

# **Sociolinguistic Survey Report on the Amuru Area of Ethiopia**

**Written by K. Wedekind**

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## 1. A Note on Amuru

This is a report on a very short survey trip to the Amuru area, carried out May 12–13, 1995. The main purposes of this trip were (a) to find out whether there are any residents in the Amuru area whose mother tongue is Amuru, and (b) to assess the distribution of languages which are being used in that administrative area at present. We gratefully acknowledge the help given by the staff of the Amuru district administrative office of Eastern Wellegga, and the secondary school staff—among these, especially Beyene Negesa, Derese Olana, Gibrile Yassin, Banti Hordofa, and Tesfaye Aregie.

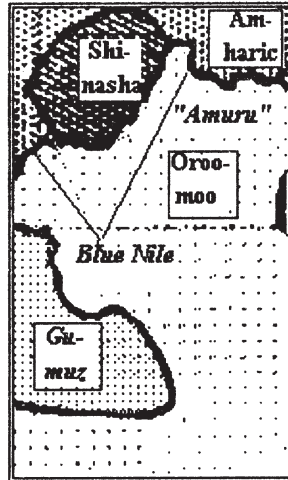
### 1.1 The Area

The Amuru Wereda is part of the fertile Horo-nna Gudru Awraja in the central northern section of Welegga. The Blue Nile is the northern boundary; and the Finchaa dam with its neighboring swamps are at its southern boundary. During the dry season, the Amuru Wereda is accessible from Bako by a gravel road, and recently the area has also become accessible from the NW, as a small road branches off the new main road which crosses the Blue Nile between Bure and Neqemte.

Amuru town, which on some maps is also identified as Fuliya, has recently been renamed as Oberra (apparently in order to avoid confusion with the Wereda Amuru of which it is the administrative center). According to elder residents of Amuru town, the name is derived from the name of an influential citizen called Amuru who, several generations ago, came to settle in this area. As the Amuru descendants grew in number and spread over a larger area, their name became the name of the entire area where they had settled.

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<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this report appeared in Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia (S.L.L.E.) Linguistic Report 29, May 1995. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Summer Institute of Linguistics.



Map I

### The Amuru Wereda

in relation to languages north and south of the Blue Nile

#### 1.2 Languages spoken in Amuru

At present, three languages are predominantly used in the Amuru area: Oromo, Amharic and occasionally, Beni Shangul (Berta). Gumuz people, although many of them live closer to Amuru than the Beni Shangul do, hardly seem to travel as far northeast as Amuru Wereda.

- Oromo clearly is the language with the largest number of mother tongue speakers in the Amuru area.
- Amharic, although it is only the second language for most of the residents, has several functions besides the fact that it is taught at school: it serves as the language of wider communication with certain visitors (those from nearby Gojjam, health officials, dam project staff, etc.).
- Berta is the third language in this Wereda, because of the fact that visitors from the Assosa area of region 6 will occasionally come to this Wereda.
- Members of a Nilotic group traditionally called Kaza come to the Amuru market regularly.
- Concerning Amuru: From interviews with various groups, including staff of the Amuru administration, staff of the secondary school, various children, and several officials as well as residents who were

born in the Amuru area, it became clear that the languages spoken in Amuru do not include a language called Amuru. Nor is any dialect of Boro (Shinasha) spoken in this area. This is worth mentioning, since Wombera, the area with the most conservative dialect of Boro, is located just across the Blue Nile. (Boro or Shinasha is the language whose dialect cluster supposedly includes Amuru.)

## **2. Sources and Comparison of Word Lists**

### **2.1 Fleming's Amuru and the Boro of today**

The following chart collates those data which were listed by Harold Fleming (handwritten by him in the 1960s) with today's Shinasha (Boro) as recorded in Wombera and Bulen in 1995 in the framework of the S.L.L.E. survey.

Fleming's data are taken from his manuscript of West Cushitic languages which soon were to be called Omotic by him (names in H. Fleming's spelling: Boro, Amuru, Anfillo, Kafa, Bambeshi, Sezo, Hozo, Janjero, Gimira, Chara, Koyra, Hararo Dorze, Malo, Oyda, Male, Basketto, Na'o, Shako, Maji, Karo, Hamra-Banna, Bako, Ubamer, Galila, and Dime). In a recent telephone conversation on the question of Amuru (Wedekind, Boston, May 1995), H. Fleming said that with relation to his Amuru data of the 1960s, possibly from Abbadie in the 1840s, it was Ato Sambato Aaga who then lived at Didessa who had acted as informant or go-between. He also said he recalled that Amuru must have been a variety of Shinasha or, in his words: "a Shinasha language". (Sambato Aaga actually is a mother tongue speaker of Bambesi-Mao and lives in Asosa as a representative of the Mao people. Cf. S.L.L.E. Reports 12 and 15 for details.) In the word lists below, the Shinasha (Boro) data have been selected from S.L.L.E. word lists published earlier. A comparison with recent data of Boro shows that the alleged Amuru would have been a dialect of Boro (Shinasha): There are about 65 look-alikes or cognates in a list of 76 comparable words—this is close to 85% of the Swadesh list.

