

The Symbolic Meaning of the Pot on the Roof

—A Case Study of the Konso in Southern Ethiopia—

TORU SHINOHARA

National Museum of Japanese History

The Konso of southern Ethiopia are agricultural people, skilled at cultivating fields on stone terraces. They also have excellent techniques of cotton weaving, metalwork, pottery and other handicrafts. This paper focuses on Konso pots in an attempt to clarify their meaning, not simply in their important everyday role as utensils for cooking, storage or alcohol-making, or as commercial items to be traded on the market, but as symbolic objects that demonstrate the structure of society.

The Konso place the pots on the roofs of their houses. There are several social norms concerning pots, and the rank of each family in Konso society is shown by the presence or absence of a pot on the roof and by the type of pot. By understanding what sort of norms govern the use of pots in Konso society, I was able to deduce four norms which demonstrate the relation between the pot on the roof and their social structure.

Key words: Konso, decorative pot, symbolic objects, social norm, village structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Konso are a minority people who live in southern Ethiopia and engage in agriculture and livestock raising. They are highly skilled at farming and handicrafts. Linguistically, they speak one of the Eastern Cushitic languages. Largely surrounded by pastoralists, the subsistence activities of the Konso are highly restricted territorially. In a number of Konso villages to the east, there are people who specialize in making pots. It is important when discussing the Konso to point out that the various pots made in these villages are not only used among the Konso but even traded with their enemy, the Borana people. One village also has a number of blacksmiths, whose forging skills cannot be ignored.

With regard to these pots, what I would like to discuss here is neither the manufacturing process nor their circulation on the market as trading commodities. The pots made by the Konso are not simply used as utensils for storage or cooking, nor are they just important commodities to be sold on the market for cash. They play an important role in demonstrating social relations within the Konso village. In this paper, my aim is to focus on a completely different use to which they are put and to throw some light on its meaning. In discussing this distinctive use of pots, however, it is necessary to explain briefly the structure of the Konso village. Near the center of Sewgame stands the house of the second wife of a man called Gaiyana, and it was in a small hut in one corner of this compound that I settled myself while I carried out my study. I stayed in Sewgame for four months, from early October 1991 to the end of January 1992. My studies focused on the relation between the subsistence activities and social organization, and on the traditional methods of livestock

management and agricultural techniques of the Konso from the viewpoint of ecological anthropology. Here, however, I would like to consider "the role of the pot in society," a theme which I came across in the course of this study.

2. THE LOCATION OF THE KONSO

To reach the area where the Konso live from Addis Ababa, it is necessary to travel south along the major highway which leads to the town of Moyale on the Kenyan border, then branch off at Shashemene, about 200 km from Addis Ababa, and take the road heading more or less southwest toward Arba Minch. The area where most Konso live lies another 100 km south of Arba Minch.

In 1990 Ethiopia was divided into 14 administrative regions. At that time, the area inhabited by the Konso came under the large administrative region of Gamo Gofa, which was further divided into provinces (*awaraja*) with the Konso belonging to the province of Gardula. The capital of the Gamo Gofa Administrative Region is Arba Minch, and the provincial town of Gardula Province is called Gidole. The province is further divided into administrative units corresponding to districts, known as *wereda*, and the area in which the Konso are concentrated coincides almost exactly with this last administrative unit.

In the district there are Peasant Associations called (*kebere gebere*). The administrative divisions are named in the Amhara language. As far as the Konso peasants are concerned, the *kebere gebere* can be regarded as equivalent to a village, or *ketema* in Amharic. At a broad estimate, 34 Konso villages located in a small, rectangular area of 20 km \times 30 km. Naturally, the territory where they conduct their subsistence activities is slightly larger, but it is nevertheless confined to an area the size of two maps of scale 1:50,000 joined together north to south. The villages are concentrated in a region of 12 km \times 12 km. As stated above, the area which they use for their daily activities, while differing from village to village depending on location, is within the area of 20 km \times 30 km. In terms of altitude, the villages in the east are generally lower than those in the west at around 1,500 m above sea level, while in the west they are located at around 1,800 m above sea level. There are no villages on the mountain tops in the east, but in the west they are built right on top of the mountains. Furthermore, the houses in the village are crowded together and the village is surrounded by a circular wall of stones, like a fortress. The village is built with one or two gates, so that a watch can be kept on people entering.

