

Sociolinguistic Report on the Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia

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Contents

1. Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia by Aklilu Yilma
 - 1.1 General description of the survey
 - 1.2 Areas surveyed
 - 1.3 Survey findings and publication of results
 - 1.4 Register of surveys by report numbers: Reports 1–22
2. Conclusion of the S.L.L.E. Survey by Klaus Wedekind
 - 2.1 General summary of activities and findings
 - 2.2 Acknowledgements
 - 2.3 Changes in the sociolinguistic context
 - 2.4 Register of surveys by report numbers: Reports 23–33
 - 2.5 Sketch of the survey movements
 - 2.6 Register by language/dialect names

1. Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia

by Akilu Yilma

1.1 General description of the survey

The Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (S.I.L.) have launched a research project known as Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia (S.L.L.E.). The primary purpose of the survey is to gather basic sociolinguistic information on the lesser known Ethiopian languages. A secondary purpose is to gather data on selected topics of general linguistics. It is also felt, with a sense of urgency, that the languages which may be endangered by extinction should be studied and documented. In the process of surveying, linguistic field experience and training shall be provided to Ethiopian Ph.D. candidates in linguistics. The goal of the survey will be accomplished after the three and a half years of S.L.L.E. work.

In order to carry out the field work, S.I.L. has provided a vehicle and the necessary equipment (tape recorders, headphones, batteries, etc.); and a computer and a scanner to facilitate writing the reports of the field work. Also, research expenses (fuel, per diem, etc.) for the field work have been covered from S.I.L. funds. The coordinator of the S.L.L.E. is Dr. Klaus Wedekind, and the other members of the survey team are Mrs. Charlotte Wedekind, Ralph and Kati Siebert, Zelealem Leyew, Alemayehu Abebe, Tim Girard and myself. In addition, some visiting scholars and S.I.L. members who reside in Addis Ababa have also published their research findings in S.L.L.E. Linguistic Reports.

The survey started in mid 1992. So far, various studies have been made on about fifty to sixty languages and dialects. The S.L.L.E. project is the first of its kind in collecting a large amount of data on numerous little-known Ethiopian languages since the 1968/1969 "Language Survey of Ethiopia", whose findings were published as *Languages in Ethiopia* (Bender et al., (eds.) 1972).

1.2 Areas surveyed

The survey has covered all the four families of languages of Ethiopia. Among the Cushitic languages, the most surveyed are the Werizoid or Dullay languages: Gawwada, Gobeze, Werize, and other languages and dialects. With Omotic, the Omoto languages and clusters have been investigated more extensively than the other Omotic languages by different members of the S.L.L.E. team. The other major work done is the collection of very valuable data (lexical, sociolinguistic,

¹An earlier version of this report appeared in *Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia* (S.L.L.E.) Linguistic Report 33, July 1995. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Summer Institute of Linguistics.

ethnographic) on very little-known Nilo-Saharan and Omotic languages and/or dialects: Mao, Koma/Kwama, Berta, Seze, and Hozo, spoken in the Asosa, Begi, and Komosha area. The Asosa Administrative Region had been inaccessible for researches for the last eighteen years for security reasons. The recent findings of the Asosa survey may solve some puzzling problems in the nomenclature and genetic classification of some of the languages spoken in the area.

1.3 Survey findings and publication of results

Generally, in this survey, 320-item word lists have been compiled and investigations have been made on bilinguals, language status, use and vitality, of most of the little-known languages of Ethiopia. Some descriptive works have also been done on some of the least-known languages.

The S.L.L.E. Linguistic Reports appear in monthly or bimonthly intervals, depending on the number of surveys carried out. Orders of back issues can be obtained from: The S.L.L.E. Project, c/o The Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, P.O.Box 1176, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In return, we expect linguists and institutions to assist the Survey with offprints or relevant publications, with information difficult to identify in Ethiopia, or other relevant contributions.

1.4 Register of surveys by report numbers: Reports 1–22

The list of languages and/or dialects that have been surveyed, the S.L.L.E. Linguistic Report numbers, the areas surveyed, and the names of the surveyors are listed in the following chart.

