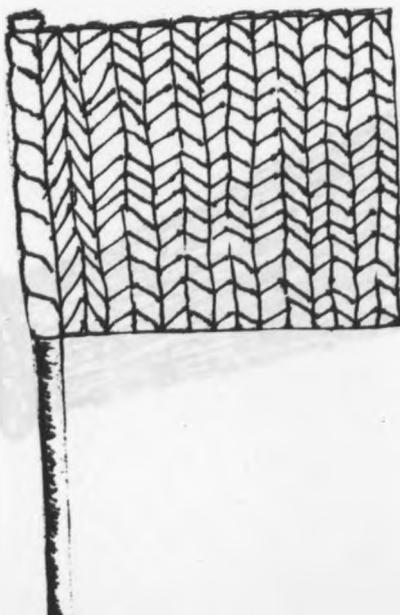


16. OTHER MATERIAL CULTURE OBJECTS

(a) Afare (fan)

The afare is made by women from the split leaves of the meti (Doum Palm) tree. The split leaves are woven in a twill weave in a rectangular shape, one edge of which is stitched to a small stick which forms the handle. Of the twenty huts visited, only one did not have this object. The rest had one each and it was found in the bada.

The afare measures 21 cm long and 17 cm wide, with a handle 24 cm long and 1.5 cm in diameter. This item has no other visible use other than fanning fire. It is used in the sitting room near the hearth. When no longer in use, it may be burnt or discarded in front of the huts (for illustration see figure below).



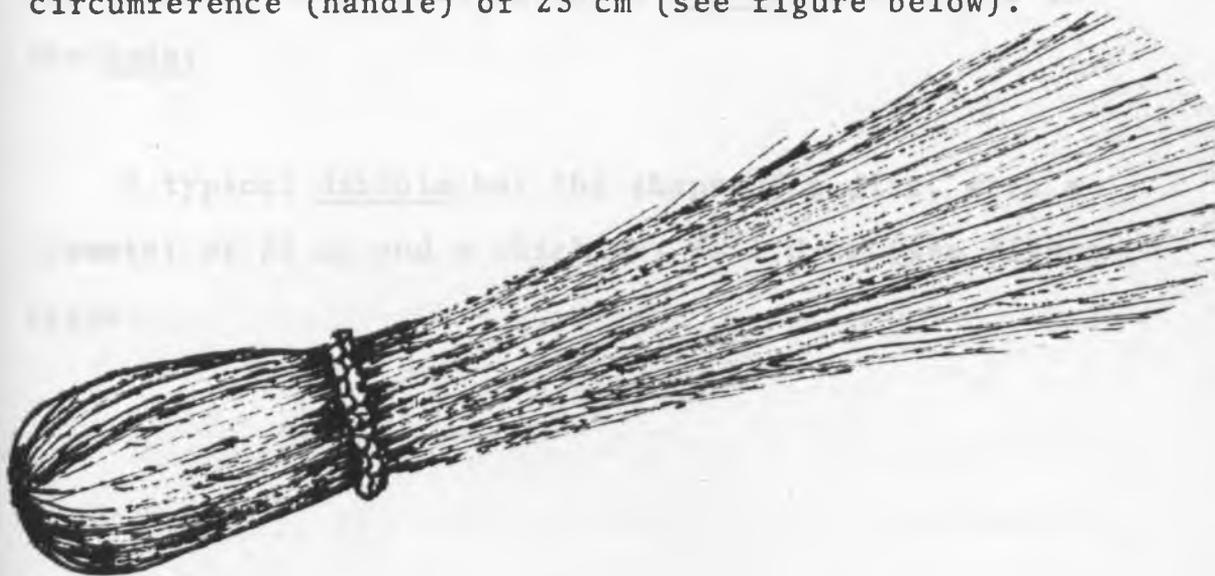
(b) Hara (brush)

The hara is the only type of brush made and used by the Gabbra. It is made by women from the split leaves of meti (Doum Palm) trees.

A sheaf of split leave strips 60 - 65 cm long is tied near one end and the ends above that point turned outward and downward. The bent strips are then tied with plaited wefts worked together, the brush elements acting as warps, to form a bulbous handle.

Fourteen out of twenty huts visited had the hara found in the bada.

A typical Gabbra hara measures 50 cm and has circumference (handle) of 23 cm (see figure below).



The hara is used for sweeping clean the floors of huts especially the bada. When no longer serving the purposes for which it was made, the hara it is thrown out of the hut.

(c) Daboola (lid)

The Gabbra make and use daboola (lids), woven from the leaves of the meti (Doum Palm) tree by women. In some cases daboola may be made of tin lids. This was casually observed in Kalacha shopping centre and nowhere else.

Sixteen out of twenty huts visited had this item. Ten of these had one each, five had two each, and one had three of them. All of these daboola were found in the bada.

A typical daboola has the shape of a disc, with a diameter of 28 cm and a thickness of 1.0 cm (see figure below).



The daboola (lids) are used to cover food containers to prevent dust from getting into the food.

(d) Gorfo (skin-clothing)

The gorfo is a complete skin clothing made by women from goat or sheep skin and used by them especially during ceremonial occasions. The gorfo was used as everyday attire before the advent of modern clothes. Presently it is only used by old women.

Of the twenty huts visited, only three were found to have this item, all of them in the dink. When not worn it is normally found safely tucked in the suup.

The sizes of the gorfo could not be obtained because the women could not allow me to take their measurements.

(e) Kobhe (Sandals)

The Gabbra make use of tyre sandals called kobhe. Most, if not all of these, are made and sold to the Gabbra by Akamba traders in Marsabit town. According to my informant, it was not until very recent times that tyre sandals became fashionable replacing sandals made of hide.

Of the twenty huts visited, only five had kobhe and all had them in the bada. For other huts the owners doubtless had them on so that I did not see them (see figure below).



The kobhe are found in different sizes, depending on whether they are for a young person or a grown up. Like any other type of shoe, the Gabbra wear kobhe to prevent thorns from pricking their feet besides being a fashionable thing to put on. Sandals for grown up people when no longer in use are converted into sandals for young boys and girls

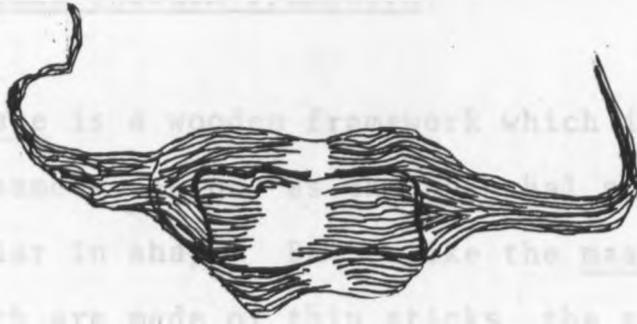
and when finally worn out, are discarded in the front of huts.

(f) (i) Hafufo (Gag)

The hafufo is made by women from twined cords of Alqi plant. It is oval in shape and looks like a container, but is not one. It is designed to cover the whole mouth of a calf, to prevent it from sucking the mother, especially when she is about to calve. Calves that suck their mothers when they are supposed to have been weaned, have their mouths tied with the hafufo. It has two leather straps one secured to each end, to make it easy to tie it to the head of a calf.

One out of twenty huts visited had this item in the dink.

A typical hafufo measures about 13 cm long and 8 cm wide (see figure below).



(ii) Mara (gag)

The mara is similar in shape, size, makers and function to a hafufo (above). The only difference between these two is that the former is made of sisal cords and the latter of skin.

The mara is used to tie on to mouths of camel calves to prevent them from sucking their mothers, just the same way the hafufo is used for cattle calves (see figure below).

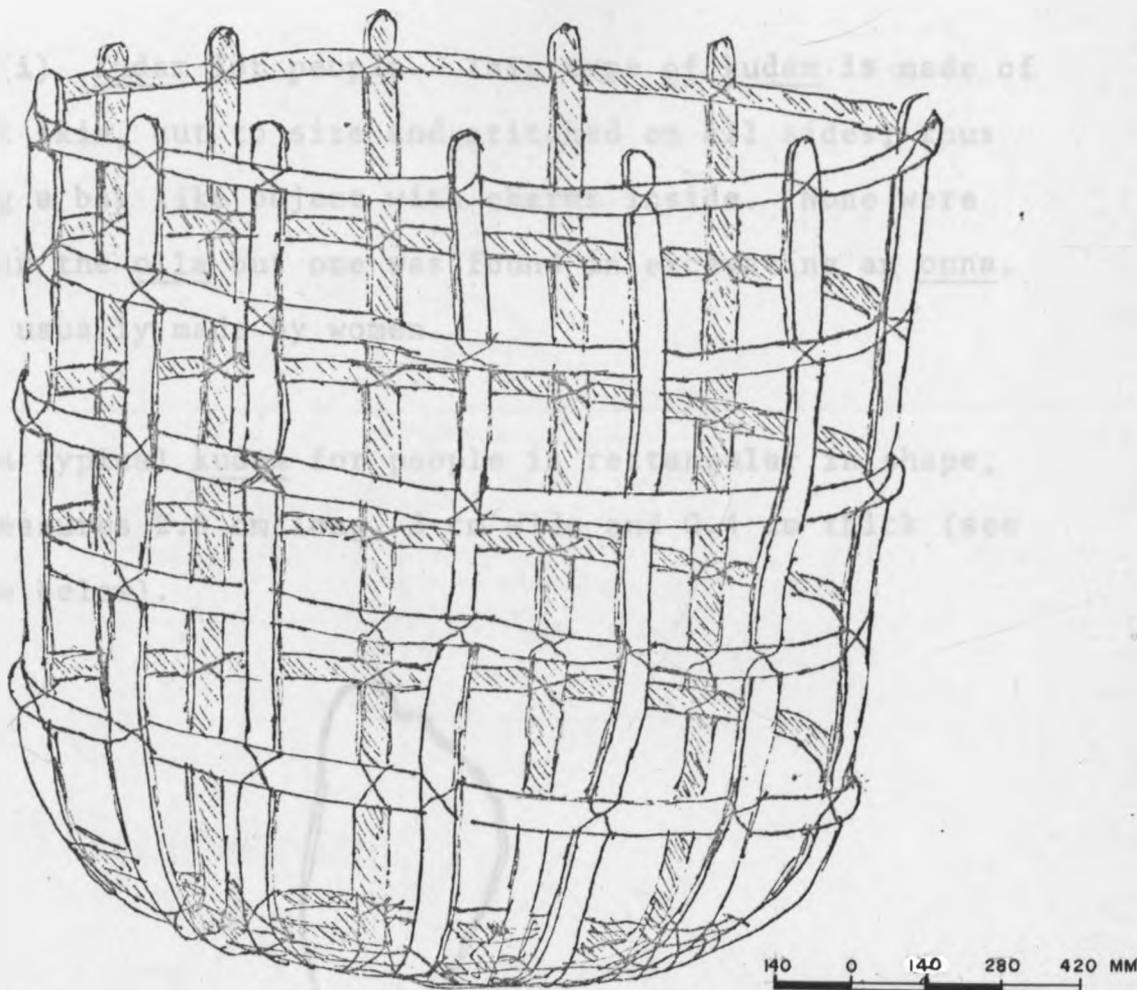


(g) Sabake (Wooden framework)

The sabake is a wooden framework which is not only made on the same technique as the chanchal and maano, but is also similar in shape. But unlike the maano and chanchal which are made of thin sticks, the sabake is made of slightly thicker ones.

Of the twenty huts visited, thirteen had the sabake, all of them in the bada. Six of these thirteen huts had two each, the rest had one each. Others had probably been taken to the wells along with the bute.

A typical sabake, which is big enough to accommodate a bute measures about 70 cm high and 55 cm in diameter (see figure below).



The sabake are used to hold the bute thus making it possible to be tied and carried on camel back. Like many Gabbra material culture objects, when no longer serving the purposes for which it was made, this object is discarded in the front of huts.

(h) Gabbra have two types of kudam (charm); one for people and the other for camels.

(i) Kudam for people. This type of kudam is made of animal skin, cut to size and stitched on all sides, thus making a bag like object with charms inside. None were seen in the olla but one was found in excavating an onna. It is usually made by women.

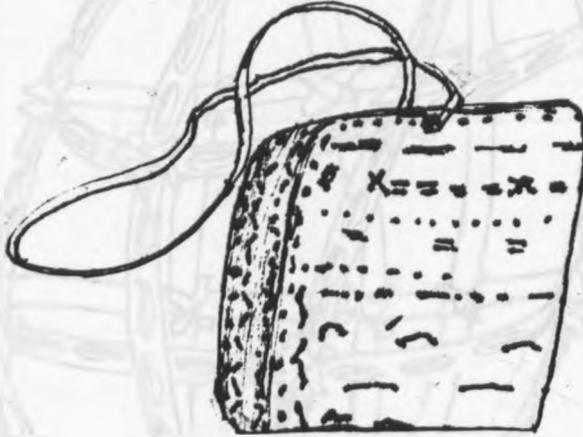
A typical kudam for people is rectangular in shape, and measures 2.8 cm long, 2 cm wide and 0.4 cm thick (see figure below).



It is used to hang on the necks of children and is said to be fixed on thread or rope for beads and hangs loose on the neck. When no longer useful, it is burnt.

(ii) Kudam (charm for camels) is a rectangular wooden object carved from a suitable piece of wood. At one end is

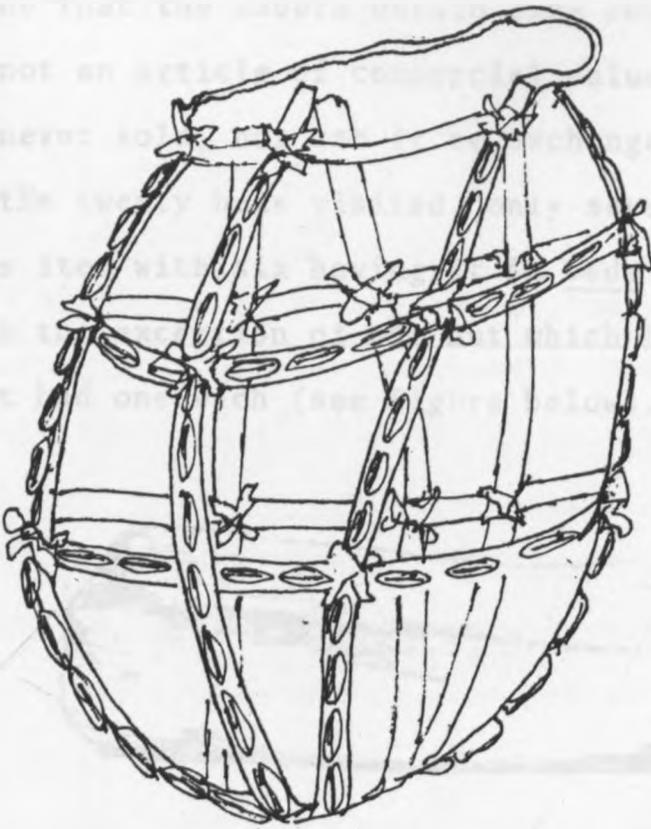
found a small hole by which it can be suspended. One hut out of twenty visited had this item, and this was found in the dink, which may be the usual place for keeping it (see figure below).



(i) Seepan (Sling)

The seepan is a sling of skin cords that are tied together in such a way that they can hold a cultural item in position. Indeed, some of them are decorated with cowrie shells. These are usually made by women. Of the twenty huts visited, only two had the seepan.

Actual measurements of a seepan were not obtained, but a typical one is big enough to hold a goda (see figure below).



The seepan is used to hang the goda inside the hut. When no longer useful it is discarded in the front of huts.

(j) Karsa (Whetstone)

The whetstone has been used by many societies for sharpening their metal implements, long before the coming of files. Known in Gabbra as the karsa, this item is neither fabricated nor made. It is a special type of

stone that the Gabbra obtain from Southern Ethiopia. It is not an article of commercial value. In fact the karsa is never sold, nor can it be exchanged for anything else. Of the twenty huts visited, only seven were found to have this item with six having it in bada and one in the dink. With the exception of one hut which had two karsa, the rest had one each (see figure below).



RAW MATERIALS

In making all the material culture objects mentioned above, which are necessary for carrying out day to day activities, the Gabbra have employed available local material and made the best of them. Raw materials of the Gabbra fall into the following categories:-

- (a) Vegetal (wood, roots, leaves and sometimes bark).
- (b) Metal (aluminium and iron), though they themselves do not work metal.

(c) Animal (skin, horn, sinews and possibly bone)
and finally

(d) Stone.

