

## The migration of the Tarke to Megareh;

How they came, and who were already there; the story

Contributed by Aida Kidane, 26 Sep 2003

This is from the Sundstrom collections, originally in Tigre language. Sundstrom was a Swedish missionary stationed in Geleb in the 1890s and collected many writings from the people. The Tigre texts were translated to me to Tigrina by Ato Gebru Kifle 1998. I have translated it to English as direct as possible, as some sayings have meanings not easy to understand now. Tarke from Lasta quarreled with his people. He gathered his children, animals and those wanting to go with him, and settled in a place called WegeriKo, and holding land stayed there for some years. And from there he settled in a place called Aagammat. After this, the children of Tarke made an agreement that they would search for better lands in different directions, and they set off. Their names are Hada, Lemechellai, Begedai, Satifai, Gebru, and Debru. Gebru, Debru and Hada went to Barka direction. Satifa, Begedai and Lemechelle went to Anseba direction. Then, Satifa went through Shelfa direction and crossed to Musha. Lemechelle and Begedai roamed the area from Ekel Sebnakhu until Jar Gengini Kum, and also searched until Hashela.

After this, Satifai, Lemechellei, and Begedai met and sat in council. Satifai said I have got a place to my liking and will settle there. Lemechellai and Begedai said that the areas they roamed was satisfactory and we shall divide it between us. Begedai settled in the area between Jar Genjini Kum until Hashela, and the rest of the area upwards Lemechellai settled in. And now what shall we do with our brothers in Barka, they said to each other. They decided to deceive them saying 'If they ask us how we found the lands, we will say the land is worthless. And when they start loading their oxen, let us load Kinab (oxen disliking loading) oxen and we will say 'the oxen are not obeying us, go forward and we will come after you. "And when they have gone, we will change direction to Anseba." They agreed.

The next morning the Barka group came and asked the Anseba group and asked them how the land was. The Anseba group answered that the land was not commodious. They in turn asked the Barka group what they saw. They answered the land was plenty and good. "Let us all go down to Barka together" they agreed and started loading their oxen. Lemechellai and Begedai as agreed earlier loaded kinab oxen and were delayed that Gebru, Debru and Hada asked why they were not starting the journey. They replied the oxen were not obeying them said, "you proceed and we will come behind you." The Barka group went their way. From the other group, Lemechellai settled in Anseba. Begedai settled his Tabot in Shareki. Satifai crossed to Musha and built their nahsi homes. (Nahsi. Huts-built of stones and grass as roof) Of the Barka group, Hada and his followers settled in Tsada Haga. Gebru and Debru agreed that Debru moved to the left and settled in Adirba, and Gebru went up to Megareh where a few Kelew lived and he settled amongst them. Hada moved from Tsada Haga and settled in Demba? But the place did not accomodate him and all his animals perished that he moved to his brother Debru in Adirba and lived there for a long time. But tigers were disturbing them that he

moved back to Tsada Haga. Later on he moved to Megareh. The sons of Tarke had horses that Hada and Gebru in their horsebacks raided cattle from Algedenai and took them home. Those at home saw that there were cattle and raided cattle like them. Later on the Mensa raided these cattle and then the Mensa returned to their homeland.

Afterwards, the sons of Hada decided to raid their uncle Begedai and raided Shareki and killed Shum Kertema and they stole away the Tabot and placed it in Megareh.

Then, Hada got old and weak. One day while sitting in the community, a girl passed by him. She was a girl of Sequin tribe. He glanced and looked at her. His son was sitting by him and said "Why did you look at her Father" Hada answered, "Does the eye die too?" The son asked if he wanted to marry her. Hada said she would bear him a son who will lead a river.

Hada's son went to the girl's father and asked him for her hand. Her father asked for whom, and the son said to his father. The girl's father said Hada needs not only a girl, but a man (to care for him) and that he was not the girl's age to be a husband. Hada's son got angry and threatened the father and went away. Because of this the girl's parents were saddened. The girl noticed them and asked her mother why they were sad. The girl said why they were so disturbed by this. The girl said "Betroth me to him, maybe I was meant to him. But then my father has to obey to what I ask of him." And as agreed she was betrothed to Hada.

When her wedding day approached, she told her father to present her many Tenkebet (mats), and "when 40 days of marriage has passed, bring me two lekota (goat hide bag) honey, two lekota butter, a sterile cow, grounded grain, and a cooking utensil. And when these are finished, you will bring me the same." The father promised to fulfill these and she got married. After the 40 days of wedding had passed, she ordered a large mat hut (Ablo, newly married live there for some days) and they built it. Her father brought all he had promised her. She ordered one lekota of honey and butter brought out and the cow slaughtered. Half the cow meat was cut into pieces and dried out. Some meat parts were cooked to eat. The rest were cut in long pieces and boiled. After all was prepared, she first fed him from the zilzil (long cut pieces of meat) and then gave him Mes (honey drink). After the long meat and Mes were finished, she made Mes again and gave it to him, and fed him from the Fusso meat (The meat is boiled lightly, cut into pieces, and then dried and grounded). After the Fusso meat was finished, she gave him from the dried meat and Mes. This man began to look strong and younger. When what she had finished, her father brought her the same again. And this girl made him strong as before. Therefore Hada invited his father's people to a feast. He was also seen visiting here and there. The girl became pregnant and had a boy, which Hada named Tes-ein. And the name means a child born in old age. She had a second son who was named Ekub-en, and then a third son was born, and Hada named him Berhanu (his light). He gave him this name for having seen light near his dying time. After these three sons were born, Hada died. Those sons born of the girl from Sequin tribe were thus called Seqeneiti people, after their mother's tribe, and are still called so.

After this, the first and second group of Hada's sons quarreled and fought. The Seqeneiti were stronger and won staying in Megareh while the others started living in Adirba. And later they were reconciled. Those who had crossed to Adirba returned to Hashela. Tes-en and Berhanu were farming there. Tes-en's farm did not yield where Berhanu's was plentiful and after harvesting Berhanu used to send Tes-en grain in Aybet (weight). When people asked Tes-en if he had grain, he said thanks to my brother Abharis (Berhanu) I have, even if I did not get good harvest. Hebtoi son of Hada was born from the first wife. His sons are Asekih, Gedlom, Ekubas, and Ekuba Kristos. Asekeh was a strong man and good judge, and rich that even his dogs had Heromai (identifying marks) tied on their necks. Tes-en son of Hada had sons Hezbai and Hankil. Hankil had Weri-seb, and Hezbai had Gered. Gered's son was Atoshim who had Shebot who had Gered and Jemi?. Gered had Hizbai and Atoshim. And Atoshim had Ejel. Idris, Shebot, Gehir, and Hashel. And Hezbai had Abrehe, Haris, Isaak, Fekak, and Malek. From the sons of Tarke, Bege dai held to his land. Gebru too held to his land. But Satifa who had crossed to Musha has become extinct that his brothers divided his land among themselves.

At the land of Lemechelli was a water well (lla) where the cattle Ber'ed (kind of cattle) were born as Denbay (without horns). The neighboring villages wanted to drink from that well and were forbidden by them that they fought and some were killed. From that day on, the well became dry. This way the sons of Tarke became plenty and became holders of the land.

Fn. Ato Gebru adds the first sons of Hada as Sa'r Amba as the first, and Afrehom from another woman. In another book it states that Hada and group were stricken by Malaria in Barka land. And that is where Hada learnt of the aristocrat and serf system. *This should not be taken as wholly correct history.*