Languages Reported on	Report No.	Areas Surveyed	Survey Staff/Report Author
Shinasha-Bure	-	Shinasha	Wedekind, K.
Kistane	-	Gurage	Wedekind, K.
Dullay	1	-	Wedekind, K.
General	2	Dullay	Girard, T.
Amharic SRT	2, 5, 7	-	Aklilu Y.
Oromo SRT	2, 5	-	Aklilu Y.
Gawwada, Gidole Gobeze, Gollango, Gorrose, Konso, Mashille, Tsamaha Werize, Worase-Harso	3	Dullay	Girard, T.
Chai, Mursi, Surma, Tirma, Tirma, Tulgit	4	S. Omo	Girad, T. and Middleton, M.

Chancha, Dawro-Kullo, Dorze, Gamo, Gofa, Wolayta - Maesketo	4, 6, 8	Ometo	Alemayehu A.
Baale, Murle, Tirma	4	S. Omo	Dimmendaal, G.
Chai	4	S. Omo	Lucassen, D. and Last, M. Moges Y. and Hirut B.
Ometo 2	6	Ometo	Alemayehu A.
Chai	7	S. Omo	Lucassen, D. and Last, M. Moges Y. and Hirut B.
Yem	9	Sokoru and Jimma area	Aklilu Y.
Yem	10	Yem	Aklilu Y. and Sieberts
Sheko	10	Bench Zone	Sieberts and Aklilu Y.
Berta, Mao-Didessa	11	Zone 6 and Zone 4	Wedekind, K.
Mao-Bambesi, Mao-Begi	11	Zone 6	Sieberts
Berta, Komo, Kwama, Mao-Bambesi	12	Zone 6	Wedekinds
Zay	14, 17	Zway	Girard, T., Gardner, S., Siebert, R., and Wedekind, K.
Silt'e	14	-	Gutt, Ee. and Hussein M.
Zay	14	Assela	Wedekinds
Hozo, Komo, Kwama, Mao-Begi, Seze	15	Zone 6	Siebert, R. and Wedekind, K.
Mao-Metahara	15	Zone 4	Wedekinds
Nayi	16	Kefa Zone	Aklilu Y.
Sheko	16	Bench Zone	Sieberts and Aklilu Y.
Yem	16	Yem Special Wārāda	Sieberts and Aklilu Y.
Awngi, Qemant Shinasha, Xamtanga	18	Gojjam	Zealelem L. and Wedekinds
Gawwada, Konso	19	Gawwada	Dinotc Kusia
Gawwada	20	Gawwada	Girard, T. and Wedekind, K.
Ganjule, Gas'ama, Baiso	21	Abbaya area	Siebert, R.
Argobba	22	N. E. Shewa	Zealelem L.

2. Conclusion of the S.L.L.E. Survey

by Klaus Wedekind

2.1 General summary of activities and findings

The survey has now been completed on July 31, 1995, at the end of a three year period, and a general summary seems in order. Although the survey staff members are very acutely aware of some shortcomings in the data, it seems useful to provide an overview of the survey trips, the results, and the reports, in order to make this information accessible to linguists who are interested in new data about Ethiopian languages— especially Agaw and Omotic.

In the preceding article, Professor Aklilu has described the survey activities up to the end of 1994. In the following section, we complement this with (a) some general comments, especially on the final stage of this project, and (b) an overview of the entire survey and its results.

In general it can be said that the survey has served to confirm the findings of the earlier survey (cf. Bender, et al., 1976, and Bender, ed., 1976). There were no dramatic “discoveries” of new languages—and where there were surprises, there were of the opposite kind: Like in the earlier surveys, quite a number of phantom “languages” were deleted from the lists, because they turned out to be either dialects of some established language, or different variants on an established language—or simply errors.

It is comparatively easy to claim the discovery of a new language (a few data from some fringe dialect will do, or a good dose of ethnic pride on the side of the informant). But it can be rather difficult to disprove the existence of a phantom: In principle (given a sufficiently large area) it even is impossible: Where would you look for data to disprove the existence of a “language” if the provenience of its data is not documented?