According to my informants, examples of different types of vegetal material used include wood such as sukela (*Delonix elata* (L)), agarsu (species unknown), meti (*Hyphaene coriacea*), suka (species unknown), dadach (*Acacia tortilis*), and wallena (*Erythrina burtii*), roots of ergams and okhole (wild asparagus) trees, and finally leaves of meti (*Hyphaene coriacea*) tree and alqi (wild sisal) plant. It must not be thought that all these types of raw-materials especially wood are used to make material culture items indiscriminately or that a particular type of wood is used to make wooden objects simply because it is found within the vicinity of Gabbra settlements. Available though some wood or trees may be, near or within settlements, they cannot be used to make each and every wooden object the Gabbra desire. Besides availability other factors must also be considered such as its suitability, workability and lastly the durability of its product. For example, the making of marjuma (stool) requires thick and soft wood which can easily be worked and the product is light and durable, all of them

qualities that wallena (*Erythrina burtii*) tree possesses.

Material culture objects require hard wood that can stand stress or that cannot break with ease. For example the making of an axe handle requires such hard wood as dadach (*Acacia tortilis*) and agarsu both of which are not only found near settlements, but also offer high durability and are less vulnerable to cracks, thus reducing the frequency of constant making of new ones.

Some of the raw materials the Gabbra use may offer one or a combination of the qualities mentioned above. Because of this, therefore, Gabbra men and women look for and secure the raw materials they need whenever they may be found and go to great lengths in order to obtain them. In many cases they are far from settlements, such as the Hurri-Hills, the mountains of Kulal and Marsabit, to name but a few examples.

Clay objects are noted for their conspicuous absence in the list of Gabbra material culture and in all Gabbra huts visited. Surprisingly, potsherds were found in a settlement which was abandoned fourteen years prior to my arrival in the area in 1980. Lack of material culture made of clay in many if not all Gabbra homes may be explained by the lack of raw materials in the area.

According to my informant, sources of clay are located in many areas in Southern Ethiopia all of which are more than seventy miles away from Gabbra settlements visited. Distant though the sources may be, clay could be obtained if required. But more important perhaps is the undesirability of clay objects which can easily break, and to the nomadic Gabbra clay pots may be cumbersome to carry. Instead, light durable containers made from non-clay materials are preferred.

However, Gabbra living near the Ethiopian border are reported to use clay okote fara (clay pots) for cooking even though like their kinsmen living in the Chalbi desert they move from one place to another in search of pastures for their stock. These pots are obtained from Watta and Konso societies who make and sell them to the Gabbra. The lack of clay pots in huts visited may be explained by the fact that these have been replaced by aluminium* cooking pots bought from Kalacha, Maikona, and Marsabit shopping centres.

* Aluminium cooking pots, tin cups, plastic Jerry cans and modern clothes are not in the list of Gabbra material culture items, since they are not considered as traditional.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

The production of material culture as well as securing raw materials used in their manufacture is shared by both men and women with the former securing raw materials for making almost all wooden material culture objects and the latter procuring those for making basketry items. The women also make the majority of skin items and a few of wood such as kadabhe (forked stick). The division of labour between men and women extends beyond making material culture into other aspects of life in Gabbra society. Besides these tasks, women prepare food, fetch water, collect and assemble raw materials needed in the construction of huts, a task in which they sometimes get assistance from unmarried adolescent girls, younger girls who have not reached puberty and uninitiated boys.

Men collect and assemble raw materials they use in constructing enclosures and in addition build dams and dig wells. Young unmarried men have the responsibility of taking herds to distant pastures and dry season camps. They are sometimes assisted by younger boys and girls.

In the settlement, it is the women who usually milk cattle. Young unmarried males milk the camels, and young boys and girls lend a hand in the milking of goats. Young

boys assist the women by bringing out the calves from their enclosures to allow them to suck the cow's udders momentarily and then restraining them while the adults do the milking.

Watering of animals is certainly the most arduous single task the Gabbra perform. All the adult members of both sexes of the family give a helping hand although sometimes/may get assistance from other members of the olla or simply from neighbouring families. /they

Custom does not allow each person to perform a task that is not meant for him or her. In the words of Legesse "... except for a few cases where people of different ages or different sexes participate in the same task, there are powerful taboos serving to keep the roles distinct. It is for instance an insult to suggest that a man build a hut, fetch water, look for food, or look after calves. Such roles nevertheless would be seen as intolerable except in the context of ritual ..." (Legesse 1973:22).

Role differentiation in every human society ensures an equitable distribution of rights and duties. Coupled with taboos, these help the society to function smoothly.

This differentiation of roles between members of both sexes is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, the feature began to be clearly pronounced in the archaeological record during the later phases of the Late Stone Age, and even possibly much earlier.

The production of material culture among the Gabbra society is not a full time activity. Apart from metal implements and other objects which are made by Konso blacksmiths and Watta craftsmen who are professionals, the rest of the material culture objects are made by individual people who make them for their own use rather than for commercial or exchange purposes. This may account for the lack of Gabbra people engaged in full time manufacture.

It is evident from what we have seen above that the Gabbra discard their worn out material culture in different parts of the olla (settlement); activity areas such as camel/cattle enclosures in the case of worn out milking containers, and to the front of huts or debris areas in the case of other objects which no longer serve the purposes for which they were made. It was observed in the olla visited that though debris may be discarded anywhere it was commonly to the front of huts.

Debris could not be found to the east of huts because of the situation of camel mona - animals the Gabbra regard as sacred and which therefore should not be in contact with what they themselves regard as dirty and unclean, such as ash and bones. Gabbra huts are built in a curve from north to south, and it is therefore impossible to discard debris on either of these sides, due to the position of other huts. The only side left is to the west which is always to the front of Gabbra huts and therefore one often find debris in this place.

The location of debris areas was also a regular pattern noticed not only in inhabited settlements, but also in abandoned ones as well. Future archaeologists looking at Gabbra settlements should expect to find the location of debris areas to the front of huts, a feature that may not have changed right from the past.

CHAPTER FOUR

ONNA (ABANDONED SETTLEMENTS) AND CONTENTS

This Chapter deals with onna (abandoned settlements) and their contents in the form of material culture and economic remains. The study of recently abandoned settlements where economic and other activities are known provide archaeologists with much needed information for the interpretation of settlement patterns, ecology, and other forms of behaviour on earlier sites (Yellen 1977, Gifford 1977, Fagan 1978, David 1971, Robbins 1972).

I am thus concerned with the nature and distribution of material culture objects as well as economic remains left behind in Gabbra onna. Where these remains are found, does their distribution conform to the pattern of discard recorded in Chapter 3? Are these remains suggestive of Gabbra activities and activity areas? Answers to these questions will be provided after analysis of onna contents.

For purposes of analysis, this chapter is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A is devoted to surface distribution of onna contents, whereas B is solely concerned with sub-surface material from excavated onna.

SECTION A - SURFACE DISTRIBUTION OF ONNA CONTENTS

As aforesaid, this section looks at the surface distribution of different types of material culture remains: ropes, mats, hearths, hut poles, knives and food remains.

The procedure used in recording all the different categories of remains in all the onna is a simple one. First, sketch plans of each onna were made and all the different structures found were given numbers. Selected structures from each onna were then examined and records of all the remains and their spatial distribution made. Three hut sites were selected for examination in each onna, comprising one hut in the middle and the end huts to the north and south as follows:

| <u>Onna</u> | <u>Total no. of huts</u> | <u>sampled</u> | <u>Total no. of stock enclosures</u> |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| A | 3 | 1, 2, 3 | 5 |
| B | 9 | 1, 4, 9 | 13 |
| C | 8 | 1, 5, 8 | 5 |
| D | 5 | 1, 3, 5 | 5 |

A total of four onna were visited for the purpose of getting the surface distribution of cultural materials left behind by the former occupants. All these onna were

situated in Roba Gade, an area about thirty Kilometres north-west of Kalacha. These onna had been occupied as olla at various periods and hence displayed different degrees of disintegration which suggested different ages. This hypothesis was confirmed by a local informant who knew the age of the onna, i.e. time of abandonment of each. These ages were anything between six months and three years.

To some extent the relative ages of onna can be estimated from the state of preservation of the stock enclosures. The Gabbra occupy an olla for not more than six months at most before abandoning it to make a new one elsewhere. No matter how much an environment may be unfavourable to the preservation of wood, six months or one year is too short a period for material (twigs and branches) used in constructing enclosures or any other construction to decay, especially as the Gabbra use fresh twigs and branches cut from living trees.

In cases where the enclosures were intact and material found to be in good shape, such an onna may not thus be more than six months old. Where enclosures have fallen and raw materials have broken down into pieces then no doubt such an onna may be more than four years old. They may disappear altogether after six or so years.

Their disappearance may be explained by such factors as re-use of materials, termites, wind and decay.

In no circumstances do the Gabbra re-use stock enclosure material in constructing others in new settlements. Whenever they shift to a new settlement, they look for new ones.

Termites and other insects that help to eat away wood are unheard of in the area, hence the decomposition of stock enclosures may be due to some other agency.

Wind in this area help to scatter broken pieces of wood. Once an enclosure falls down and its materials break then wind tends to blow off some, particularly the light ones. The rest are therefore left to decay after about six years.

As regards the dimensions of a Gabbra onna, they are hard to determine as they have no fences or walls around their settlements. Where dimensions are given, they are but approximations.

Onna A

This onna was given the designation A simply for purposes of analysis. It has no ethnographic connotations. Judging from the remains which were still visible, this onna seemed to have been abandoned for not more than a year, a fact that my informant corroborated by informing me that this was an olla shortly before the end of 1979.

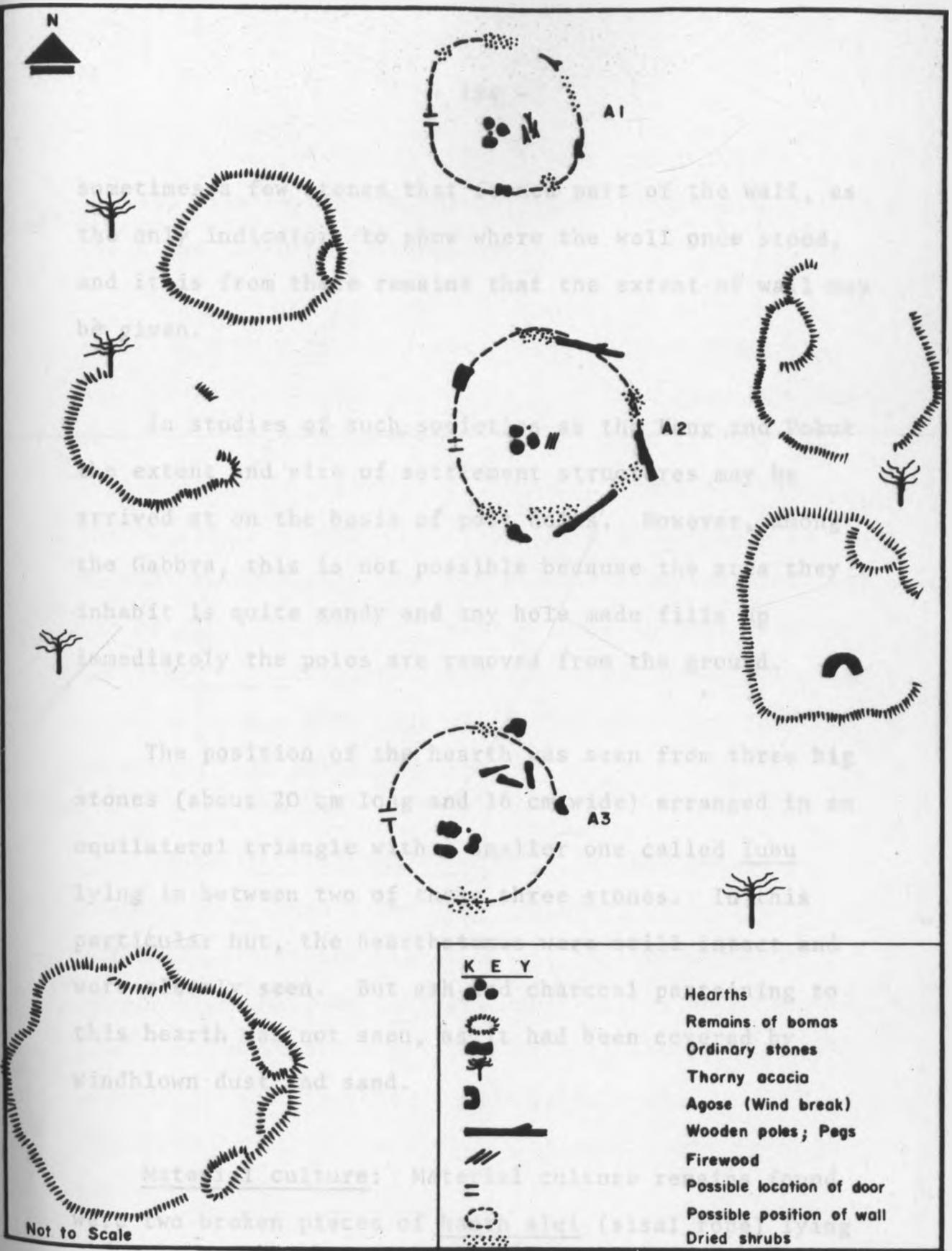
In this onna were found the remains of three huts and five stock enclosures. A sketch plan of this onna if given on page 193 figure 4:1).

Remains of hut structure No.A1

From the remains of what was the wall, this hut had a diameter of 3 m. corresponding to the average diameter of most Gabbra huts. However, this figure must be taken with caution, because the few remains of walls may not always indicate the exact position of where the wall stood. As explained in Chapter Two, the Gabbra remove their hut poles and therefore one is left with a few dried shrubs and

* The designations A,B,C,D are only for analytical purposes. They have no ethnographic connotations.

Fig. 4.1 SKETCH PLAN FOR ONNA A



A1



A2



A3



KEY

- Hearths
- Remains of bomas
- Ordinary stones
- Thorny acacia
- Agose (Wind break)
- Wooden poles; Pegs
- Firewood
- Possible location of door
- Possible position of wall
- Dried shrubs

Not to Scale

sometimes a few stones that formed part of the wall, as the only indicators to show where the wall once stood, and it is from these remains that the extent of wall may be given.

In studies of such societies as the Kung and Pokot the extent and size of settlement structures may be arrived at on the basis of post holes. However, among the Gabbra, this is not possible because the area they inhabit is quite sandy and any hole made fills up immediately the poles are removed from the ground.

The position of the hearth was seen from three big stones (about 20 cm long and 16 cm wide) arranged in an equilateral triangle with a smaller one called lubu lying in between two of these three stones. In this particular hut, the hearthstones were still intact and were clearly seen. But ash and charcoal pertaining to this hearth was not seen, as it had been covered by windblown dust and sand.

Material culture: Material culture remains found were two broken pieces of haath alqi (sisal rope) lying 80 cm north of hearthstones and three pegs forked at one end and sharpened at the other measuring 49 cm, 51 cm and 48 cm long. The pegs were found lying beside the hearth-

stones, with two of them having their forked ends pointing south and the other northwards.

The nature of their ends suggests that these were not firewood and were likely to have been karo (bed pegs) as nothing else in occupied olla was seen to have such forked poles or pegs. In cases where these are not taken, they are burnt. Lacking signs of breakage to warrant abandonment, the only plausible explanation that can be given to justify their presence in that place is that they may have been forgotten to be packed alongside other materials when camp was shifting, though they may have been left intentionally.

Economic remains/food debris: In this category of remains were found seven bone fragments of various parts scattered around the hearth. This tallied with the observations made in inhabited settlements which showed that bones are thrown in front of huts though a few, especially small pieces of comparable size, are left behind in places where meat eating took place which is normally inside the huts.

1.5 metres north* of the hearth was found 1 bean

* Measurements were taken from the nearest point of hearth.

lying half buried in sand. It was strange for beans and other agricultural products to be found in Gabbra huts, as the Gabbra do not practice any farming. Upon enquiry, it was found that this was part of the government's relief food given to the people living in drought stricken areas such as Marsabit, Garissa and Turkana Districts.

Remains of hut structure No.A2

The remains of this structure lay six metres south of the structure numbered A1. A few dried shrubs and three poles of lengths 69 cm, 56 cm and 76 cm mark the position and extent of where the wall once stood. From these remains the hut's diameter was estimated as 3.17 m.

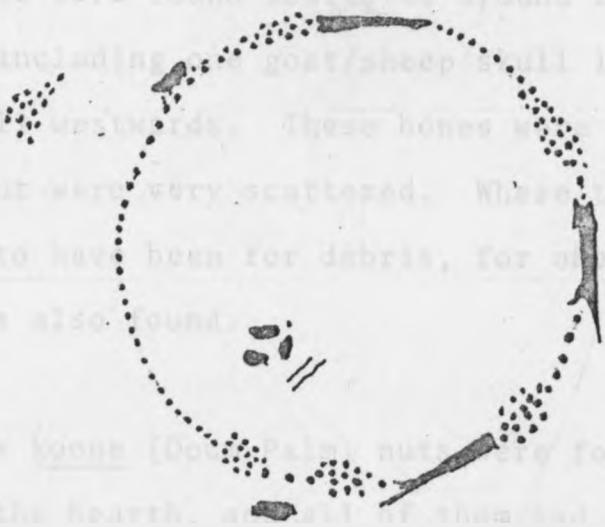
The hearth was found to be intact, with three big stones arranged in an equilateral triangle with a small one in between two of them. As in hut structure number A1, ash and charcoal was not seen as it had been covered by windblown dust and sand. The diagram below shows some of the remains of this hut.