Terraced fields extend in concentric circles around the fortress. The villages tend to be situated on the top of a ridge running east-west, with the fields stretching southwards along the north-south axis, and there are boundaries between neighboring villages.

Fig. 1 shows the Sewgame territory in Konsoland. As the road descends toward the Segan river, the terraced fields become fewer and villagers' work-huts start to appear along the way. The plains begin to increase and by the time we reach the Segan river, the altitude has dropped to 800 m. Fields are cultivated along the fertile river terraces and many livestock graze here. This is where the Konso come into contact with the Borana people and conflicts between the two people arise.

Hallpike (1972) wrote a detailed monograph on the Konso. His study was of the village of Buso in the eastern part of Konso territory. At the time of his survey (1965–1967), the Konso population was estimated at 60,000, but by 1991 it was thought to exceed 100,000. The people live in 34 villages with the houses clustered together. For my part, I have studied the village of Sewgame, which stands on the highest ridge in the western part of Konso territory (Fig. 1).

Sewgame is situated on the top of a mountain and is surrounded by a stone wall approximately 260 m in diameter. With 226 houses and an estimated population of between 1,000 and 1,500, it is relatively small as a Konso village.

3. OUTLINE OF SEWGAME VILLAGE AND ITS SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Sewgame is about 13 km from Bekawile, the heart of Konsoland, and stands on the top of