2.2 Acknowledgements

The support which the surveyors received from various institutions is gratefully acknowledged: The Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the Linguistics Department of the Addis Ababa University, the African Studies Department of the University of Cologne, the German Academic Exchange Service (daad), and the S.I.L. Department of International Linguistic Surveys.

The help which we received from the following linguists and administrators was especially encouraging: Professors Dr. Taddese Beyene and Dr. Bahiru Zewdie as Directors of the I.E.S.; Professor Dr. Werner Winter of the University of Kiel; Dr. Ted Bergman, Nairobi, as S.I.L. International Surveys Coordinator; and Prof. Dr. Bernd Heine with his colleague Dr. Matthias Brenzinger of

Cologne University. And warm thanks are due to Shumet of the Gondar administration, who just appeared in time to save the team from the shock of an armed assault, and to cheer them up with a great banquet, celebrating everybody's happy "survival".

2.3 Changes in the sociolinguistic context

During the three years of surveying, there has been a major change as far as the sociolinguistic climate is concerned in which this survey was carried out. Originally it had been planned to assess the interest which the smaller ethnic groups might or might not have in seeing their own languages developed.

One of the results of this change was the decision to discontinue the work on the "Sentence Repetition Tests" ("SRT", see Reports 2, 5 and 7). No useful function for the SRT test was conceivable anymore after the sociolinguistic climate had changed (especially in cases where tight administrative boundaries had been established between the areas where a certain language was supposed to be spoken, and where not).

In general, the interest in "minor" languages changed remarkably. While in the planning stage of this survey (i.e., in the 1980s), this kind of topic was not particularly in focus, it has become a major issue during the final stages of the survey. So much so, that with this change of the ethnolinguistic climate, some answers to our original sociolinguistic questions have become predictable and somewhat useless in terms of "information". Some examples may illustrate this:

During the first months of the survey, a question like "*Would you like to see your language developed to writing?*" would sometimes be answered, "*Why?*" or "*What is the use of it?*"

During the last months of the survey, the answer became predictable: "*Yes*".

2.4 Register of surveys by report numbers: Reports 23–33

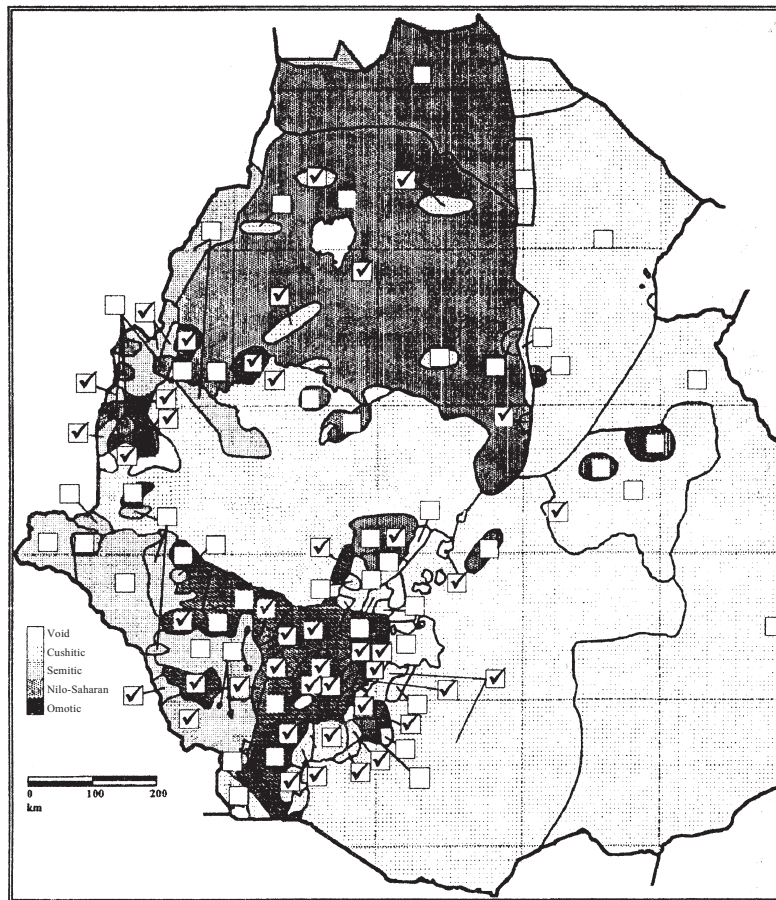
The following list complements what Aklilu Yilma has presented previously for the reports up to number 22: Here the topics and times of the later reports (numbers 23 to 33) are supplemented:

No.	Dialects/Languages	Month	Time of Trip	Survey Staff or Report Author(s)
23	Xamtanga	1995/01	1995/01/25–01/30	Wedekind, K.
24	Male	1995/01	1995/02/28–02/03	Siebert, R.