## 3. The Word Lists

English	Amuru	Boro I	Boro II of Bulen	Boro III of Wombera
<i>all</i>	-		ʔùn:ó	ʔùn:ó[ni]
<i>ashes</i>	-	tulla	tùl:à	tùl:à
<i>bark N</i>	-	fe:k'a	k'ò:k'írá	k'ò:k'írà
<i>belly</i>	matʃɔ	ma:tʃ'a	mà:tʃ'à	mà:tʃ'à
<i>big</i>	eno	e'nɔ	ʔè:nà	ʔè:nà
<i>bird</i>	káffa	kafa	kàfà	kàfá
<i>bite</i>	-	-	ʃà:s'íré	sà:s'íré
<i>black</i>	áko	-	ʔà:k'à	ʔà:k'à
<i>blood</i>	tʃamtʃo	-	t'êtsà	s'ás'à
<i>bone</i>	makketʃɔ	mek'í-ts'a	màks'à	màks'à
<i>breast</i>	-	t'a:ts'a	t'á:tsà	s'á:tsà
<i>burn</i>	at:	mits'	mìs'íré	mìs'íré
<i>claw</i>	-	t'ungutsa	t'ɪŋgu[t]sà	s'ɪŋgú[t]sà
<i>clay</i>	-	-	ðɛŋgá	ʃàlá
<i>clothing</i>	-	-	ʃè:m:á	tàhà
<i>cloud</i>	dámno	daw-na	k'ùwà	dà <sup>w</sup> ná
<i>cold</i>	ákwa	ak'a	ʔà:k'á	ʔà:k'á
<i>come</i>	wa-f	-	wà: <sup>h</sup> rè	wà:rè
<i>die</i>	kit-	k'ír <sup>h</sup>	k'ír <sup>h</sup> íré	k'íríré
<i>dog</i>	káno	kana/kana	kàn:à	kàn:à
<i>drink</i>	wɪ	uwi/uʃ	ʔúʃíré	ʔúʃíré
<i>dry</i>	ʃúko	ʃu:nk'a	ʃù:k'à	ʃù:k[']à
<i>ear</i>	wádʒo \ detʃo	wa:za	wá:zà	wá:zà
<i>eat</i>	mu-m	m-a/mɔ	máháré	má:rè
<i>egg</i>	[ankulálo]	k'e:ts'a	k'é:tsà	bà: k'é:sá
<i>eye</i>	ábo	a:w-ɔ/a:w-a	ʔá:wà	ʔá:wà
<i>eyebrow</i>	-	-	ʔá:w s'í:rà	ʔǎ:w k'ílwà
<i>fat N</i>	-	k'wɔts'a	k'ò:tsá	k'ò:tsá
<i>feather</i>	-	-	bà:k'í bàŋgá	s'í:rà
<i>fire</i>	támɔ	tana	tàwà	tàwà

English	Amuru	Boro I	Boro II of Bulen	Boro III of Wombera
<i>fish/fishnet</i>	aso	matsa	mùs'á, jábkà	mùtʃ'á, mùtʃ'í dīs'í kámbà
<i>five</i>	hutʃa	tʃ-uru	ʔù:tsá	ʔù:tsá
<i>go</i>	am \ sá-u	am	ʔámré	ʔám[í]ré
<i>good</i>	ádzedo	ʃe:ŋga	ʃè:ŋgà	ʃè:ŋgà
<i>green</i>	-	-	mòtʃ'á	mòtʃ'ò k'òjí
<i>hair of head</i>	tʃig \ tʃigerò	ts'i:ra	s'í:rà	s'í:rà
<i>hand</i>	kíʃò	kiʃa	kíʃà	kíʃá
<i>head</i>	tóko	tò:ka	tò:kà	tò:kà
<i>hear</i>	sistini	ʃi	ʃíʃiré	ʃíʃiré
<i>heart</i>	libbo	nimba	nímb:à	líb:à
<i>horn</i>	-	k'a:la	k'ál:à	k'álà
<i>I</i>	ta	ta'tu-w	tà:ná	tà:ná
<i>kill</i>	wút	wud'	ʔù:r <sup>h</sup> :é	ʔù:dúdfè
<i>knee</i>	gubto	gu:bra	gù:bìrà	gùbìrà
<i>know</i>	den	dèn	dén:iré	dán:iré
<i>leaf</i>	mato	ma:ra	màhàrà	mà:rà
<i>lie V</i>	-	k'e:ʔ	-	g'irmá:néré
<i>liver</i>	-	afa:ra	ʔàfá:rà	ʔàfá:rà
<i>long</i>	géndzo	ge:nza	gènzà	gènzà
<i>louse</i>	tʃútʃò	ts'u:ts'a	t'ùs'á	s'ùs'á
<i>man \ person</i>	lugʃò \ áso	- a:ʃ-a/a:ʃ-ò	ʔáʃà	ʔáʃà
<i>many</i>	atʃkítʃò	ayya	ʔàʃ:á	ʔáʃ:à
<i>meat</i>	metʃò	me:ts'a	mè:tsà	mè:tsà
<i>moon</i>	ázitʃa \ áʃò	aʃutsa	ʔà'ʃtsà	ʔà:ntsísà
<i>mountain</i>	dágo	gu:ra	gùrà, jíndà	gùrà
<i>mouth</i>	nóno	nò:na	nò:ná	nò:ná
<i>name</i>	sutʃò	ʃuts'ò/ʃu:tsa	ʃú:[t]sà	ʃú:sà
<i>neck</i>	kétto	bi:mba	bì:mbà	bì:mbà
<i>new</i>	andro	addisya	ʔándírà	ʔándírà
<i>night</i>	tum	t'u'w-a	kò:tʃ'á	kò:tʃ'á
<i>nose</i>	sítʃò	ʃint'a	ʃí:t'á	ʃí:nt'á
<i>one</i>	íkka	ikke	ʔík:à	ʔík:à