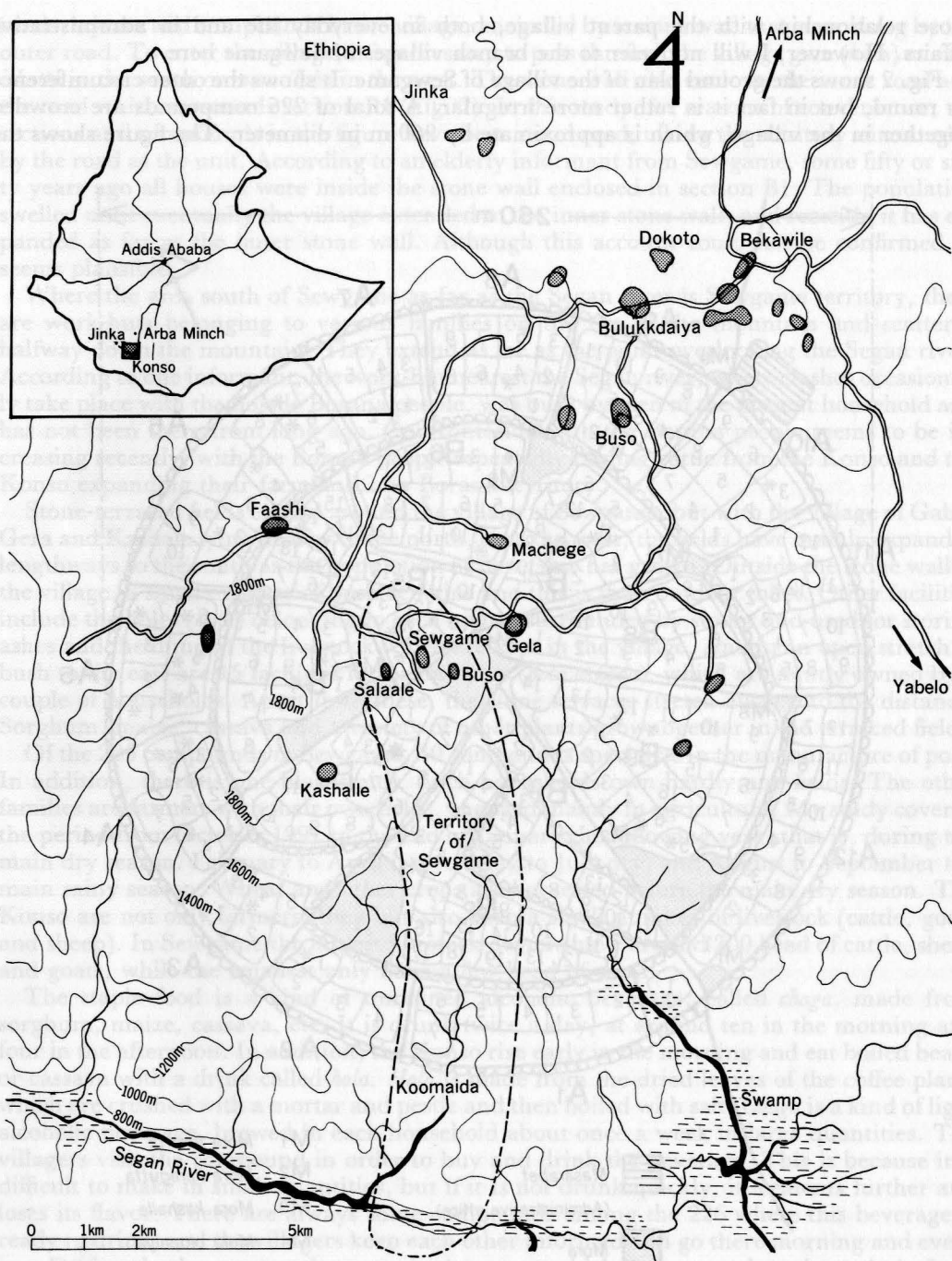


Fig.1. Map of Konso.

a ridge 1,880 m above sea level. Sewgame presently consists of three villages: Sewgame, Buso and Salaale. It seems that Buso and Salaale separated from Sewgame, and excess population from the parent village of Sewgame gradually moved to these villages and built homes there. The Konso have a custom of building work-huts in fields that are far from home, and these seem to have formed the nucleus of such development. With about 40 houses in each, both villages have a similar configuration to Sewgame, and they keep a

close relationship with the parent village, both in everyday life and in administrative affairs. However, I will not refer to the branch villages of Sewgame here.

Fig. 2 shows the ground plan of the village of Sewgame. It shows the outer circumference as round, but in fact it is rather more irregular. A total of 226 compounds are crowded together in the village, which is approximate by 260 m in diameter. The figure shows the