25	Chara	1995/03	1995/02/28–02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
25	Dime	1995/03	1995/02/28–02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
25	Malo (Melo)	1995/03	1995/02/28–02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
25	Nayi (Nao)	1995/03	1995/02/28–02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
26	Bayso	1995/04	1994/10/27–11/03	Brenzinger, M.
26	Boro-Wombera	1995/04	1995/03/29–04/03	Lemma A., Wedekind, M.
26	Ganjawle (Ganjule)	1995/04	1994/10/27–11/03	Brenzinger, M.
26	Gats'ame (Kachama)	1995/04	1994/10/27–11/03	Brenzinger, M.
26	Harro	1995/04	1994/10/27–11/03	Brenzinger, M.
27	Malo (Melo)	1995/04	1995/02/28–02/03	Caudwell, S., Siebert, R.
27	Surma-Mursi	1995/04	1995/02/28–02/03	Caudwell, S., Siebert, R.
28	Awngi	1995/05	1995/02/08–02/14	Wedekind, C. and K.
29	Amuru	1995/06	1995/05/12–05/13	Wedekind, K.
29	Boro-Bulen	1995/04	1995/02/08–02/14	Wedekind, C. and K.
29	Boro-Bure	1995/05	1992/07/18	Wedekind, K.
29	Boro-Mambuk	1995/04	1995/03/29–04/03	Wedekind, C. and K.
30	Qimant (Kemant)	1995/06	1995/06 etc.	Zealealem L.
31	Dime	1995/07	1995/02/28–02/03	Siebert, R.
32	Chara	1995/07	1995/02/28–02/03	Aklilu Y.
33	General	1995/07	1992/06–1995/06	Aklilu Y., Wedekind, K.
34	North-Omo general	1995/07	1995/05/20–05/25	Siebert, R.

2.5 Sketch of the survey movements

The general map (which follows) shows which areas have been travelled by the survey team. The particular areas and language names can be identified in the overview given in the S.L.L.E. report 13, or in the maps with the respective reports (see the list which follows).



Sketch Map: Language and dialect areas surveyed 1992–1995

Note: The sketch is based on the map prepared for the 1966 edition of the *Ethnologue*.

Every “✓” stands for a language area (usually several dialects) which was surveyed.

2.6 Register by language/dialect names

The following is an exhaustive list of all languages and dialects surveyed, arranged by the language or dialect names.

Rep. no.	Dialects and Languages reported on	Report issued (month)	Time of survey trip (Time of analysis)	Survey Staff or Report Author(s)
2	Amharic SRT	1992/11	1992/11 analys.	Aklilu Y.
5	Amharic SRT	1993/03	1993/03 analys.	Aklilu Y.
7	Amharic SRT	1993/05	1993/05 analys.	Aklilu Y.
29	Amuru	1995/06	1995/05/12–05/13	Wedekind, K.
20	Arbore (Irbore)	1994/12	1994/09/11–09/18	Dinote K., Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
22	Argobba	1994/12	1994/11/07–11/08	Siebert, R.
22	Argobba	1994/12	1994/11/07–11/08	Zealelem L.
18	Awngi	1994/05	1994/04/15–04/24	Zealelem L., Wedekind, C. and K.
28	Awngi	1995/05	1995/02/08–02/14	Wedekind, C. and K.
4	Baale (Zilmamu)	1993/01	1992/12/20–01/19	Dimmendaal, G.
21	Bayso	1994/11	1994/10/27–11/03	Siebert, R., Brenzinger, M.
26	Bayso	1995/04	1994/10/27–11/03	Brenzinger, M.
11	Berta (Beni Shangul)	1993/11	1993/11/05–11/18	Wedekind, K.
12	Berta (Beni-Shangul)	1993/11	1993/12/13–12/24	Wedekind, C. and K.
29	Boro-Bulen	1995/04	1995/02/08–02/14	Wedekind, C. and K.
29	Boro-Bure	1995/05	1992/07/18	Wedekind, K.
18	Boro-Highl.	1994/05	1994/04/15–04/24	Zealelem L., Wedekind, C. and K.
18	Boro-Lowl.	1994/05	1994/04/15–04/24	Zealelem L., Wedekind, C. and K.
29	Boro-Mambuk	1995/04	1995/03/29–04/03	Wedekind, C. and K.