Scowell remains/Excavation: Twelve Bone

fragments were found scattered around the hearth and the
bones including goat/sheep skull lying three meters

from the hearth. These bones were not found in a
pile, but were very scattered. Where these bones lay
would have been for debris, for the dried alqi (sisal)

Six bones (Dove) nuts were found scattered



KEY:

-  Hearths.
-  Ordinary stones.
-  Wooden poles.
-  Fire wood.
-  Possible position of wall.
-  Dried shrubs.

Material culture items found include three short pieces of heath alqi (sisal rope) of different lengths, 17 cm, 9 cm and 14 cm. They were found 103 cm northwest of the hearth all of them resting on a dried shrub that once formed part of the wall. Also found was a piece of an old dasse (sisal mat) 71 cm away east of hearth.

Economic remains/Food debris: Twelve bone fragments were found scattered around the hearth and five others including one goat/sheep skull lying three metres from wall westwards. These bones were not found in a heap, but were very scattered. Where these bones lay seemed to have been for debris, for one dried alqi (sisal) bark was also found.

Six koone (Doum Palm) nuts were found scattered around the hearth, and all of them had slightly gone grey due to their exposure to the sun. Koone nuts are not a regular part of Gabbra diet but are only eaten occasionally by young ones to supplement other foods or as a snack for adults, though they are an important famine food.

Others: Two short sticks of lengths 15 cm and 11 cm respectively, each with one of its ends charred, were found 18 cm east of the hearthstones. In inhabited settlements, it was found that Gabbra are very economical in their use of firewood. They do not burn all of it at once. It is used to provide fire for cooking food and when the meal is ready the fire is put out and firewood is preserved for use later though it is not carried to the next olla.

Remains of hut structure No.A3

The remains of this hut structure lay 8.4 metres south of hut structure No.A2. From the few remains of wall, the diameter was estimated to be about 3.15 metres. Its hearth was intact with three big stones and a smaller one, and like in the hearths of the other two structures mentioned above, ash and charcoal was not visible.

Material Culture: Two poles measuring 164 cm and 161 cm long were found in what was the dink (sleeping room). All these poles had their ends cut square with a sharp tool possibly the dakara. They were roughly equal in thickness with diameters between 5 and 6 cm and may have been used as supports for the sirir (bed structure).

In the same general area and 141 cm east of the hearth were two fragments of old clothing, and 17 cm south of these lay 1 piece of haath guraj (skin rope) 21 cm long.

Food debris: In this category of remains, were found nine koone nuts and seven bone fragments. All of them were scattered near the hearth, but with concentrations to the southeast of it.

Mona (enclosures)

The mona in this particular onna were not completely intact as the materials in some of the sections had fallen and were lying flat on the ground. As a result of this, it was hard for one to tell where the entrances had been.

To the east of the hut structures were found two enclosures containing camel dung which is almost round in shape, similar to that of goats and sheep but bigger in size. Ethnographically Gabbra have their camel mona to the east of hut structures and these two were therefore for camels.

Inside one of the camel enclosures was the remains of agose (windbreak) where young unmarried males responsible for milking camels sleep. This agose which was almost intact was nothing more than three or four branches with twigs heaped together to make shelter.

Onna B

According to my informant, this onna was the remains of Nabudo Mamo Olla, which was abandoned in the Middle of 1980 - the exact dates not known. The remains of

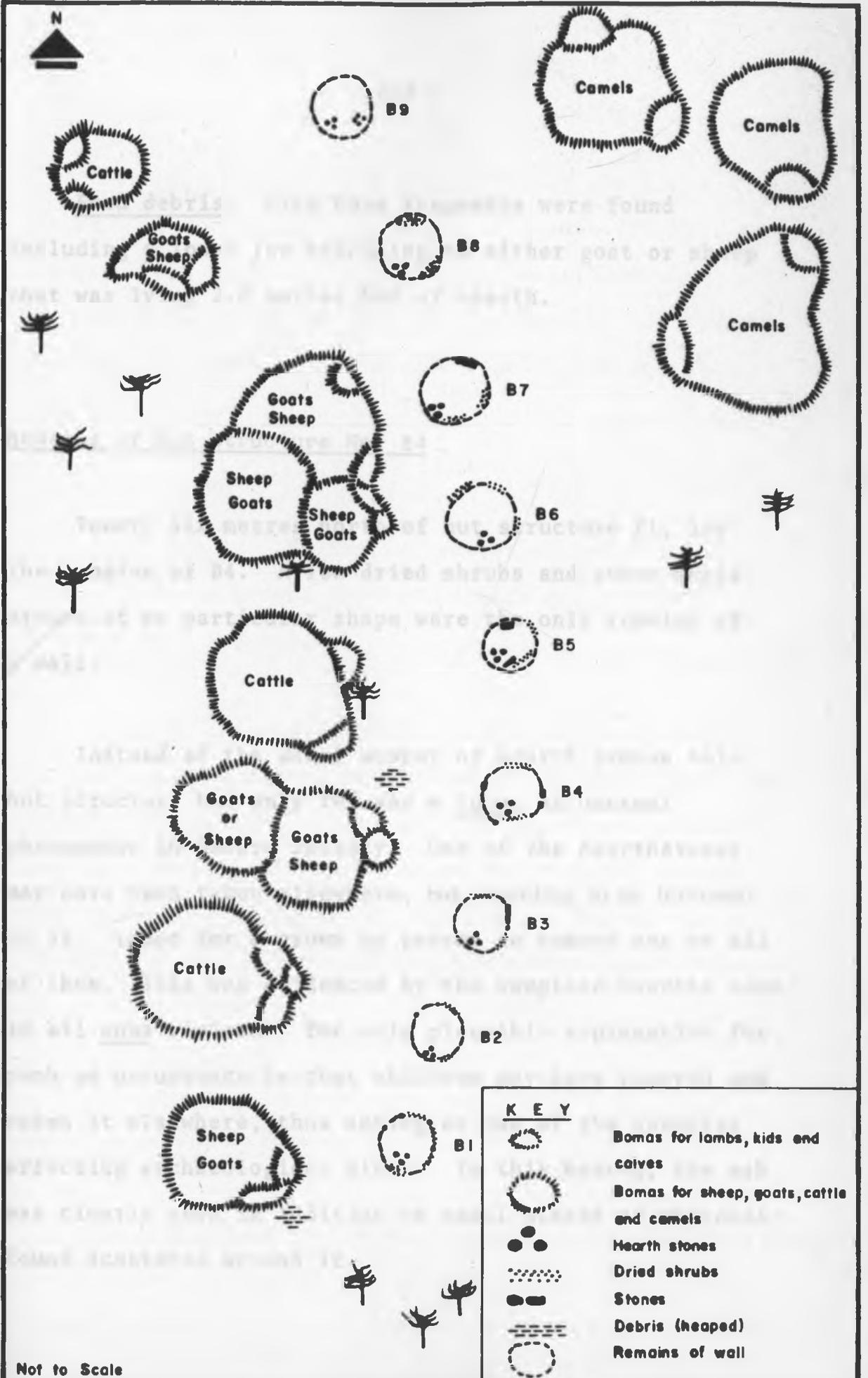
settlement structures comprised 9 huts and 13 stock enclosures as shown in Fig. 4:2 below.

Remains of hut structure No. B1

The hut structure numbered B1 was the last one to the south. The position of the wall was clearly seen from the remains of a few dried shrubs and four small stones. The diameter from north to south being 3.09 metres, was within the range of Gabbra huts.

Its hearth was complete and intact with ash and charcoal clearly seen, though with some sections covered with a thin film of dust.

Material Culture: To the north of the hearth at a distance of 1.31 metres was 1 piece of kobhe (tyre sandal) 14 cm long and 6 cm wide. It did not form a complete rectangular shape and one end was completely worn out. 18 cm to the west of the sandal was a small piece of cut skin, burnt on one end. Near what was once the door and resting on one of the stones that marked the position of the wall, were 4 pieces of old cloth (calico sheet?).



Food debris: Five bone fragments were found including a lower jaw belonging to either goat or sheep that was lying 2.0 metres NNE of hearth.

Remains of hut structure No. B4

Twenty six metres north of hut structure B1, lay the remains of B4. A few dried shrubs and seven small stones of no particular shape were the only remains of a wall.

Instead of the usual number of hearth stones this hut structure had only two and a lubu, an unusual phenomenon in Gabbra society. One of the hearthstones may have been taken elsewhere, but according to my informant it is taboo for a grown up person to remove one or all of them. This was evidenced by the complete hearths seen in all onna visited. The only plausible explanation for such an occurrence is that children may have removed and taken it elsewhere, thus acting as one of the agencies affecting archaeological sites. In this hearth, the ash was clearly seen in addition to small pieces of charcoal found scattered around it.

Material Culture: This includes an old piece of cloth 1.31 metres east of hearth; 2 pieces of skin, one of which was found 1 m south of the hearth on outer side of wall, and the other 2.11 m to the north, and finally, an old tin lid slit on one side found 0.28m west of hearth.

Food debris: Of the 22 remains of food, all of them scattered around the hut, 9 were koone nuts and 13 were bone fragments.

Others: A small bundle of human hair was found slightly buried in the sand 2.98m SE of hearth near the remains of the wall. Hair cutting activity is the only possible explanation for such an occurrence. Indeed, it was found that in inhabited settlements men cut their children's hair behind the hut and buried it in the sand in the same spot.

Remains of hut structure No.B9

The hut structure B9 was the northermost of the nine huts, 103 metres away from B1. Unlike the other huts, there were no remains to indicate the extent and position

of wall. The only evidence of a hut was three hearthstones and lubu. Four other small stones were found 0.46m south of the hearth not arranged in any apparent order. These four stones could not have been part of the wall or may have served a different purpose altogether such as to hold cooking utensils, as in the case of bute, where a circle of small stones serves this purpose. Ash and charcoal were covered by windblown dust and sand.

Material Culture: Discarded material culture objects found in this hut included one kadabhe (forked stick for holding charcoal and for cleaning milk containers) found 0.4m east of the hearthstones. In front of the estimated position of the door lay 1 haath alqi (sisal rope) piece with a knotted end, 37 cm long. One hara (brush) made of split leaves of Doum Palm tree lay 0.32 m south of the hearth next to where the wall once stood.

Food debris: Apart from eight koone nuts found scattered near the hearth, no other food remains were found. However, many bones were found lying scattered 8 m in front of the hut and near to an enclosure.

Others: Lying in between the hearth stones was found a short stick, which may have been brought in as firewood.

Mona (Stock enclosures): In this onna were found 13 enclosures. On the basis of dung remains, three of the ten mona to the west of the hut structures were for cattle, and the rest were for sheep and or goats; the other three to the northeast were for camels. Adjoined to each animal mona were small sections and pens for calves, kids and lambs.

Most of the enclosures were intact though in some of them small sections had fallen. No cultural remains except dung were found inside. However, near the enclosures that lay to the front of huts B1 and B4 were scatters of debris including fourteen pieces of cloth, one old tin can (Kimbo/Cowboy), thirty three bone fragments (no measurements) of various parts, six broken pieces of haath alqi and two of skin rope, one knife blade and two small pieces of polythene paper. These were rather scattered, but in a restricted area.

Onna C

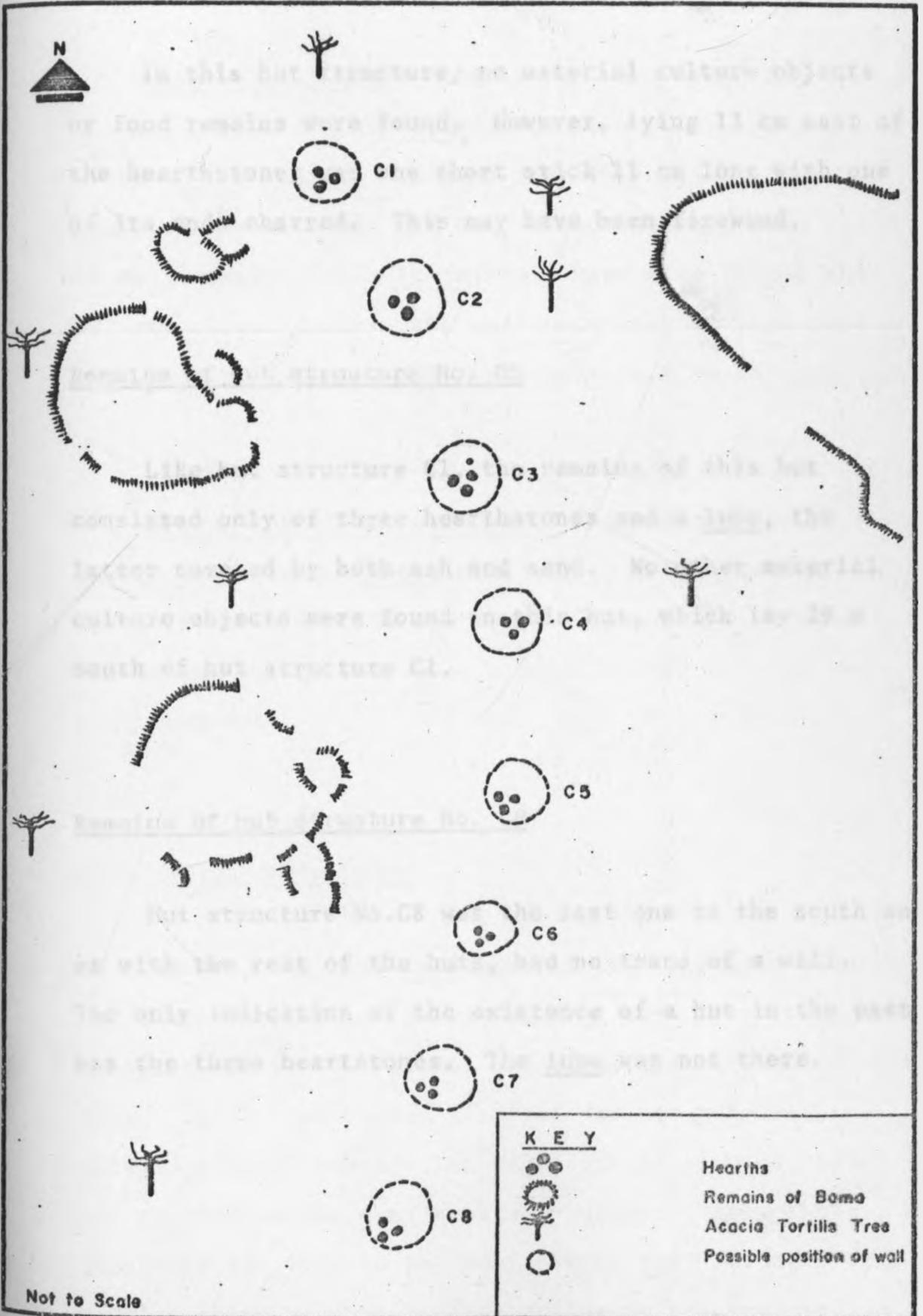
This onna was situated over 1 km east of Sumun Worია Boru onna, and northeast of Bojioskencho well in the Roba Gade area. (Sumun Worია Boru was later excavated). In this onna most of the mona material had disintegrated showing that this was an old onna. My informant neither knew the owner nor the time it was abandoned. However, judging from the contents, it may have been more than four years old (see Fig. 4:3).

A total of 8 intact hearths with ash and charcoal suggests an equal number of huts. And there were remains indicating five enclosures - Four to the west and one to the east of huts. The huts were found forming a curve from north to the south. Of these 8 huts, three were examined.

Remains of hut structure No. C1

The northermost hut was numbered C1 and in it were found three hearthstones and a lubu which was covered by sand. There was nothing else to suggest that it was the remains of a hut.

Fig. 4.3 SKETCH PLAN FOR ONNA C



In this hut structure, no material culture objects or food remains were found. However, lying 13 cm east of the hearthstones was one short stick 11 cm long with one of its ends charred. This may have been firewood.

Remains of hut structure No. C5

Like hut structure C1, the remains of this hut consisted only of three hearthstones and a lubu, the latter covered by both ash and sand. No other material culture objects were found in this hut, which lay 29 m south of hut structure C1.