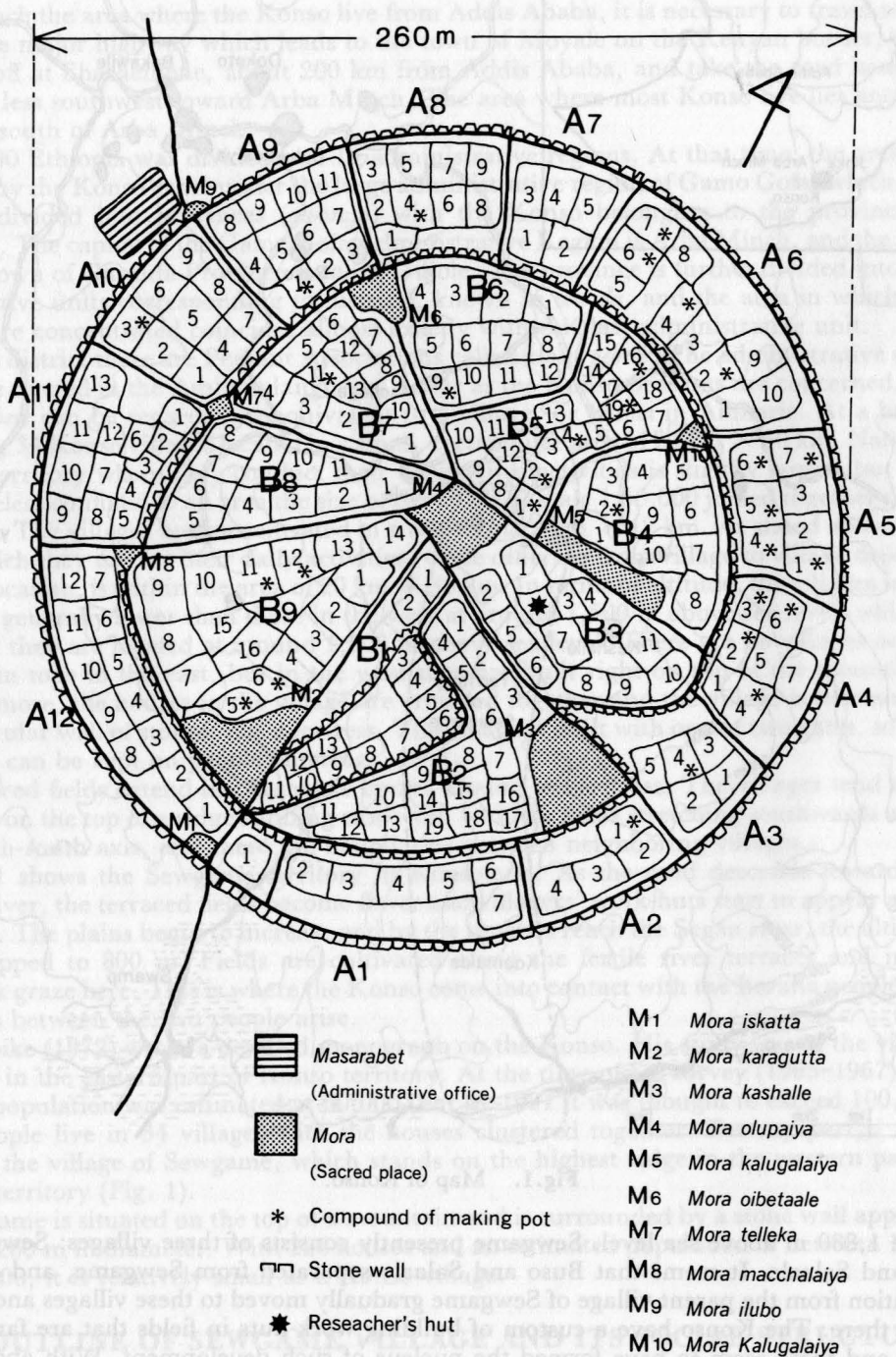


Fig.2. Village of Sewgame.

roads, square and compounds in the village, encircled by a stone wall that runs along by the outer road. To enter the village, it is necessary to pass through the village gate (*hara*) at *mora iskatta* in the south or *mora ilubo* in the west. The stone wall also encloses the inner road and the road which surrounds section B1 (Fig. 2). In this study, for reasons of convenience, the sections and compounds in the figure have been numbered, taking the territory surrounded by the road as the unit. According to an elderly informant from Sewgame, some fifty or sixty years ago all houses were inside the stone wall enclosed in section B1. The population swelled until eventually the village extended to the inner stone wall, and recently it has expanded as far as the outer stone wall. Although this account could not be confirmed, it seems plausible.

Where the area south of Sewgame as far as the Segan river is Sewgame territory, there are work-huts belonging to various families on the top of the mountain and scattered halfway down the mountain. They extend as far as the point overlooking the Segan river. According to one informant, the work-hut nearest the Segan river, where clashes occasionally take place with the hostile Borana people, was built by men of the present household and has not been there from long ago. Confrontation with the Borana people seems to be increasing recently, with the Borana people repeatedly raiding cattle from the Konso and the Konso expanding their farmland into Borana territory.

Stone-terraced fields extend around the village of Sewgame, but with the village of Gaho, Gera and Kashale lying nearby to the north, east and west, the fields have mainly expanded lengthways to the south as the population of Sewgame has grown. Outside the stone wall of the village, a small expanse of bush remains and this is their outdoor toilet. Other facilities include the holes (*kufa*) belonging to each house, surrounded by stones and used for storing ashes and the dung of the livestock which are kept in the village. And in an open stretch of bush to the east are 15 facilities for baking pots (*pota okkoda*), which are jointly owned by a couple of households. Apart from these, the stone terraces stretch away into the distance. Sorghum, maize, cassava and a variety of other plants grow together in the terraced fields.

