

Wedding Ceremony And Rituals Among The Kunama And Nara (part II and final)

Written by Winta Weldeyesus



After the groom and his relatives return from the bride's house, he visits all his relatives. On his visit, he receives all kinds of presents like chicken, money and beads: the best man gives either a sheep or an ox on this occasion.

Another incident that takes place during the wedding ritual of the Kunama people is that the day the two families meet to discuss the amount of dowry, one family brings an ax while the other brings a traditional drink-Ayefa- to the appointment. The drink is poured on a stone and the man with the ax will split small stones with his ax. Then the man brings the small stones into the bride's house and covers them with the drink. Later they will go to one of the huts nearby and slaughter a calf brought by bride's father to the occasion. The calf is prepared inside this hut and is eaten by the relatives of the bride only. No one is allowed to watch while they are eating and after they finish eating, they bury the bones of the calf in the hut.

After this, the groom's family is invited to bring the ox or calf that they brought for the wedding: the groom's father accompanied with dancing and singing relatives will bring the animal to the bride's house. The animal is then taken to the place where the sorghum from the groom's house was gathered and then a ring and knife will be tied to the branch of one of the trees near-by. An elderly man brings the ring and touches it on the right leg of the calf where upon it is slaughtered. The calf or ox has to face east at the time of slaughtering and the blood is collected in four containers.

The day after the ox or calf is slaughtered the groom with the best man wash their feet in the blood. If they do not pass through this ritual, they would not be allowed to enter the honeymoon room. Following this, two men from the groom's family will give sorghum and beans to the bride, as a present. Until the latter ritual is completed, there would not be any marriage ceremony in the Kunama ethnic group.

While these rituals take place at the bride's house, in the groom's house the relatives dance the traditional -Mar Dagusa-. Both families hold a wedding reception in their respective houses and the invited guests will go to both houses to participate on the wedding.

On the eve of the wedding day, the groom's father gives dowry to the bride's family along with other presents and on the morning of the wedding day, the groom accompanied with his friends will go to the bride's house after he had a good meal in his house. This is usually practiced among the Nara ethnic group. Once the groom is at the bride's house, he goes to the hut prepared for the honeymoon without looking or meeting his fiancée. The bride's relatives and friends gather in the house but the bride stays inside the house with her friends.

Following the arrival of the groom at the bride's house, an ox will be slaughtered and during

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which the father of the bride or other close relative, acting as father announces that he is wedding his daughter to the man. And the father of the groom or close relative will announce that he is receiving the bride to be the wedded wife of his son. After this ceremony, the festivities continue for three to five days.

While the festivities for the wedding are going on, the bride inside the house will cry loudly, showing the sadness of being separated from her parents. This is practiced among the Nara ethnic group.

However, in both Nara and Kunama societies both families give presents to the newly wedded and the groom's family is expected to give more. The presents exchange takes place upon the agreement of both families. If the groom's family are unable to provide the presents, the village elder will give the groom sculptures of animals and put it in front of the groom. Then the groom will receive the sculptures and promise to replace those images by real ones by dancing and singing.

After the wedding ceremony ends, two elderly women take the bride from her father's house to the hut prepared for the honeymoon of the newly weds. The ladies stay in the hut until the bride gets used to the new environment and the honeymoon period lasts for three months in both ethnic groups.