Remains of hut structure No. C8

Hut structure No. C8 was the last one to the south and as with the rest of the huts, had no trace of a wall. The only indication of the existence of a hut in the past was the three heartstones. The lubu was not there.

Material culture: Material culture found in this hut was 1 rectangular kalim (aluminium bead) lying 2.5 m north of the hearth. Judging from the evidence from inhabited settlements and from abandoned huts with signs of wall remains, this kalim would have been inside the hut and close to where the wall once stood. This bead was similar to those worn by Gabbra women on their necks.

Economic remains/Food debris: Scattered around the hearth were found 7 koone nuts all of them grey and partially decayed. To the south of hearth were found 2 rib-bones, though they were almost covered by sand and windblown dust.

Mona (stock enclosures)

Although in this onna most of the enclosure material had disintegrated, it could still be seen that there were 5 enclosures to the west of hut structures and one to the east. Of the enclosures seen, it was not possible to determine which belonged to what sort of animals, since all of them lacked dung remains. However, from their positions the four to the west should have belonged to cattle, sheep or goats corresponding to the position in

currently inhabited settlements, but we have no means of telling which was which, and the one to the east was for camels.

Onna D

This onna was found three kilometres or so southeast of onna C. It was in proximity to an area containing a significant number of thorny Acacia. Most of this area was covered by short shrubs that provide good forage to goats and sheep.

The fact that in this onna the animal enclosures were intact and the raw-materials used in their construction still fresh, is a clear indication that this was an olla abandoned not more than four months prior to visiting the area in October, 1980. This onna and that of B (Nabudo Mamo above) were possibly contemporaries and may have been abandoned around the same time.

Out of a total of 5 hut structures, cultural material remains were recorded in three. (See fig. 4:4, page 215).

Remains of hut structure No. D1

The hut structure numbered D1 was the last of the huts at the southern end of the curve. The position of the wall was clearly shown by a raised line of windblown sand that made a semi-circle on the windward side of the hut, where it had clearly accumulated against the hut wall. From these remains the diameter was 3.14m.

The three hearthstones and lubu were still in position. Besides the lubu there were two other small stones found to the south of hearth. As the hearth was still uncovered by windblown dust and sand, the ash was clearly seen.

Two small circles of small stones, one of 5 and the other of 7, were found some 1.10m northwest of the hearth. The nature of their arrangement indicates clearly that they were purposely put there and they presumably served to hold the bute (water vessels) in position, a phenomenon seen in Buyicha olla - one of the inhabited settlements. In other huts this was not found, and according to my informant, where there are no stone circles to hold the bute, then one may find heath alqi (sisal ropes) tied to make a ring shape, on which the bute may rest. In other

cases, some people find it easier to fasten the haath alqi rope, which holds the bute, to a hut pole, thus helping it to stand in position.

Material culture: Material culture found includes one kadabhe (forked stick) lying 27 cm east of the hearth. 91 cm southeast of the hearth was found an old piece of clothing measuring 13 cm long and 5.5 cm wide and completely stained black. This may have been part of a bigger cloth used to supplement the dasse and ithile. An old mukoto (handle for adze) was found 62 cm north of the hearth.

Economic remains/food debris: Around the hearth were found fourteen bone fragments possibly of goat or sheep, and a burnt cow's kench (hoof). Also found were 11 koone nuts scattered in the hut with the majority around the hearth.

Remains of hut structure No. D3

The remains of hut structure D3 lay 19m north of the structure D1. Of the remains of wall, only dried shrubs

and a stone support were found. From these few remains the diameter was measured as 3.30m; a figure slightly greater than the normal range of Gabbra huts.

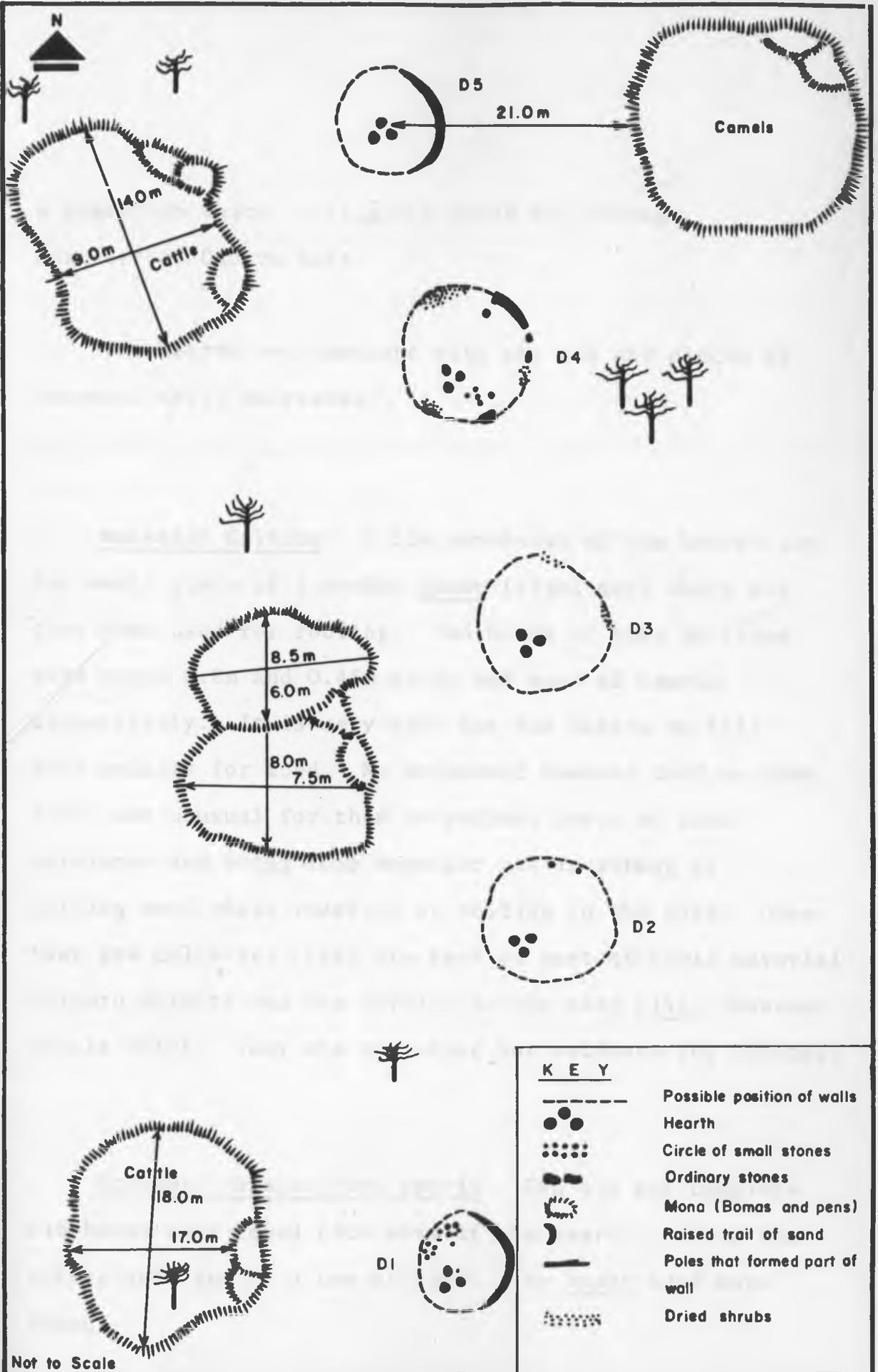
The hearth was still intact with three big stones and a lubu. Ash was still visible.

Material Culture: Apart from one torn piece of old cloth covered with soot found 37 cm south of the hearth, no other material culture object was found. This old piece of cloth was the sosso (cloth used to wipe clean the inside of milk containers).

Food remains: The only remains were six broken bones found lying to the east and south of hearth.

Remains of hut structure No. D5

Hut structure D5 was the northernmost of the curve and as in the case of D1, there was a raised line of sand on the windward side, indicating the extent of wall. On the leeward side of the hut were a few dried shrubs. From these remains, the diameter of this hut was about 3.23m;



Not to Scale

a dimension which is slightly above the average diameter of Gabbra huts.

The hearth was complete with the ash and pieces of charcoal still uncovered.

Material Culture: 1.33m northeast of the hearth lay one small piece of a broken dasse (sisal mat) which may have been used for roofing. Two horns of oryx antelope were found 0.8m and 0.45m south and east of hearth respectively. It is very rare for the Gabbra to kill wild animals for food. My informant however told me that it is not unusual for them to collect horns of dead antelopes and bring them home for use in poking or spiking meat while roasting or boiling in the fire. Once they are collected, they are kept as part of their material culture objects and are carried to the next olla, whenever people shift. They are therefore not evidence for hunting.

Economic remains/Food debris: Two big and complete rib-bones were found 63cm west of the hearth. These two either belonged to a cow or camel. No koone nuts were found.

Mona (enclosures) A total of 5 mona (animal enclosures) were found in this onna. Four of these were found to the west of the hut remains. Of these, two were for goats and or sheep and the remaining were for cattle as seen from dung remains. The one big enclosure 21.1m east of the huts (see diagram above) was for camels. All these enclosures were still intact. One old gorf with a split bottom was found in the camel enclosure.

Debris: In this onna were found bones, koone nuts and broken sticks in front of the huts and beyond, with no particular concentrations. In the case of bones, some were found beyond the enclosures and this may be attributed to scavenging animals such as dogs and hyenas.

Distribution of Material Culture objects and Food
remains per hut per onna

| ONNA A | ONNA B | ONNA C | ONNA D |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>A1 *</p> <p>2 pieces of <u>haath alqi</u></p> <p>3 <u>pegs</u></p> <p>7 bone fragments</p> <p>1 bean</p> | <p>B1</p> <p>1 <u>kobhe</u> (sandal)</p> <p>1 <u>piece</u> of skin</p> <p>4 cloth fragments</p> <p>5 bones</p> | <p>C1</p> <p>1 piece of firewood</p> | <p>D1</p> <p>1 <u>kadabhe</u></p> <p>1 <u>cloth</u> fragment</p> <p>1 <u>mukoto</u></p> <p>14 <u>bone</u> fragments</p> <p>1 <u>kench</u> (hoof)</p> <p>11 <u>koone</u> nuts</p> |
| <p>A2</p> <p>2 pieces of <u>haath alqi</u></p> <p>3 <u>pegs</u></p> <p>1 <u>dasse</u></p> <p>17 <u>bones</u></p> <p>6 <u>Koone</u> huts</p> <p>2 pieces of firewood</p> | <p>B4</p> <p>1 cloth fragment</p> <p>2 pieces of skin</p> <p>1 tin lid (daboola?)</p> <p>9 <u>koone</u> nuts</p> <p>13 <u>bone</u> fragments</p> <p>1 bundle of human hair</p> | <p>C5</p> <p>No cultural material remains.</p> | <p>D3</p> <p>1 <u>sosso</u>.</p> <p>6 bone fragments</p> |
| <p>A3</p> <p>2 bed poles</p> <p>2 cloth fragments</p> <p>1 piece of <u>haath guraj</u></p> <p>9 <u>koone</u> nuts</p> <p>7 <u>bones</u></p> | <p>B9</p> <p>1 <u>kadabhe</u></p> <p>1 piece of <u>haath alqi</u></p> <p>1 <u>hara</u></p> <p>8 <u>koone</u> nuts</p> <p>1 <u>short</u> stick (firewood?)</p> | <p>C8</p> <p>1 <u>Kalim</u></p> <p>7 <u>koone</u> nuts</p> <p>2 rib-bones</p> | <p>D5</p> <p>1 <u>dasse</u> fragment</p> <p>2 <u>horns</u></p> <p>2 rib-bones</p> <p>1 <u>gorf</u> (in camel mona nearest to this hut.</p> |

SURFACE DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL MATERIAL REMAINS IN 4 ONNA

| CULTURAL ITEM | ONNA A | ONNA B | ONNA C | ONNA D | TOTALS |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Beans | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Bones | 31 | 18 | 2 | 22 | 73 |
| Cloth Frags. | 2 | 5 | - | 1 | 8 |
| <u>Daboola</u> (Lid?) | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| <u>Dasse</u> | 1 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Firewood | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | 4 |
| <u>Gorf</u> | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| <u>Hara</u> | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Hair | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| <u>Haath alqi</u> | 4 | 1 | - | - | 5 |
| <u>Haath guraj</u> | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Horns | - | - | - | 2 | 2 |
| <u>Kadabhe</u> | - | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| <u>Kalim</u> | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| <u>Kench</u> | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| <u>Kobhe</u> | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| <u>Koone nuts</u> | 15 | 17 | 7 | 11 | 50 |
| <u>Mukoto</u> | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Pegs | 6 | - | - | - | 6 |
| Poles | 2 | - | - | - | 2 |
| Skins | - | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| Sosso | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| | 65 | 50 | 11 | 42 | 168 |

A total of twelve huts, three for each onna, gave a total of 168 cultural objects and food remains of which 73.8% are evidence of subsistence. The only inorganic remains are Kalim and tin lid.*

* Tin lids were found to have replaced original daboola in settlements with modern touch (urbanised ones like Kalacha).

SECTION B

EXCAVATED ONNA AND THEIR CONTENTS

As aforesaid, this section looks at cultural material remains from onna treated as archaeological sites. A number of huts from each of the three onna showing different states of disintegration, were selected for excavation. Huts selected for this purpose were those in which cultural material remains could still be seen on the surface. Besides, some of them had their hearths intact and the position of wall could still be seen though in part only (see map 3 page 24).

The first to be excavated was Kalacha onna found 2 kilometres east of the shopping centre known by the same name. Unlike the two other onna below which were new, this one was old having been abandoned fourteen years prior to my visit into the area in December 1980.

Neither the remains of animal enclosures nor dung was seen. However, 13 hearths which suggest an equivalent number of huts, indicate this as having been an olla in the past. The hearths made a crescent from north to south (see sketch plan A). Excavations were made in five huts as shown in sketch plan below.

Sumum Worla Boru 1 was the next to be excavated. It was situated in Roba Gade area near Bojioskencho well. Judging from the remains of animal enclosures and hut structures, this was not an old onna. This hypothesis was confirmed by my informant who told me that this was an olla up to September/October 1979.

In it were found the remains of 11 huts and 9 animal enclosures, six to the west and three to the east of hut remains. Of these, excavations were made in 6 huts as shown in sketch plan B below.

The third onna to be excavated was Sumum Worla Boru II." This and the one above was occupied by the same people at different times in the past. It was in occupation when I made my first trip into the area in September 1980 and in December of the same year, it was abandoned. In this onna were found 11 huts and 8 animal enclosures. 5 to the west and 3 to the east of hut remains. Excavations were made in 3 huts seen in sketch plan below.

Excavations were made in 1 sq. metre grids in and sometimes near huts in order to discover activity areas and their contents. Trenches were made in places where

* The number indicate which Sumum Worla Boru onna as two were excavated. Hence, the number has no ethnographic connotations.