Of the 226 compounds in Sewgame, 30 compounds specialize in the manufacture of pots. In addition, there is one blacksmith. Such households own hardly any fields. The other families are farmers with their own fields, engaged mainly in agriculture. My study covered the period from October 1991 to the end of January the following year, that is, during the main dry season. February to April is wet, May to July dry, and August to September the main rainy season. Wheat and other crops are harvested before the main dry season. The Konso are not only farmers, they but also keep a small number of livestock (cattle, goats and sheep). In Sewgame the largest livestock owners have around 200 head of cattle, sheep and goats, while the smallest only have a few head of cattle.

The staple food is a kind of unrefined alcoholic beverage, called *chaga*, made from sorghum, maize, cassava, etc. It is drunk twice a day, at around ten in the morning and four in the afternoon. In addition, the Konso rise early in the morning and eat boiled beans or cassava with a drink called *hola*. *Hola* is made from the dried leaves of the coffee plant, which are crushed with a mortar and pestle and then boiled with salt. *Chaga* is a kind of light alcoholic beverage, brewed in each household about once a week in large quantities. The villagers visit the compound in order to buy and drink the beverage. This is because it is difficult to make in small quantities, but if it is not drunk quickly, it ferments further and loses its flavor. There are always some compounds among the 226 where this beverage is ready to drink, and the villagers keep each other informed and go there morning and evening. During the dry season, the men gin the cotton which the women have brought in from the fields, spin it into yarn and weave cloth on the loom in the square. The women go to the fields to collect grass to feed the livestock kept in the village, draw water with two gourds vessel, and prepare the food. At the work-huts which stand apart on the way to the Segan river, the second or third sons, while they are children, turn the livestock out to graze, while the second wife and daughters cultivate the fields near the huts.

There are three main social organizations which govern their lives: the neighborhood organization, the kinship organization, and the Konso type of age-system, which seems to be common to the pastoral peoples in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. The

Table 1. Composition of neighborhood (*kanda*).

Kanda	Compound
Mora kashalle	A1 (except A1-1), A2, A3, A4, B1, B2
Mora kalugalaiya	A5, A6, B3, B4, B5
Mora oibetaale	A7, A8, B6, B7, some of A9·A10
Mora ilubo	A9, A10, A11, B8
Mora macchalaiya	A12 (include A1-1), B9
Buso	all compounds of Buso
Salaale	all compounds of Salaale

neighborhood organizations were not originally found in Konso society. The Ethiopian government set up *kebele* administrative organizations in the 34 Konso villages and these become the present neighborhood organizations. Outside the *mora ilubo* Fig. 2 is the *kebele masarabet*, the peasant association office. The *kebele* organizations were supposedly abolished with the change of government in May 1991, but the Konso continued to use the name, and the organizations fulfilled similar functions at the administrative level, at least as far as my research revealed. They hold strong powers from the central government regarding circular notices, liaison, tax collection, military service, etc. There is also a detention hut at the *masarabet* for dissenters, and the organization even holds partial judicial powers. However, at the present time, these organizations may be in a state of flux.

In Sewgame, the *kebele* organization consists of seven members and several soldiers (*millisha*). These seven member are representatives of the *kanda*, which are neighborhood organizations mainly situated around the square, as indicated in Table 1. The villages of Salaale and Buso are also considered as a neighborhood organization, thus bringing the total to seven neighborhood organizations. When major problems arising in the *kebele* organization, for example, concerning announcements from the government, tax issues and the like, the men in the village hold a big congress (*tsubitubba*) at the *mora oibetaale*. Congresses for each neighboring organization are also held in various squares. In addition, *kebele* members periodically hold meetings, and if disputes over farmland or quarrels should take place in the village, a non-member elder will be invited to resolve the issue. This elder is a representative of the three *faraida* groups, which are organized on the base of age-system. Actually, the head of the *kebele* is also the head of clan. His name is Attama Ailatte, and he is one of the *pogora* of Alugamaida, which is one of the clans. Thus, it is clear that the *kebele* organization blends traditional systems with systems newly introduced from the outside.