English	Amuru	Boro I	Boro II of Bulen	Boro III of Wombera
<i>rain</i>	ámso	awuʃa	ʔà <sup>w</sup> ʃà	ʔà <sup>w</sup> ʃà
<i>red</i>	bíro	bi:ra	bĩrá	bĩrá
<i>rest V</i>	-	-	kàʃiré	kà:ʃéré
<i>road</i>	mingo	we:ra/wɔyrha	wè:r <sup>h</sup> á	wè:ríndà
<i>root</i>	tʃappo	ts'ep'a	s'áp':à	s'áp':à
<i>sand</i>	-	ʃi:ya	ʃijà	ʃijà
<i>say</i>	et / gét	e:t/erh	ʔétíré	ʔétíré
<i>see</i>	tʃil	beʔ/bek'/ts'il/tsir	s'ílíré	s'ílíré
<i>seed</i>	ʃóko	ʃɔ:ka/na:ra	ʃò:kà	ʃò:kà
<i>sit</i>	beu	be:u	bè:hèré	bè:ré
<i>skin</i>	atʃo / goko	gɔ:k'a	gò:k'à	gò:k'à
<i>sleep</i>	tóto	k'eu	k'èhèré, k'è <sup>h</sup> ré	k'è:ré
<i>small</i>	mukko / tu	muk'k-	múk'à	múk'à
<i>smoke N</i>	tʃugo	t'suwa	s'íwà	s'íwà
<i>stand</i>	tu	ne:d-	ʔè:díré	nè:déré
<i>star</i>	keno	k'e:na	k'è:ná	k'è:nà
<i>stone</i>	sútʃo	ʃu:ts'a	ʃú <sup>w</sup> ʃà	ʃú <sup>w</sup> sà
<i>sun</i>	áb-a / áb-o	a:wa	ʔà:wà	ʔà:wà
<i>swim</i>	-	wa:k'	wà:kíré	wà:kíré
<i>tail</i>	-	k'etʃ'tʃ'ea	dúʃà	dúʃà
<i>that</i>	banɪ	e:w-i/ɔkk-e:wi	ʔék:èwí	ʔék:èwí
<i>this</i>	eɣ	hani/mani	hání	hání
<i>thread</i>	-	-	hùl:á	fùl:á
<i>three</i>	kedza	ke:z/ke:zza	kè:zà	kè:zà
<i>tongue</i>	élbeto	albe:ra	ʔàlbé:rà	ʔàlbé:rà
<i>tooth</i>	gásso	gɛ:ʃa	gáʃà	gáʃà
<i>tree</i>	mɪ'tto	mi:ta/mitta	mít:à	mít:à
<i>two</i>	gitta	gitti	gīt:á	gīt:á
<i>warm A</i>	ketʃo	k'e:ts'a/ʃɔll-	k'è:s'à	k'è:s'à
<i>water</i>	átʃo	a:ts'a/atʃɔ	ʔà:tsà	ʔà:tsà
<i>we</i>	no-na	nɔ-na	nò:ná	nò:ná
<i>what?</i>	aɣ / ágo	e:ge:	[ʔègɔʃà]	ʔégɔní
<i>white</i>	[nétʃo]	nɛts'a	nès'á	nàs'á

English	Amuru	Boro I	Boro II of Bulen	Boro III of Wombera
<i>who?</i>	kon / kóna	kɔ'ne:	kòní	kòní
<i>woman</i>	matʃa	ma:ts'-u	má:sà	má:[t]sà
<i>yellow</i>	-	-	àtʃʷə k'əjǐ	àtʃʷə k'əjǐ
<i>you PL ye</i>	-	-	ʔit:[í]ná	ʔit:ĩná
<i>you SG thou</i>	ne:-na	ne:-na	-	-

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