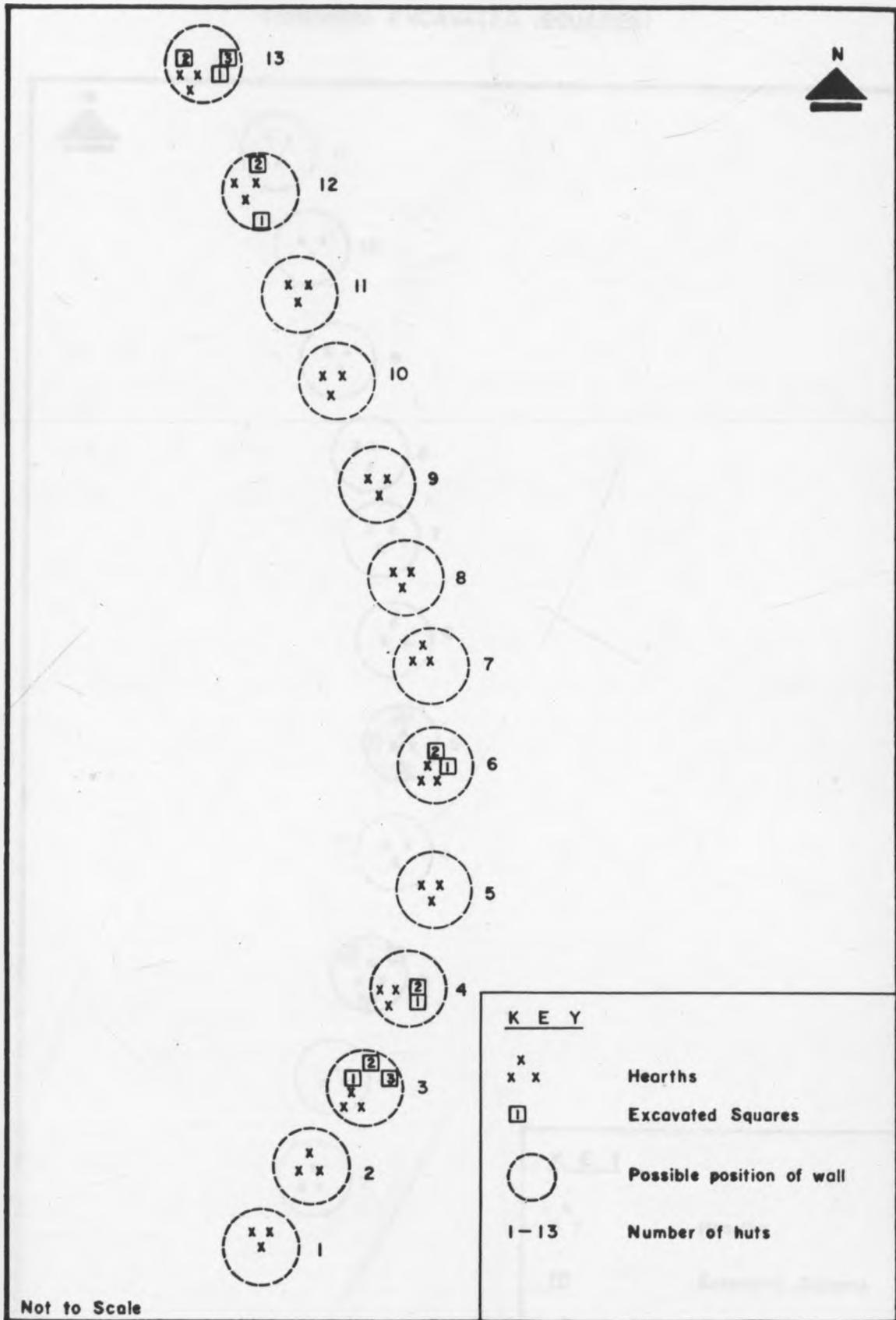
cultural material were found lying on the surface. The surface level was taken to include loose superficial sand. Below this, more compact sand was reached which was excavated in 5 cm spits/levels. Excavations stopped when a trench no longer turned out any cultural materials.

Soil and sand from these trenches and spits was collected and taken for sieving, which was carried out further away from excavated areas. Cultural material found in the sieve was collected for each spit, packed into labelled bags and taken for analysis. (Analysis done in the University of Nairobi archaeological laboratory).

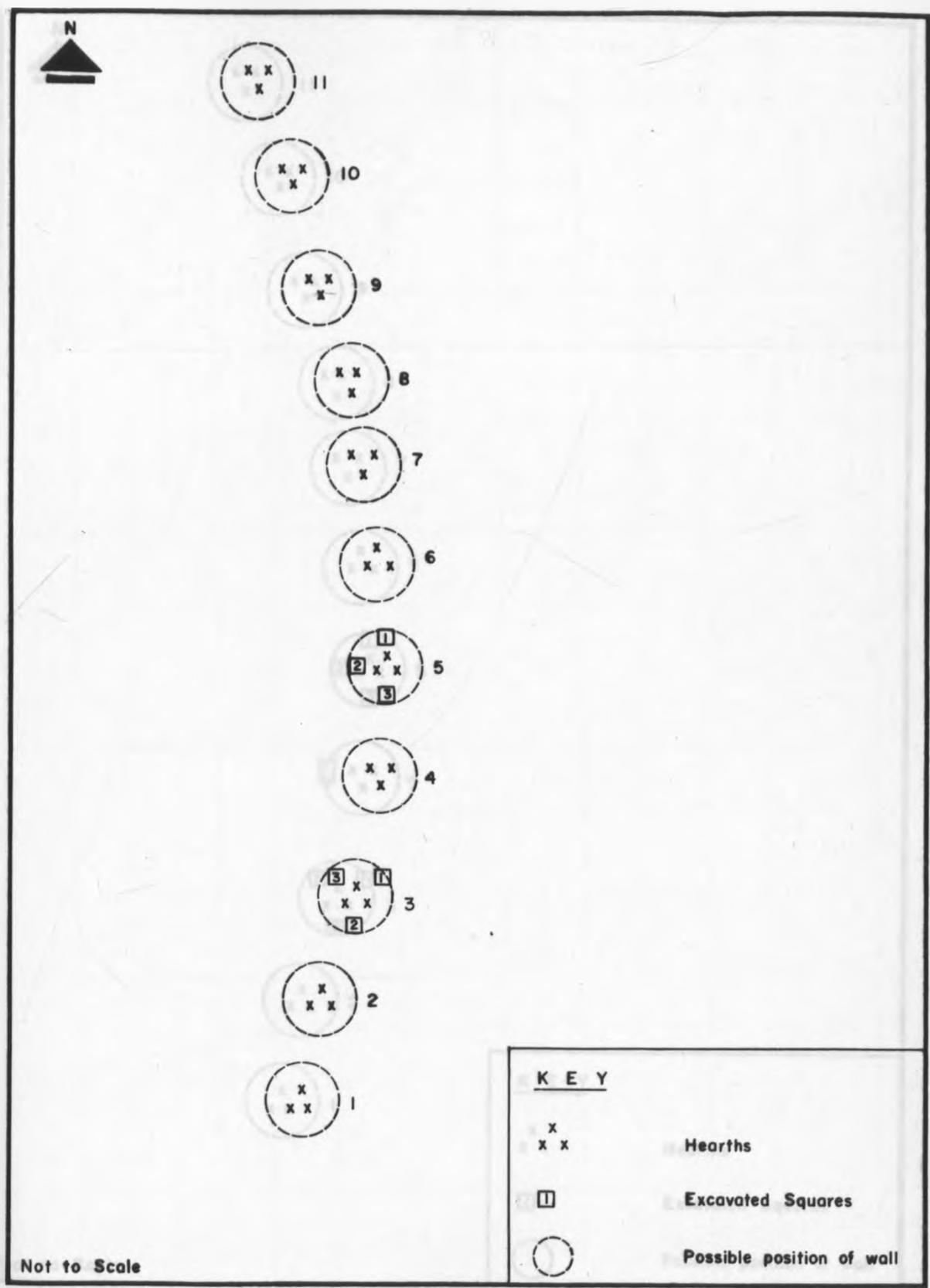
Below is shown how materials from these onna were analysed and described (see also the introduction, stage III page 19 above). First came three sketch plans followed by three tables, each representing an onna and its contents (see sketch plans A, B, C and tables (i), (ii), and (iii) below). A list of each object by site is also shown.



SKETCH PLAN A : KALACHA ONNA SHOWING EXCAVATED SQUARES

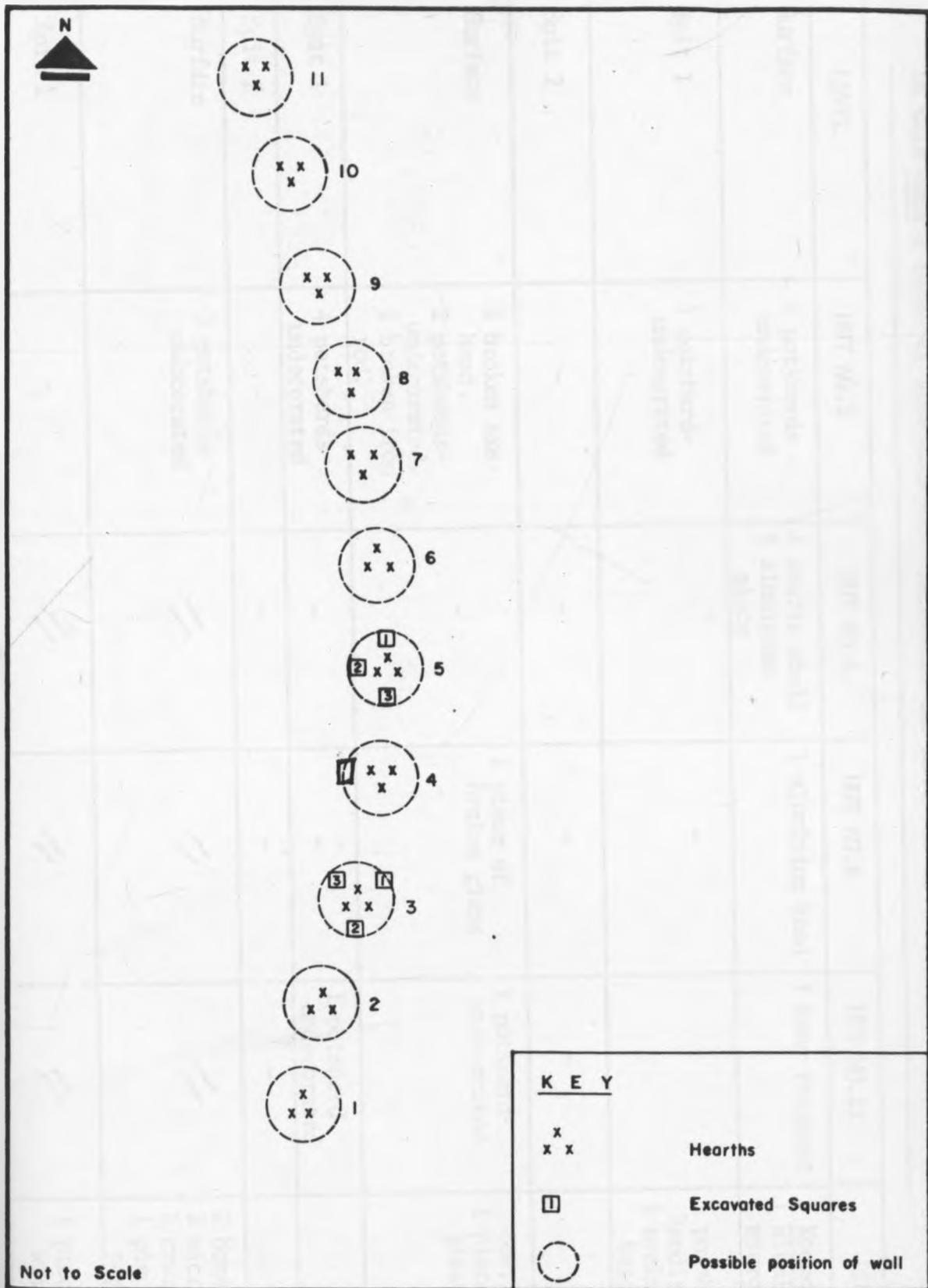


SKETCH PLAN C : SUMUN WORIA BORU II (SWB II) (SHOWING EXCAVATED SQUARES)



Not to Scale

SKETCH PLAN C: SUMUN WORIA BORU II (SWB II)
(SHOWING EXCAVATED SQUARES)



Not to Scale

Table i : Excavated Material from Kalacha onna

In this onna a total of five huts was excavated the material of which can be seen below

| SQ | LEVEL | HUT NO.3 | HUT NO.4 | HUT NO.6 | HUT NO.12 | HUT NO.13 |
|----|---------|--|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Surface | 4 potsherds - undecorated | 1 cowrie shell 1 aluminium piece | 1 aluminium bead | 1 bone fragment | 1 Koone nut 1 aluminium bead 1 microlith |
| | Spit 1 | 1 potsherd- undecorated | - | - | - | 1 potsherd (broken handle)undecorated 1 broken glass bead |
| | Spit 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | Surface | 1 broken axe head. 2 potsherds- undecorated. 1 broken iron rod. | - | 1 piece of broken glass | 1 potsherd- undecorated. | 1 cowrie shell 1 piece of broken glass |
| | Spit 1 | 4 potsherds undecorated | - | - | 1 potsherd undecorated | - |
| | Spit 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | Surface | 2 potsherds undecorated | // | // | // | 2 bone fragments 2 microliths 2 cowrie shells 1 piece of plastic paper |
| | Spit 1 | - | // | // | // | 1 piece of copper wire |

- Indicates the absence of cultural remains or sterile levels.

// - Indicates the squares not excavated.

Table ii : Excavated Material from Sumun Worla Boru I onna

| SQ. | LEVEL | HUT NO.1 | HUT NO.2 | HUT NO.3 | HUT NO.4 | HUT NO.6 | HUT NO.9 |
|-----|---------|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| 1 | Surface | 2 bone fragments 2 snail shells | 1 koone nut 2 bone fragments 1 piece of rubber 3 beans | 2 pieces of rubber 2 bone fragments | 2 koone nuts 1 piece of rubber 1 bean 2 hooves 5 bone fragments 2 pcs.of broken glas. | 8 bone fragments 2 hooves 4 koone nuts 1 battery top (aluminium) 1 piece of iron 1 piece of dasse | 9 bone fragments 1 molar tooth 2 koone nuts 2 pieces of jute bag. |
| | Spit 1 | 1 broken molar tooth 3 bone fragments 3 snail shells | 1 glass bead 5 bone fragments 3 snail shells | 1 piece of broker glass 5 bone fragments | 1 orange bead 1 cloth fragment 1 piece of plastic paper 5 bone fragments | 7 bone fragments 1 hoof | 1 koone nut 2 bone fragments 1 root (ergams) 1 piece of broken sisal rope |
| | Spit 2 | - | 1 battery top (aluminium) 1 piece yellow paper 3 bone fragments 1 koone nut 2 snail shells | - | - | 1 broken tooth 6 bone fragments 2 bires (incense) | 1 koone nut 3 bone fragments |
| 2 | Surface | 2 bone fragments | 3 koone nuts 6 bone fragments 1 bires(incense) | 1 bundle of hair 1 bone fragment 1 coffee bean | 1 aluminium bead 3 bires(incense) 1 cloth fragment 1 piece of broker skin rope 1 hood 4 bone fragments | 7 koone nuts 5 pieces of sisal rope 1 tyre sandal (Kobhe) 2 bires (Incense) 1 chewing stick 5 bone fragments | 4 broken pieces of sisal rope. |
| | Spit 1 | 3 bone fragments 1 snail shell | 1 koone nut 2 pieces of broken glass 5 bone fragments 1 cloth fragment | - | 1 bean 1 koone 4 bone fragments | 3 roots(ergams) 1 incense 1 bone fragment 1 koone nut 1 pice of broken glass | - |
| | Spit 2 | - | 1 bone fragment 2 snail shells | - | - | 4 bone fragments | // |
| 3 | Surface | 2 koone nuts 3 bone fragments | // | // | 1 premolar tooth 2 bone fragments | 1 koone nut 1 chewing stick 3 bone fragments | // |
| | Spit 1 | 3 bone fragments | // | // | 1 premolar tooth 5 bone fragments | - | // |
| | Spit 2 | - | // | // | - | - | // |
| 4 | Surface | // | // | // | // | 2 broken pieces of glass 5 bone fragments | // |

Table iii : Excavated Materials from Sunan Worla Poru II onna

| SQ | LEVEL | HUT NO.3 | HUT NO.5 | FRONT OF HUT NO.4 & 5 |
|----|---------|---|--|---|
| 1 | Surface | 1 piece of goat skin with hair 4 bone fragments | 2 broken pieces of sisal rope 1 charm container 1 bone fragment 3 pieces of broken glass 1 piece of rubber 1 hoof | 1 hoof 2 pieces of rubber 9 pieces of wood chips 1 bone fragment |
| | Spit 1 | 1 koone nut 1 root-ergams 2 bone fragments 1 bundle of human hair 1 battery top (aluminium) | 1 bundle of human hair 3 bone fragments 2 cloth fragments | 1 koone nut 5 pieces of wood chips or off-cuts |
| | Spit 2 | - | 5 bone fragments 1 cloth fragment | - |
| 2 | Surface | 1 piece of goat skin with hair 1 broken piece of sisal rope 1 cloth fragment 3 bone fragments | 4 broken pieces of sisal rope 2 cloth fragments 1 koone nut 1 hoof with burns 2 pieces of wood chips 3 pieces of rubber | 4 bone fragments 1 piece of broken glass |
| | Spit 1 | 1 broken piece of sisal rope 3 roots-ergams | 1 short copper wire 1 spike of a wooden comb | 3 bone fragments |
| | Spit 2 | - | 1 bundle of human hair 3 bone fragments | - |
| 3 | Surface | 1 bone fragment 2 pieces of skin 2 pieces of wood chips 1 cloth fragment | == | == |
| | Spit 1 | 1 piece of skin with hair 1 bone fragment 3 pieces of stick | == | == |

- Indicates the absence of cultural remains or sterile levels.

== - Indicates the squares not excavated.