26	Boro-Wombera	1995/04	1995/03/29– 04/03	Lemma A., Wedekind, M.
4	Chancha	1993/01	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
8	Chancha	1993/06	1993/03/26– 04/01	Alemayehu A.
25	Chara	1995/03	1995/02/28– 02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
32	Chara	1995/07	1995/02/28– 02/03	Aklilu Y.
4	Dawro-Kullo	1993/01	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
8	Dawro-Kullo	1993/06	1993/03/26– 04/01	Alemayehu A.
25	Dime	1995/03	1995/02/28– 02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
31	Dime	1995/07	1995/02/28– 02/03	Siebert, R.
19	Diraasha (Gidole)	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Wolde-Gebriel T., Wedekind, K.
3	Diraasha-G.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
4	Gamo	1993/01	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
4	Gamo-Dorze	1993/01	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
8	Gamo-Dorze	1993/06	1993/03/26– 04/01	Alemayehu A.
21	Ganjawle (Ganjule)	1994/11	1994/10/27– 11/03	Siebert, R., Brenzinger, M.
26	Ganjawle (Ganjule)	1995/04	1994/10/27– 11/03	Brenzinger, M.
21	Gats'ame (Kachama)	1994/11	1994/10/27– 11/03	Siebert, R., Brenzinger, M.
26	Gats'ame (Kachama)	1995/04	1994/10/27– 11/03	Brenzinger, M.
19	Gawwada general	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Dinote K.
20	Gawwada general	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Wedekind, K.
1	Gawwada (Dullay)	1992/06	1992/06 analys.	Wedekind, K.

3	Gawwada-F.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Gobeze-A.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Gollango-A.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Gorroze-A.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-K.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Mashille-L.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Mashille-U.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Werize-F.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
3	Gawwada-Woraze-Harso	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
13	General	1994/01	1994/01 analys.	Banti, G., Wedekind, K.
2	General	1992/11	1992/06 analys.	Girard, T.
33	General	1995/07	1995/01– 1995/06	Aklilu Y.
33	General	1995/07	1992/06– 1995/01	Wedekind, K.
7	General	1993/05	1993/05 analys.	Girard, T., Wedekind, K.
4	Gofa	1993/01	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
26	Illarro	1995/04	1994/10/27– 11/03	Brenzinger, M.
15	Hozo	1994/03	1994/02/16– 02/28	Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
12	Komo	1993/11	1993/12/13– 12/24	Wedekind, C. and K.
15	Komo	1994/03	1994/02/16– 02/28	Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
19	Konso	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Dinote K.
3	Konso	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
21	Koorete	1994/11	1994/10 analys.	Hoef, L.