Table iv : List of objects by onna

| | KALACHA | SWB I | SWB II | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------|-------|
| *Aluminium | 3 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| Bones | 3 | 124 | 38 | 165 |
| Beans | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| *Clay (potsherds) | 16 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| *Copper | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| *Cowrie shells | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Coffee | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Cloth fragments | 0 | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Chips of wood | 0 | 0 | 18 | 18 |
| Charm | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Chewing stick | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Dasse | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Gastropods | 0 | 13 | 0 | 13 |
| *Glass | 2+1 broken glass bead | 6+2 glass beads | 4 | 15 |
| Hair | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Hooves | 0 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| Incense | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| *Iron | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Koone nuts | 1 | 28 | 3 | 32 |
| Paper & Plastic | 1 plastic paper | 1+1 plastic | 0 | 3 |
| Roots | 0 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Rubber | 0 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| *Stone | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Sisal (ropes & bags) | 0 | 12 ropes + 2 bags | 8 | 22 |
| Skin | 0 | 1 rope | 5 | 6 |
| Sticks | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Spike of comb | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Teeth | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| | 37 | 235 | 106 | 378 |

Above is a list of excavated objects by site. A total of 378 material remains were excavated from three Gabbra onna and of this, there were 162 material culture objects including some by-products of material culture production; the rest being economic or food remains. Looking at all the materials recovered from the three onna, only glass, metal, clay, stone and possibly rubber are expected to survive for long in the archaeological record. Bones too, may survive but not for a long period of time, especially where the environment is very unfavourable (asterisks show objects that last for a long period of time).

All excavated material from three onna after analysis and tabulation, were then grouped and described as shown below:-

1. METAL

Objects of three types of metal were excavated from the onna: iron, aluminium and copper all of which attest Gabbra use of metal objects though they themselves do not participate in the making of the same. This is claimed to be because they regard metal working as a task that is less noble than pastoralism and thus look at it with contempt. That aside, perhaps one other reason why they do not engage in this activity has been the lack of raw-

materials in Gabbra land. Today, as it has been in the past, the Gabbra rely on Konso blacksmiths for their metal objects.

(a) Iron

Iron was recovered in the form of broken axehead with its sharpened end completely worn out and blunt. From its shape, this piece was no different from complete dakara (axes) the Gabbra were using in inhabited settlements. Also found was a broken piece of wire which may have been intended for use in the making of awls, and a very small piece of iron sheet.

(b) Aluminium

The few aluminium products found consisted of rectangular aluminium beads commonly worn by Gabbra women on their necks, and battery tops or the ends of torch cells. It is not known whether the tumthu use these battery ends for anything else such as rattles or even to decorate the kalim beads. Like other metal objects this must have been obtained from other people. Probably they were bought from shopping centres in the form of cells for torches or radios, though none of these was seen in olla visited. The only radios and torches seen

were those found in Kalacha shopping centre.

(c) Copper

The only copper objects were two pieces of copper wire. One had been twisted into a cord like object, and the other was just ordinary wire. In some societies, for example the Kalenjin speakers, copper ornaments and earrings are found, but this was not observed among the Gabbra which suggests that twisted copper wire may have been used for something else.

2. RUBBER

Eleven pieces of rubber were found in the three excavated onna. These pieces must have been part of rubber sandals used by Gabbra men and women. Tyre sandals, after a period of use, wear out on the sides and these are sometimes reshaped into sandals for young boys and girls. It is in the process of reshaping that small pieces are left as cut-offs and these may be part of what was found in excavated onna. Rubber sandals are obtained from dealers in major market centres as Marsabit and Kalacha.

3. GLASS

15 objects of glass were found with other excavated material. These consisted of 12 pieces of bottle glass, two pieces of broken glass beads and one complete bead. It is not known whether the Gabbra use broken glass pieces to smooth some of their wooden objects, a phenomenon that Robbins (1973) casually observed among the Turkana. Glass beads are rarely used by the Gabbra for they commonly use strings of aluminium beads, but with one or two glass or plastic beads to make them look more beautiful.

4. PLASTIC SHEET AND PAPER

Among the materials excavated were two pieces of plastic sheet[§], and a piece of paper. Like any other materials foreign to the Gabbra, plastic paper may have found its way into Gabbreland through trade or exchange, perhaps as packing for foodstuffs, such as salt, pepper, sweets or any other commodity. In currently inhabited settlements, none of this was seen being used.

One piece of ordinary paper was found. This was a yellow type of paper such as is used for packing tea

leaves. This may indeed be a piece of torn tea packet, for many Gabbra were seen buying small packets of tea leaves, but no printing was preserved.

5. CLAY

Although material culture objects made of clay were completely absent in all the currently inhabited settlements visited, potsherds were excavated from Kalacha but not from the other two onna, SWB I and SWB II.

A total of 16 potsherds, all of them undecorated, were found with other excavated materials. Apart from one which showed that it was part of a broken handle, the rest were undiagnostic of body parts, and could not indicate the shape of vessel or vessels concerned. The lack of decorative motifs renders it very difficult to place them among the known pottery traditions of East Africa and Kenya in particular. Gabbra, whether living along the Kenya-Ethiopia border or those living far to the south of the border in the Chalbi desert are reported to buy their pottery from the Konso and Watta societies inhabiting parts of Southern Ethiopia. These two societies have been the traditional suppliers of clay pots to the Gabbra and also to the Boran. The Gabbra themselves seem

not to have engaged in pottery making, possibly due to the lack of clay in the area they inhabit.

The presence of potsherds in Kalacha onna, which was an olla upto sometime in 1966, and the lack of pots in Gabbra homes visited, requires an explanation. According to my informant, okothe fara (clay pots) are usually used for cooking meat and other foodstuffs. In most Gabbra homes found near the Kenya-Ethiopia border, clay pots are used, whereas those living near Kalacha have had their clay pots replaced by aluminium pots bought from Kalacha and Marsabit shopping centres. From the evidence of Kalacha onna, this would seem to be a recent practice.

6. STONE

Like material culture made of clay, stone tools, except the whetstone and hearthstones are hardly in use in Gabbra huts either as scrapers or even as grinding stones. However, three microliths were found in hut no.13 of Kalacha onna (see table i above). Whether these were tools, and the presence of the same was by accident or design, it would be worthwhile to conduct further research to determine whether Gabbra may have until recently used microlithic tools. Gallagher observed

a modern society in south central Ethiopia using large flakes to scrape off excess flesh on animal skins during drying process (Gallagher 1971), but this was not observed among the Gabbra and in any case, the number of microliths seen is too small to give any positive conclusion.

7. VEGETAL MATERIAL

Excavated vegetal material falls into many different sub-categories which can be seen below:-

(a) Rope and Cordage

In this category are found locally made rope and mats, and jute bag which was imported into the area. A total of twenty pieces of alqi (native sisal) rope was found, some of them with knotted ends, and all of them attest the use of sisal rope in Gabbra settlements (see Chapter Three). All these pieces were left behind because they seemed to have lost their function.

Three pieces of dasse (mat) were excavated from these onna. These pieces had been stained black with soot, which shows that they were part of a large dasse which the Gabbra use for roofing their huts.

Evidence of use of jute bag is seen in two pieces found alongside other excavated materials. In inhabited settlements it was found that a few of these are used to contain some of Gabbra's important culture objects.

(b) Cloth

Old cloth fragments were found mainly on the surface of excavated onna and all of them were torn or tattered pieces. These cloth fragments form part of Gabbra attire and are occasionally used to supplement other roofing and siding materials, especially when no longer used as attire. If these pieces of clothing were stained black, then one would say that they were the sosso. A total of ten pieces were found in the three excavated onna.

(c) Doum Palm Nuts

Gabbra eat doum palm nuts as famine food, though they are commonly eaten by children as a supplement to other foods. This is attested by the presence of doum palm nut remains - 30 of them found alongside other excavated materials. In all the onna visited, doum palm nuts were scattered in what was the bada (sitting room) and a few in

the dink (sleeping or bedroom) and outside the hut. The fact that the majority of these nuts were found near the hearths, is a clear indication that they were eaten there. There is no evidence from inhabited settlements to show whether they are used as fuel.

(d) Wood Chips

18 pieces of wood chips were excavated from SWB II and none from the other two onna. These chips are found in many shapes - triangular, some trapezium, others rectangular yet others did not conform to any particular shape. All these pieces were small in size and none of them could be longer than 5 cm. It is probable that they resulted from the preparation of wooden material culture objects rather than from cutting firewood. Most Gabbra women collect small sticks for firewood and hardly any wood is cut to provide the same. Besides, these wood chips look fresh and appear to have come from newly cut, fresh wood, thus reinforcing the idea that they have been by-products of production of wooden artifacts.

(e) Incense

6 pieces of bark and 3 of roots which were identified as biress and fito respectively, were found in the three excavated onna. According to my informant, this was part of the incense which Gabbra women use to perfume their bodies. The fito (roots of a certain plant) and biress (bark of a plant of an unknown species) are commonly found stored in the suup (skin bag) by Gabbra women.

(f) Beans

In recently abandoned settlements, beans were found scattered on the surface. A total of six beans were excavated from SWB I onna and this provides us with evidence of Gabbra diet. Since the Gabbra do not practice any form of cultivation, the only plausible explanation for their presence in that place was through trade. But upon enquiry, it was found that this was part of the government's relief food to people in drought stricken areas or marginal areas of the country.

(g) Coffee

Of the three onna excavated, only SWB I yielded one coffee bean. Coffee beans are roasted and eaten with a mixture of butterfat and soup, mainly during ceremonial times though in other cases eaten as any other foodstuff. Since coffee is not grown in Gabbra area, whatever may be found here must be through trade contacts. The Gabbra obtain their coffee from Ethiopia, and some from Meru and Nyeri districts of Kenya.

(h) Roots

Eight ergams (roots of wild asparagus tree) were found and according to my informant were part of what Gabbra women use in the manufacture of their basketry, such as milking containers.

(i) Comb

A spike of a wooden comb was found with one of its ends showing signs of detachment from the main comb. It measures 10 cm long and 0.5 cm in diameter (at the thickest end). In some societies, sharpened wooden sticks

are used to poke or jab meat with, especially when roasting or boiling on a fire. Though I did not see sticks of this nature in inhabited settlements, I do not think that this one was for spiking meat as it is not only short but also thin. Besides, my informant told me that the Gabbra use antelope (oryx) horns for this purpose. This leaves us with the probability that this is the spike of a comb. Combs were never seen in any of the Gabbra huts visited though Gabbra women are known to plait their hair using them.

(j) Toothbrush

Two short pieces of wood were found as part of the excavated material. Both of these sticks had their bark and each had one of its ends chewed to make a brush. Gabbra normally have such pieces of sticks as toothbrushes.

8. ANIMAL MATERIAL

Animal material falls into two categories: bone and teeth; and other animal material.

(a) Bones and Teeth

A total of 165 bone fragments and 5 teeth was recovered from all the three onna. The horizontal and vertical distribution of these is given in tables i to iv above. The specimens were examined by Mr. Watene of the National Museums and identified to body part. No detailed identification to species was attempted but on the basis of size the majority of pieces are consistent with sheep or goat, only very few being of the size of cattle or camels. Bones of other animals such as dogs, cats or wild animals or birds (not eaten by the Gabbra) were not positively identified, though their presence cannot be definitely excluded.

Some fragments show points of impact such as cut marks which were probably inflicted during butchery, and others have traces of gnawing probably from scavenging animals such as dogs and hyenas.

(b) Other Animal Material

A number of animal materials such as hair, skin and hooves were found.

(i) Hair: Four bundles of human hair were excavated. These must be the result of hair cutting activity

the men sometimes perform at the back of huts. Once the hair has been cut, it is buried in the sand, just in the spot where the activity was performed, though sometimes anywhere near the activity area. Indeed, this was confirmed by the excavations.

(ii) Skin: One probable piece of a skin rope and five pieces of goat or sheepskin were found. The former measured 3.7 cm long and 2.5 cm wide, and may have been part of a long gaathi (skin rope) which the Gabbra use for tying a cow's legs when they are being milked. The other pieces of skin may be fragments of larger skins the Gabbra use for sleeping on.

Also found was a skin kudam (charms for humans). Charms for human use were not seen in inhabited settlements visited. Perhaps they were meant to be kept or worn in secret places and parts of the body. However, one wooden kudam for camels was seen in Alqana Yaa olla (see distribution table, Chapter Three, page 76).

(ii) Hooves: A total of 9 small sized hooves, possibly of goat or sheep, were excavated from these onna, and all of them showed signs of burning, an indication

that they may have been burnt before detaching them from animal limbs. Probably they belong to the animals slaughtered for meat, though there is a possibility of antelope hooves finding their way into the place as well.

9. SHELL

A total of 13 shells were excavated from Gabbra onna (3 cowries and 10 gastropods). Cowrie shells are used by the Gabbra in decorating the seepan (leather strap for holding milk containers), and are obtained from traders in Marsabit and possibly centres beyond Gabbra land.

No material culture object made of gastropods (such as beads) was seen in all Gabbra settlements visited. Besides, the Gabbra do not eat snails, which would have explained the presence of small sized gastropods in the onna. These shells which belong to water snails may be part of the remains of the dried Lake Chalbi (these were collected along with excavated materials).

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, this Chapter has looked at the nature and distribution of cultural material remains found in Gabbra onna. In all onna visited, including those which were excavated, material culture objects found were those that seemed to have been rendered functionally useless either through wear and tear or old age. Except for some few poles for beds which were in good condition and the beads, probably accidentally lost, the rest of the remains were all in pieces or fragments. This included, inter-alia, broken pieces of rope, old pieces of dasse, old cloth fragments, broken iron and other metal pieces, pieces of rubber, paper and brushes to name but a few examples.

Apart from old tyre sandals for grown ups, and skin water buckets (okhole) which are reconverted into sandals for young boys and girls, the Gabbra do not normally re-use discarded or worn out material culture objects.

Economic remains were mainly food debris such as broken bones of either goats or sheep, cattle and camels, though in the absence of detailed analysis bones of other animals and possibly birds may be included. But since the Gabbra do not eat meat from wild animals, then one would not expect to get bones of such animals. Besides,

the society only uses antelope horns (for poking meat) and giraffe skin (for making waterbuckets) and not any other part of a wild animal's body - the bones included. Therefore, the presence of bones of a wild animal in Gabbra onna is accidental.

The fact that goat and sheep bones easily outnumber those of large stock is accounted for by the fact that the Gabbra kill goats and sheep very regularly for meat and only rarely do they kill cattle or camels, usually during or for ceremonial purposes. It is therefore not surprising to get more ovicaprid bones in Gabbra onna than bones of other animals. All these bones were found scattered around the huts and some in the debris area which is usually located to the front of huts.

Bones aside, other economic remains include the doum palm nuts found scattered around the hearths and in sitting room generally, bean seeds, and a coffee bean, all of them evidence of what the Gabbra use for food.

Gabbra huts are portable structures that can be dismantled and carried to a new settlement where they are re-erected again. However, only on rare occasions might one find hut poles and postholes in old Gabbra settlements due to the sandy nature of Gabbra land that renders pole-

holes or postholes to fill up whenever the poles are removed and taken elsewhere. Sometimes, one may find dried shrubs and a few stones left to mark the position of a wall. Unlike the stones that occasionally form part of the hut, which may be preserved for long, shrubs will rot away after a period of not more than one year at most.

As regards hearths, unless otherwise disturbed by human and animal agencies these will be preserved in the archaeological record much more than any other Gabbra material culture. Because these are not taken into new settlements, the hearth stones remain in their position, thus becoming good indicators of where Gabbra huts and settlements were located.

Bomas in all onna visited displayed different stages of disintegration. The most recent ones had fallen down and materials were broken and scattered. Indeed, one cannot expect to get a complete boma in a Gabbra onna dating between one and four years and in an onna of more than four years, one does not expect to get any boma remains. In Kalacha onna which was about fourteen years old, for example, no signs of boma were seen. This shows that Gabbra bomas and their material disappear completely between four and fourteen years.

Besides material culture objects and food remains, products of some Gabbra activities such as hair cutting, and the making of wooden objects were seen. In the former, this was seen in the form of bundles of human hair, and the latter in the form of wood chips, all of them recovered from excavated onna.

Archaeologists excavating past Gabbra settlements and possibly those of related peoples, may expect to get few material culture objects, and most, if not all of them, functionally useless except hearthstones. Unless by accident, Gabbra carry all their functional material culture objects (all that are supposed to be taken to a new settlement site) whenever they shift camp. Perhaps this is because they spend most of their time herding, rather than making new material culture objects.

Of the remains found in an onna, one may expect to get more food remains - mostly bones and koone nuts. Where there are less bones, perhaps they may have been transported elsewhere by scavenging animals. Besides food remains, one may get objects of rubber, metal and few of clay and complete hearths.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

In the first three chapters of this thesis, I have, among other things, described the location of settlements and the different settlement structures found in each, various Gabbra activities with the people responsible, the material culture objects used by the Gabbra and the raw materials employed in their manufacture. Chapter Four deals with the nature and distribution of material culture and economic remains in abandoned settlements. Having seen all these, I now turn to the interpretation and discussion.

This chapter is mainly concerned with the most important point of this thesis which is to test the hypothesis that "activities and activity areas observed in inhabited settlements can be reconstructed for abandoned settlements on the basis of material remains found there". As a point of departure, it is important to ask two pertinent questions:

1. What is the general relationship in occupied olla between material remains and the activities that generate them?

2. Do the material remains found in onna give an accurate indication:

- (a) of what activities took place in the onna and
- (b) where these activities took place?

Before answering these two questions, it is important to consider the conditions that disturb and preserve archaeological sites and material. In Gabbra area, agents that disturb archaeological sites and their contents include wind, water, animals and man.

Wind which often blows very strongly tends to carry away lighter material remains such as wood chips or broken pieces of rope and to scatter them anywhere in or beyond the settlement area. Because this area is windy, it is common to find such material remains sparsely scattered in the settlement. However, windblown sand and dust help to bury and preserve some of them though sometimes they can etch bone into unrecognisable bits.

Water could also concentrate or scatter materials or align them in new orientations. In other cases the rolling of bone with other materials such as sand in

turbulent water currents can reduce it to rounded "pebbles" or totally destroy it. However, due to this area's geographical position which receives very little rainfall (between 150 - 250 mm per annum) running water which is a common phenomenon in other areas as an archaeological site disturbing agent is not found here.

Animals differ in the ways in which they disturb sites and their archaeological material. Some, like goats, cattle, camels and sheep trample on archaeological materials, breaking some, removing some from their original position and helping to bury small objects such as bone splinters - a common phenomenon in this area. Scavenging animals like jackals, hyenas and dogs may scatter bones or remove them completely. All these scavenging animals are found in this area. According to an informant, hyenas and jackals visit settlements for bones and sometimes to prey on sheep and goats, mainly during the night. Perhaps these scavenging animals have contributed greatly to the scatter of bones in Gabbra settlements.

Like hoofed animals, men trample on archaeological materials, removing some from their original position. Sometimes, men through ploughing farmlands disturb and possibly destroy archaeological sites and their contents, but this is not a danger that affects the Gabbra area.

However, through other activities they may cause disturbance. For example children may remove hearthstones from their original positions and scatter them anywhere in the onna.

It is not known to what degree rodents and insects, particularly termites (no termite action observed in area studied), may disturb archaeological sites and material in this area, although in other areas they may play an important role as agencies that affect archaeological sites and their contents.

In this area, preservation of archaeological material is very poor. After about four to ten years, organic materials except bone, cowrie shells and doum palm nuts will possibly have decomposed. Regarding decomposition of bones, Gifford had the following to say:

"... in well drained locations of Koobi Fora-Ileret region, bones of medium and large animals can exist in reasonable states of integrity for over 15 years. Subsurface bones, of course, endure much longer and are in optimal situation for diagenetic changes leading to fossilization, though they may be considerably leached if near or below water table ..." (Gifford 1977:291).

Gabbra area and Koobi Fora-Ileret region may have similar climatic conditions and hence bone may not decompose in the area in less than 15 years. In fact

this place is semi arid/arid and the possibility of bone fossilizing exists.

In this case therefore, only bones, shell and inorganic materials such as stones and metal objects are preserved for long in the archaeological record. It is, therefore, not a surprise to find in an old Gabbra onna hearthstones, bones, potsherds, rubber, broken pieces of glass and metal material remains.

Therefore, in considering the questions posed earlier, the above disturbance and preservation factors must be taken into account.

For the first question, there is a tendency to give a ready and generalised answer that where material culture objects and food remains are found, they are indicators of specific activities and activity areas. Such an idea is based on the assumption that the by-products of any activity and of whatever nature, either in the form of food remains or remains of an activity such as woodcurving, and material culture objects that may be rendered functionless in the process of performing an activity are always left behind in the area where that activity took place. However, depending on the activity some by-products may be left in the activity area whereas others

may be collected and deposited elsewhere. To understand what is left behind in activity areas, it is important to show where and why Gabbra activities are carried out in particular places and not elsewhere and what each may leave behind for the archaeologist.

Human behaviour is not random, it is patterned, and Gabbra activities are no exception. This patterning reflects the organization of activities so that they can be performed with an acceptable degree of efficiency. Such efficiency depends partly on the convenient placing and storage of material culture objects (such as tools and other related materials) required for each activity so that they can be obtained when required. Usually this is near the place where the activity can be performed. Although only some Gabbra activities are performed inside the hut, it is inside the hut that all material culture objects needed for carrying out most of the different activities are found, with the exception of a few objects which may be found outside such as spears, gombosare (food container for dogs) and herding sticks.

Most human activities are interrelated and this calls for a central point from which they can all be co-ordinated. Many Gabbra activities are performed in and near the settlement and particularly in settlement structures.

Although these activities are performed in different settlement structures, the hut serves as the central point from which all activities are co-ordinated. This is not only seen from inhabited settlements visited but also from material remains in abandoned ones.

Although food preparation takes place in and around the hut, most of the cooking takes place in the bada (sitting room) where the cooking fire is located. Besides the location of the cooking fire, one finds other food preparation activities and related material culture objects in this section. Perhaps these take place here because of the location of material culture objects necessary for the carrying out of these activities. But more important is the fact that the Gabbra do not like preparing or cooking their foods in the dink (bedroom) where space would not allow for the location of a hearth anyway. This activity leaves behind food debris: plant foods such as maize, nuts or seeds, beans, coffee and bones. Although bones may be left behind, these are more likely to derive from eating than cooking. However, in the case of maize, beans and coffee remains, these may not only show a food preparation area but also suggest storage.

Depending on whether the area is conducive for the preservation of food remains, archaeologists visiting the

settlements in future will find these remains in the bada, especially around the hearths which survive for long periods as seen in Chapter Four. Although bones are discarded to the front of huts, bone splinters will always be left behind in preparation and eating area.

Butchering, which is a food preparation activity, is carried out outside the huts somewhere in between the huts and the stock enclosures. It is performed here because as the Gabbra say, the animal to be butchered can be reached with ease while in the mona. It may be carried out here because of storage and location of material culture objects needed in performing this task such as knives, though these are easily transported. The nearness to the huts and hence cooking fire may also have a hand in determining where this activity is performed. Instead of making a fire elsewhere, butchers can use the only cooking fire in the hut to roast their share of meat. Except in unusual circumstances, therefore, such as when an animal has died far from the huts or olla, the Gabbra will always butcher their animals in between the huts and the enclosures and especially to the front of the huts.

Gabbra butchery sites lack poles from which the carcass is hung, a phenomenon that is found among such societies as the Kung. In the absence of these,

archaeologists may find it difficult to locate this activity area. Material culture objects used in performing this task, such as knives, whenever they break, are discarded in the debris area. In some cases, intestinal and undigested food remains are left behind in the butchery area, which if done repeatedly might help to alter the vegetation profile of the spot; however, since this area is hot, dry and windy, such remains are easily blown away by the wind.

In all the inhabited settlements visited, bones were found scattered to the front of huts and sometimes extending up to the edges of mona. Because these areas also serve as butcher sites, one may be tempted to conclude that the bones found scattered are indicative of a butchery site. However, according to my informants, these bones were discarded into the debris area but later scattered by dogs.

In the case of milking, one finds the Gabbra performing this task in respective animal enclosures which are located about twenty metres away from the huts. This activity is performed here because the calves and the kids are kept in the main enclosures for adult animals. For security reasons, enclosures for the young animals are usually built inside those for adult animals to allow the Gabbra young men who

usually sleep near or in the enclosures to guard them all at the same time. Those charged with the task of milking therefore, need not go far to bring the calves and the kids, a task that would be time consuming as the number of animals to be milked may be more than ten. (Animals must be milked very early in the morning before 8.00 a.m. to allow them to go foraging while the browse still has dew).

Besides the convenient proximity of enclosures to the huts where the preparation of milk and milk products takes place, custom forbids milking a Gabbra animal outside its mona. Animal dung and sometimes discarded material culture used in performing this task are left behind.

Gabbra bleed their animals so as to get blood to be consumed with milk. Bleeding of animals, like milking, also takes place in the enclosure where the animals are located, lawe (bleeding arrows) and guba (bow) are kept in the hut where the blood is distributed and drunk. The tip of a bleeding arrow or sometimes the whole arrow may indicate to an archaeologist that bleeding of animals was performed in a Gabbra settlement and inside the enclosures. However, bleeding arrows that no longer serve the purposes for which they were made are discarded in the debris area. But the Gabbra take so much care of their lawe that they

are not carelessly handled, and hence hardly any is rendered functionless. The preparation of wooden, leather and basketry material culture takes place in no particular spot within the settlement, though one would normally find them being made in the shade of a nearby tree and behind or in front of the hut depending on where the sun has cast its shadow. In many cases, the making of such material culture takes a long period of time, up to one year in the case of bute which the maker takes with her to work on whenever time allows.

Manufacture may also take place inside the hut, for material culture objects made by both men and women. In the evenings women, for example, may find time to make some of their basketry items, whereas the men may give final touches to some of their wooden objects. Usually, this takes place inside the hut, either in the sitting or bedroom. This leaves very little or no remains which can be of use to an archaeologist. However, the making of wooden material culture objects, especially in the initial stages of manufacture, leaves quite a good number of cut-offs and chips of wood of various sizes. These may sometimes be found either under a nearby shade tree or far away in any place where the raw material was obtained.

According to my informant, a man after getting the right raw material will cut it to the required size and rough out the object on the spot, leaving the rest to be completed in the settlement. In these two places, where the raw material was obtained and under any nearby shade tree, an archaeologist will find cut-offs or chips of wood. None of this however, was seen in all olla visited.

Smithing is an activity not practiced by the Gabbra themselves for reasons that have been considered earlier. However, in the area I visited there was only one tumthu (blacksmith). His activities included making bracelets and rectangular aluminium beads and repairing sufurias. Most of his paraphernalia except the bellows are made of metal and should one of them break or be rendered functionless or lost it might be left where smithing is performed, usually under a tree.

When the tumthu shifts his activity area, he may leave behind something that can help an archaeologist know that this activity was performed here. This might be in the form of manufactured items and those used in the manufacturing process such as files, hammers, angle irons and others, and perhaps other metal pieces that remain as cut-offs from the preparation of metal material culture

objects. However, blacksmiths are very meticulous regarding the use of their raw materials and tools. Indeed, they must make sure that they use even the smallest pieces so that few cut-offs and the very smallest pieces may be left, which archaeologists visiting this place in future may find; although they may not deduce that the smith was not a Gabbra.

At the time I visited one blacksmith in October 1980, he had had only one activity area and therefore, I cannot say with any certainty what he might leave behind when he shifts his activity area to a new site. However, ash and charcoal pieces and the stones that form and support the hearth may be left alongside small useless pieces of metal and metal cut-offs. Useful objects no doubt will always be taken to a new activity area.

Smithing activity areas are located under a tree in a settlement. Here, the tumthu can not only shade himself and his furnace from the scorching sun, but also can perform his work better than when inside a hut or house. Such an area is far enough from the huts to avoid disturbance and distraction from other people performing other chores. Besides, according to my informant, custom forbids the forging and making of iron or metal objects inside a hut.

Skin drying is a task performed by women inside goat/sheep or cattle enclosures, and on very rare occasions outside but close by. The whole process right up to the time the skin dries takes only half a day, so that by evening it will be ready. Carrying out this task in animal enclosures is a necessary precaution to keep off the animals that stray home or those coming home from grazing from trampling on the skins before they dry.

The Gabbra do not dry skins on a wooden framework, but rather stretch them on the ground with wooden pegs. Small holes are made around the edge of the skin and sharp wooden pegs are driven through these holes and firmly fixed in the ground. When the skin dries all these pegs are removed and thrown into the debris area. Archaeologists visiting and excavating the area will find evidence of this activity, so long as the sticks survive.

Hair cutting or shaving is an activity that is usually carried out at the back and sides of a Gabbra hut. When this has been accomplished, the hair is buried anywhere near or within the spot where this activity took place. It is performed here perhaps because it is not far from where the equipment needed for this task is kept, i.e. in the hut. Apart from the hair cutting and shaving which was carried out here, no material culture objects related

to this activity such as razor blades, knives, arrows (if the Gabbra use these for shaving) are left behind. In fact material culture objects related to and used for this purpose, whenever they cease serving the purposes for which they were made, are discarded in the debris area.

In terms of material culture, one might have expected to find the tools used in the preparation of wooden objects, the dakara, oto, koto, and possibly any other sharp informal objects in places where they were used. But this is not the case, for such material culture objects no longer serving the purposes for which they were made, are then discarded in the debris area. It is very unlikely for these three implements to be found by archaeologists after the settlements have been abandoned, for they form a Gabbra tool kit which is particularly cared for. Those left behind must have been broken, otherwise none are likely to be lost by accidents.

It should not be forgotten that sharp pointed or edged material culture objects such as dakara, oto, koto, arrowheads, and awls when no longer serving the purposes for which they were made, are not discarded at random. This is because they pose a danger to people and must therefore be discarded in the debris area.

Bone splinters too are dangerous and like sharp pointed or edged material culture objects, can inflict injury on people's feet and hence are discarded in the debris area as well, although a few will always be left around cooking fires or hearths. Thus archaeologists excavating a Gabbra debris area may find these objects though some may be found in other places.

An important point that should be understood about Gabbra activities is that not all of them leave something useful to the archaeologist either in the form of by-products or sometimes broken material culture objects. Very many activities will leave no traces, e.g. regular milking, and of traces that are left, very many will not survive for a significant length of time.

Thus although material remains doubtless are manifestations of activities,

1. they may not indicate accurately where the activity was carried out.
2. very many activities will leave no traces; e.g. milking could be carried out 100 times and leave no material evidence behind.

3. of the traces that are left, very few will survive for any significant length of time.

From this therefore, it should be understood that many activities take place in occupied settlements yet these may not all be reconstructed from the material remains they generate. This is more so after the settlement has been abandoned for quite a long time. Having seen all these I now turn to the second question.

The second question can be answered by looking at where material remains were found in abandoned settlements. Looking back at Chapter Four, one can see the kind of material remains: food debris, functionless material culture objects, by-products of material culture production, bundles of human and animal hair, as well as where each was located in the onna.

The remains of beans, bone splinters, koone nuts and a coffee bean found scattered in the sitting room, are indicative of one activity that took place here - that is food preparation and eating. The presence of complete and intact hearths found in association with the food debris confirms this as a food preparation and eating area.

The presence of beans and a coffee bean could as well be interpreted as indicating a storage area, but this was not observed in inhabited settlements.

In all the onna visited, only one gorf was found and this was inside a boma. Though this was a single item, it shows the kind of activity it was used for and also the activity area. Ethnographically the same is discarded inside the animal (camel) enclosure which serves as a milking activity area. Hence, this was a good example of a material culture object found in an abandoned settlement that is indicative of what and where an activity was performed.

Four bundles of human hair were found in excavated onna and where they were found coincided with the places where the Gabbra cut and bury their hair, thus showing the kind of activity and where performed in the settlement. Perhaps wind, animals or any other archaeological site disturbing agent was responsible for their removal from where they had been buried originally. In such cases therefore, material remains indicate the activity but not always the spot where it was performed.

Among the excavated materials were pieces of rope (sisal and skin) which may have been part of the ropes

the Gabbra use for various jobs requiring the use of the same. Pieces of rope are light and hence may be easily disturbed by wind and animals and thus scattered in huts and settlements generally. Coupled with this is the fact that ethnographically, the Gabbra use few types of rope to serve many diverse purposes and whenever these break they are discarded anywhere including the debris area and not necessarily in the activity area - thus making it hard to identify not only the specific activity but also where the activity was carried out. Besides, the society's activities requiring the use of rope are performed in no particular spots. Because of this therefore, broken ropes wherever found in an onna, are not indicative of a specific activity or activity area. Therefore, one is left with a wide range of possibilities for which rope was used rather than a specific task.

The possibility that rope fragments found may indicate where ropes were manufactured may be rejected since remains of sisal raw-materials were lacking and furthermore these pieces were old and showed signs of usage.

In Gabbra onna were found several metal objects such as aluminium beads, broken axeheads, iron rod, and a twisted copper wire. These suggest three things: either

they they were discarded during the process of manufacture or when no longer serving the purposes for which they were made, or accidentally lost. Regarding the former, metal objects found showed signs of use, and furthermore they were found in different areas. Lack of by-products of manufacture associated together suggests that these metal objects were not discarded during the process of manufacture. This is further supported by the fact that the preparation of metal objects is performed outside the olla under a tree and not in the hut where the metal objects were found. It is more likely that most of these objects were discarded when no longer serving the purposes for which they were made. This is further supported by the fact that most of them except the aluminium beads, which must have been accidentally lost, were worn out, especially in the case of the blunt and broken axehead. Though some of these such as the dakara are indicative of an activity, they do not show the specific area in which this was carried out. The dakara was found in what was once a hut, which may reasonably be interpreted as the place where it was kept when not in use.