12	Kwama	1993/11	1993/12/13– 12/24	Wedekind, C. and K.
15	Kwama	1994/03	1994/02/16– 02/28	Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
24	Male	1995/01	1995/02/28– 02/03	Siebert, R.
25	Malo (Melo)	1995/03	1995/02/28– 02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
27	Malo (Melo)	1995/04	1995/02/28– 02/03	Caudwell, S., Siebert, R.
11	Mao-Bambassi	1993/11	1993/11/05– 11/18	Siebert, R. and K.
12	Mao-Bambassi	1993/11	1993/12/13– 12/24	Wedekind, C. and K.
11	Mao-Begi	1993/11	1993/11/05– 11/18	Siebert, R. and K.
15	Mao-Begi	1994/03	1994/02/16– 02/28	Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
11	Mao-Didessa	1993/11	1993/11/05– 11/18	Wedekind, K.
15	Mao-Metahara	1994/03	1994/03/08– 03/08	Wedekind, C. and K.
8	Mesketo (Basketto)	1993/06	1993/03/26– 04/01	Alemayehu A.
4	Murle	1993/01	1992/12/20– 01/19	Dimmendaal, G.
19	Muusiye (Bussa)	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Zewde C., Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
16	Nayi (Nao)	1994/03	1993/12/08– 12/17	Siebert, R. and K., Mikael
25	Nayi (Nao)	1995/03	1995/02/28– 02/03	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R.
34	North-Omo general	1995/07	1995/05/20– 05/25	Siebert, R.
6	Ometo general	1993/04	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
20	Ongoota (Birayle)	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Dinote K., Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
2	Oromo SRT	1992/11	1992/11 analys.	Aklilu Y.
5	Oromo SRT	1993/03	1993/03 analys.	Aklilu Y.
18	Qimant (Kemant)	1994/05	1994/04/15– 04/24	Zelealem L., Wedekind, C. and K.

30	Qimant (Kemant)	1995/06	1995/06 etc.	Zealelem L.
15	Seze	1994/03	1994/02/16– 02/28	Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
10	Sheko	1993/12	1993/12/08– 12/17	Siebert, R. and K., Mikael
16	Sheko	1994/03	1993/12/08– 12/17	Siebert, R. and K., Mikael
14	Silt'e	1994/01	1994/01 analys.	Gutt, Ee., Hussein M.
4	Surma	1993/01	1992/04/24– 05/07	Girard, T., Middleton, M.
4	Surma (Tirma)	1993/01	1992/12/20– 01/19	Dimmendaal, G.
4	Surma (Tirma) 1	1993/01	1992/04/24– 05/07	Girard, T., Middleton, M.
4	Surma (Tirma) 2	1993/01	1992/04/24– 05/07	Girard, T., Middleton, M.
4	Surma-Chai	1993/01	1992/04/24– 05/07	Girard, T., Middleton M.
4	Surma-Chai	1993/01	1993/01/01– 02/18	Lucassen, D., Last, M., Moges Y., Hirut B.
7	Surma-Chai	1993/05	1993/01/19– 02/01	Lucassen, D., Last, M., Moges Y., Hirut B.
27	Surma-Mursi	1995/04	1995/02/28– 02/03	Caudwell, S., Siebert, R.
4	Surma-Mursi	1993/01	1992/04/24– 05/07	Girard, T., Middleton, M.
4	Surma-Tulgit	1993/01	1992/04/24– 05/07	Girard, T., Middleton, M.
20	Tsamay (Tsamaha)	1994/12	1994/09/11– 09/18	Dinote K., Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
3	Tsamay (Tsamaha) A.	1992/12	1992/06/27– 07/15	Girard, T.
4	Wolayta	1993/01	1992/12/02– 12/16	Alemayehu A.
8	Wolayta-Gofa	1993/06	1993/03/26– 04/01	Alemayehu A.
18	Xamtanga	1994/05	1994/04/15– 04/24	Zealelem L., Wedekind, C. and K.
23	Xamtanga	1995/01	1995/01/25– 01/30	Wedekind, K.
10	Yem (Yemsa)	1993/12	1993/12/08– 12/17	Siebert, R. and K., Mikael

16	Yem (Yemsa)	1994/03	1993/12/08– 12/17	Siebert, R. and K., Mikael
9	Yem (Yemsa)	1993/08	1993/07/15– 07/21	Aklilu Y., Siebert, R. and K.
14	Zay	1994/01	1992/07/16	Girard, T., Gardner, S., Wedekind, K.
14	Zay	1994/01	1994/01/13– 01/15	Wedekind, C. and K.
17	Zay	1994/03	1994/03/28– 04/01	Gardner, S., Siebert, R., Wedekind, K.
21	Zayse	1994/11	1994/10/27– 11/03	Siebert, R., Brenzinger, M.
21	Zayse-Zergulla	1994/11	1994/10/27– 11/03	Siebert, R., Brenzinger, M.