Like the dakara, the metal rod and the copper wire do not show the purposes for which they were used, nor do the positions in which they were found indicate

activity areas, though they were found in what was once a hut. This is complicated further when ethnographically the society do not make use of copper wire. The case of the iron rod is different in that this was possibly used to make awls. Without any material remains found in association with them, it is hard to know the activity or activities these objects served and the particular spot where performed. In all, metal objects found in onna, like most Gabbra material culture remains are neither indicative of activities in which they were used nor particular spots where they are likely to have been used.

It should be noted that, since Gabbra metal objects are rarely discarded, coupled with the fact that they themselves do not make them, archaeologists excavating abandoned Gabbra settlements may expect to find few objects of metal. However, because metal objects are likely to be preserved for a long time in the archaeological record, these may be found any time an onna is excavated.

The three microlithic stone tools found are enigmatic in that no clue to their use is provided by ethnographic observation. Thus we do not know what activity they represent, if any, or even if they belonged to the Gabbra inhabitants of the onna.

The pieces of rubber found do indicate the remaking of tyre sandals for young children and may indicate where this activity was carried out although there is no particular place for it in occupied olla. However, in the absence of ethnographic observations, anyone finding pieces of rubber in Gabbra onna might be unable to tell what specific activity they served. These pieces of rubber, like other material culture objects foreign to the society, suggest trade contacts.

Pieces of wood chips were recovered from excavated onna but none from areas under nearby trees where the Gabbra normally prepare their wooden artifacts. As a result, one may be tempted to conclude that they resulted from the cutting of firewood. But from observations in inhabited settlements, it was found that Gabbra women collect small pieces of dead wood for making fire and hardly cut fresh wood, unless for a different purpose altogether.

These pieces suggest therefore that wood carving may sometimes be carried out in other places including the hut.

Like any other vegetal material, wooden chips are unlikely to be preserved unless the area is conducive,

which Gabbra land is not. They will either rot or be blown away by the wind, so that archaeologists excavating a Gabbra onna may or may not get these remains depending on how old it is.

Broken pieces of glass without any trace of utilization give no indication of the activities they were used for, if any. If these were in use, then one would expect to find them in places or areas where wooden artifacts are made, which is usually under a tree; though they may also be used elsewhere to scrape smooth some of the wooden artifacts the Gabbra make. Broken pieces of glass have been observed to be used by the Turkana (Robbins 1973) for scraping smooth some of their wooden material culture objects, a phenomenon not observed among the Gabbra.

Other material culture remains recovered include ergams (roots), fito (incense in the form of bark and roots), spike of comb?, cowrie shells, gastropods, plastic sheet and paper. These remains were found in different places in excavated Gabbra onna. On the basis of archaeology alone, none of these remains shows what specific activity took place and where. Even from ethnographic observations made in inhabited settlements, these material remains were not seen to be regularly used in any particular spot. Indeed some such as plastic paper were not seen. However, cowrie shells were seen in the form of decorations for the seepan

(see Chapter Three).

In all the onna visited, including Kalacha which was about fourteen years old (at the time of the visit), the hearths were found intact and in most cases complete with three large stones and a smaller one called lubu in between two of them. These hearths, if undisturbed can stay for any length of time and hence are good indicators of where settlements and particularly huts once stood. Archaeologists should find them whenever they excavate a Gabbra onna. From the hearths they can also tell the number of huts that there were in a particular onna.

In all, although material remains found in onna doubtless are manifestations of activities that generated them,

1. only in few cases were they specifically indicative of what and where activities took place in the settlement.
2. Some of them were found to be diagnostic of general activities performed in the settlement yet silent on specific activities and activity areas.

From the above, one can see that many, if not all Gabbra activities and activity areas observed in olla (inhabited settlements), can hardly be reconstructed from the remains found in onna after even only a few years. In fact on the basis of archaeology alone, reconstruction of the same is quite impossible. This is mainly due to reasons advanced earlier in this chapter.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown inter-alia the reasons why Gabbra activities are performed in particular places and not elsewhere. Reasons for this are varied. They include the nearness of many activity areas to the hut (even inside it) - the central point from which all activities are co-ordinated; nearness to the other related activity areas such as stock enclosures; the nearness to the point in which material culture objects needed in performing an activity are stored: and possibly social and cultural taboos which prohibit or dictate the location of certain activities in particular parts of the settlement. Each of these or a combination of all of them give us the pattern of Gabbra activities and hence human behaviour.

Although each of the activities mentioned above may leave something behind which may be of help to an archaeologist in reconstructing and understanding the way of life of the Gabbra, this is only in general terms, for

whatever remains these activities generate and leave behind do not always give an accurate picture of all activities and activity areas.

Not all these activities have the same or similar archaeological visibility. For some such as food preparation and eating it is quite high as compared to others such as carving a wooden bell or spear shaft for which it is extremely low. This depends mostly on how often the activity generally occurs and the number of people in the settlement or group performing it and also what by-products it generates. Generally, subsistence activities as compared to manufacturing have a high archaeological visibility. This may be because the former occur more regularly and take place in all settlements.

Whatever these activities leave behind in terms of material remains such as hearths, enclosures, dung, firewood, food debris, ornaments, pieces of old attire, to name but a few examples, does serve to show the spatial organization of Gabbra settlements. This is more so in cases where material culture items are discarded in activity areas. But this must not be taken to mean that this is possible for all abandoned settlements. Due to

preservation factors and other agencies that disturb archaeological sites and their contents, which have been mentioned earlier, only metal, shell, potsherds, glass, rubber, cowrie shells, doum palm nuts, and bone may be found in onna that are more than fourteen or so years old, in which case other organic materials will have disappeared. As a result, therefore, it is hard to reconstruct activities and activity areas in all Gabbra onna except in the case of newly abandoned ones.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The stated purpose of this study was to see how far, is it possible to reconstruct present or very recent Gabbra activities on the basis of abandoned materials - and hence how this might contribute to the understanding of the past behaviour of pastoral communities from archaeological remains.

In this study, two main sources of data were used: observation of material culture found in both olla and onna and laboratory analysis of excavated material which included food remains, both plant and animal.

From the evidence provided by this study, the following observations can be made about the society's material culture in relation to:-

1. Their distribution in settlements
2. The makers
3. Raw-materials
4. Variability, forms and functions
5. Economy/Subsistence.

1. Distribution in Settlements

Available data reveals that Gabbra material culture¹ is found in settlement structures and especially within huts, a point that confirms them as the central points from which all activities are co-ordinated. Besides, huts also serve as storage areas for some items.

Inside the huts, the area is divided into different sections, the dink and bada, with each material culture item having its own location for both safe keeping and easy access to respective activity areas - a pattern that was observed in all olla and huts visited. However, some of them may be found outside but by the sides of the huts.

From this ethnoarchaeological study, the Gabbra have all material culture items requisite for their day to day use in or near huts.* The absence of some items in olla and huts visited may be explained by the fact that at the time of my visit they had been taken for use elsewhere. According to my informants, some material culture items such as goda, gorf, soror, bleeding arrows, herding sticks and possibly iron, may have been taken to fora (see the

* It is assumed that material culture objects that may be found in a Gabbra hut are those shown in the inventory which are about 66 items - although there may be slightly more than this.

meaning of fora in Chapter Two) yet others such as the bute, okhole, heath alqi and guraj may have been taken to the wells.

Depending on where an activity is performed (whether inside the hut, animal enclosures etc), some material culture items that break in the process of being used may be left in the place where they were used, while others are discarded in the debris area. In each case, if they remain undisturbed they may be found by archaeologists visiting the area in the future. However, in abandoned settlements visited, seldom were such items found in probable activity areas. The majority, if not all of them, were found scattered in onna - a phenomenon that is attributed to archaeological site disturbing agents (wind, animals and man), thus rendering the reconstruction of specific activities and activity areas quite impossible.

Although material culture remains are not sufficient to show the pattern and distribution of all activities in the settlements, they may with the help of occasional by-products of some activities give a general, albeit incomplete, spatial organization of Gabbra settlements. While some reconstruction of activities in newly abandoned onna may thus be possible, in the case of very old onna

almost all organic material remains will have disappeared leaving inorganic ones behind, from which not much will be gleaned. This will therefore prove an obstacle to an archaeologist who may want to answer basic questions regarding the spatial organization of Gabbra settlements and by extension that of any other pastoral society. However, the relatively permanent hearthstones will at least indicate the presence and distribution of hut structures.

2. Division of Labour

The preparation and manufacture of material culture among the Gabbra is based on different sexes. Females make all woven, skin and fibrous items and a few of wood. Tasks such as the preparation and scraping of hides are done by women and tools associated with it if found in the archaeological record would be indicative of female presence. This contrasts with the practice of some Ethiopian tribes where this task is carried out by men (Gallagher 1971).

The males procure raw materials for the production of all wooden material culture items (except the kadabhe and chanchal which are made by women); gaathi skin rope,

all metal implements and ornaments. Objects of metal are not made by the Gabbra but by Konso blacksmiths and any of them including the tools associated with their production if found in the archaeological record should be interpreted as indicative of the latter not the former.

Few material culture objects made by adult members of both sexes and none made by the young enter the archaeological record. Those that do, will not survive for any significant length of time except hearthstones, metal implements and ornaments, objects of clay and stone. Very little of the society's division of labour may be inferred from archaeological remains and this may also be said of other pastoral societies not only in the past but also in the present.

3. Raw Materials

Raw materials the Gabbra use in the manufacture of material culture are vegetal: (wood, bark, roots, leaves and fibres); animal: (skin, horn, sinews and possibly bones); metal:(aluminium, iron and copper), rubber (in the form of tyre sandals); clay and finally stone. These are obtained not only from within settlements but also from very distant sources.

By simple calculation, 81.8% of Gabbra material culture items are made from organic raw materials, 7.6% from inorganic and the other 10.6% from both inorganic and organic materials, such as spears, arrows etc., which have one part metal and one part wood. It is striking that 81.8% of the items consist of perishable materials. But if conditions are conducive for their preservation, some of these can be found by archaeologists visiting the area more than fifteen years after an olla has been abandoned.

The remaining 18.2% partly or wholly of inorganic materials (metal and stone), will survive in the archaeological record for a longer time and archaeologists visiting this area anytime in the future will no doubt find them. The Gabbra like the Kung however, care meticulously for their iron tools. In excavations of abandoned settlements, few metal objects were found and all of them functionless. A similar phenomenon was also observed among the Botswana Bushmen (Ebert 1979) thus showing us that functional tools are rarely found in the archaeological record. It is therefore important to understand that the most used, most "important" or popular tool types may be the least frequently found in the situation of loss or discard. The same is possibly true of other pastoral societies.

Objects of clay, plastic paper and glass are conspicuously absent from the inventory of Gabbra material culture observed in inhabited settlements. However, 16 undecorated potsherds, 15 pieces of glass (12 pieces of bottle glass, 2 broken and 1 complete glass beads) and 3 pieces of plastic paper were found in onna. Regarding potsherds, these are indications of the use of pottery which has been progressively replaced by modern cooking pans. Like objects made of metal, those of clay are not made by the Gabbra, but obtained from Konso and Watta societies through exchange, trade or as gifts to the Gabbra. Although the presence of potsherds in Gabbra onna would suggest to an archaeologist that pots may have been made and used by the Gabbra, ethnographic observations show otherwise.

It is possible that objects of glass and plastic are slowly finding their way into the area. This is supported by the fact that few were found in recently abandoned settlements and none in very old onna. Perhaps this may be due to their entrance into the area in relatively recent times. That they are still rare is shown by the fact that they were not observed in the sample of occupied olla examined.

4. Variability, forms and functions

Variation in artifacts is a result of differences in techniques of manufacture and design concepts. These dimensions can further be divided into morphological and decorative aspects. Gabbra artifact classes display similar techniques of manufacture and morphology despite the fact that they were made by people living in different settlements.

Sometimes, variations in size displayed by a similar class of artifacts may be dictated by the purpose for which they were made. However, since all serve similar functions in the present case, variation may be due to the makers personal preference and design concepts rather than function. Besides, the nature, type and sizes of raw materials may also have played an important role in determining sizes and morphology of artifacts, especially in the case of wooden objects such as stools. The extent to which the number or size of a family or herd affects the size of items, for example cooking pots in the case of the former and milking bowls or storage vessels in the case of the latter, is not known. However, there is a possibility that the size of a family or herd may affect the number of items required rather than their size.

Gabbara material culture lacks decorative motifs which might provide variety within artifact classes. Because of this, no difference was seen between material culture items of one olla and that of another. Archaeologists excavating Gabbara settlements will therefore find little difference within artifacts types.

5. Economy/Subsistence

Gabbara material culture is marked by a conspicuous absence of items or objects related to plant cultivation. Coupled with this is the absence of plant food remains except a coffee bean, a bean seed and koone nuts. Except for koone nuts which were found in significant numbers, the rest were very rare and hence cannot show whether they are produced in Gabbara area. None of the excavated material culture objects shows the society's dependence on animal foods - milk and meat. However, ethnographic observation does so. This may also be the case with other pastoral societies.

Although the Gabbara depend on meat (as seen from excavated bones), bones from excavated onna were all of domestic stock and would suggest that they never eat meat from wild animals, which is confirmed by ethnographic

sources. Archaeologists excavating Gabbra settlements will find bones belonging to sheep, goats and large stock and none of any wild animals.

Animal foods the society uses are occasionally supplemented by plant foods, mainly koone (Doum Palm) nuts which were seen in both inhabited and abandoned settlements visited. The small numbers of them is a clear manifestation of the society's low dependence on them. In comparison with animal foods, they seem to play a minor role in Gabbra diet both in the past and present. Archaeological excavations of past Gabbra settlements should thus yield few nuts because this has not been a major source of food for the society, being taken normally as a snack. However, they are taken as a famine food so their presence in significant numbers could suggest the existence of drought at the time.

Few imperishable objects that are likely to enter the archaeological record would provide little evidence as to the type of economy the makers practised. Preservation of perishable materials in specially favourable conditions could be expected to provide a more complete picture.

Activities

Observations made in Gabbra settlements showed very many activities and activity areas along with traditional material culture items the society employs in carrying out their day to day functions. Yet an attempt to reconstruct the same on the basis of the remains found in abandoned settlements yields very little. This is mainly because the majority of the activities leave no traces either in the form of by-products or material culture items that break in the process of being used, despite the number of times these activities are carried out in the settlements.

As regards the few traces left behind by some activities, not all of them will last long in the archaeological record - particularly organic materials which perish very quickly. Besides, some of them may be deposited elsewhere whence archaeological site disturbing agents, animals, wind and man, help to remove them further from activity areas. With no material culture items nor by-products to show activities and activity areas, it therefore becomes quite impossible for an archaeologist to reconstruct a fairly complete picture of Gabbra behaviour in the past.

In fact, what can be reconstructed from the few remains, mainly inorganic such as hearthstones, metal

implements and ornaments and a few organic materials such as koone nuts and bones , is still very little.

In all onna (both recent and old) visited, hearths were found to be intact (except in one case where not all heathstones were found) with three stones and lubu. From this, one can reconstruct the number and position of households a settlement contained. Besides, they also show one activity area that for food preparation - but this may not last long unless the area is conducive to bone preservation.

Although the number of households can be determined, their compositions cannot. No material culture items and structures that would have otherwise indicated the number of people a hut contained were found. Besides, ethnographically, it was observed that not everyone in a Gabbra family has a structure or material culture item which he/she can be identified with. Therefore, this apparent lack of indicators of household composition will merely lead an archaeologist to assume a family size of any number.

From the above, it may be concluded that it is not possible for one to reconstruct the total behaviour of a society from material remains, unless it is backed by

ethnoarchaeological data. Such data must pay special attention to each minute detail of a society's material culture, the kind of associations of artifacts and the multiple uses of some of them, and any other relevant information, all of which are very invaluable towards the interpretation of material remains that may be found.

Although the study shows serious limitations of the archaeological record in documenting the full range or even a small percentage of the activities which actually took place, this is not peculiar to Gabbra sites. It applies in varying degrees to all archaeological sites, though the case of nomadic pastoralists with little imperishable material culture must represent one of the lowest levels of potential for archaeological reconstruction.

Besides the archaeological conclusions this thesis has come up with, it has also given some invaluable ethnographical information in documenting the material culture, settlement patterns and activities which may also be of use to archaeologists indirectly in suggesting the possible range of activities not represented in the archaeological record. However, it may be borne in mind that the Gabbra represent only one form of specialised

nomadic pastoral life adapted to a particularly harsh environment. Thus direct or indirect comparisons with archaeological manifestations which appear to represent more settled communities or different ecological adaptations must be made with considerable caution.

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