We turn now to the Konso organization of kinship. The Konso are reportedly divided into nine clans, and clan exogamy is the norm. In a study of 199 examples of major marriages in which the spouses were main husband and wife in the case of extended families, and from which families in which one spouse was dead were excluded in 226 compounds, we found that the norm was observed without exception. Inheritance within the clan is patrilineal, and its residential pattern is patrilocal. In other words, the women, not the men, are expected to move around within the village or between the villages. Table 2 indicates the Sewgame marriage range. Inter-marriage within the village is the most common, accounting for 84.4 percent of marriages, which indicates a closed system in terms of marriage.

Table 3 indicates the distribution of the Sewgame clans. In the Konso language these clans are called *kaha*. When asking about this issue in Sewgame, I heard that there were 10 different *kaha*, contrary to what I had believed. This is probably due to the fact that the title *pogora*, which is a sort of lineage head under the *kaha*, is awarded when a compound belonging to a clan continues for more than nine generations in the same place. This title exists in various Konso villages, and among the *pogora* there is also a so-called honorable family, and these compounds also hold family names. For example, Attama Ailatte is the head of the

Table 2. Intermarriage area of Sewgame (Number of women).

Native village of wife (no husband from outside)		
Inside	Sewgame	164 (82.4%)
	Buso Sewgame	3 (1.5%)
	Salaale Sewgame	1 (0.5%)
	Total	168 (84.4%)
Outside	Gaho	9 (4.5%)
	Gela	6 (3.0%)
	Faasha	4 (2.0%)
	Machege	4 (2.0%)
	Gasalgyo	3 (1.5%)
	Others	5 (2.5%)
	Total	31 (15.6%)
Total		199 (100.0%)

kebele and also is the lineage head of the Alugamaida clan. In this clan there are three *pogora* just in Sewgame. The family names are Poloke, Satale and Sibbila, respectively. Poloke is the Attama's family name and is a powerful *pogora* among the Alugamaida. The *pogora* title passes to the first son, and since the second and younger sons are also considered to be members of this *pogora*, this may be equivalent to a sort of lineage. Okodomaida may be one of these *pogora* that has the possibility of becoming part of clan Keeluditta. This is probably why the total amounts to 10 clans.

The *pogora* title comes in major and minor positions, and their ranks within the clan carry different weight. Generally speaking, the positioning is indicated symbolically by the pot and two ostrich eggs on the roof. The relationship with these items will be explained later. Each of these nine clans have an animal or plant as their ancestor of origin. In addition, it is said that various things or affairs (i.e., the moon, animals, tools, roads, etc.) are characteristic parts of a clan. The details of this aspect will be omitted.

Of the nine clans, the Keeluditta has the most members in Sewgame, followed by the Alugamaida and the Saudatta (Table 3). Needless to say, these three clans are powerful within the village. There are a total of seven *pogora* households in these nine clans. They include the following seven families: B1-12 Gendisha Kashalla (Saudatta), B2-6 Gorono

Table 3. Clan identity of main compound couple.

Identity	Male	Female	Total
Keeluditta	72	42	114
Alugamaida	29	25	54
Saudatta	23	26	49
Toogumaleida	21	27	48
Maalodaida	15	22	37
Ishalaida	15	15	30
Paasanda	11	14	25
Mahaleida	7	12	19
Tiguseida	7	10	17
Okodomaida	4	3	7
Total	204	196	400

Giloiya (Saudatta), B2-7 Abebe Abelle (Keeluditta), B5-10 Kalasoo Kaiyato (Keeluditta), B6-2 Attama Ailatte (Alugamaida), B7-7 Goola Gofale (Keeluditta), and B9-7 Juraado Durre (Mahaleeda). These families have gained this title by continuing for more than nine generations.

In terms of the historical relationship with the village, there is only one *pogora* in section B1, which is surrounded by the most ancient stone walls. The other six *pogora* show no correlation with the time of establishment of residence. This is because the *pogora* have not only continued for nine generations but also include more than a total of nine households including the compounds of brothers. In either case, the pots on the roof of the housing complexes within the *pogora* compound other than compound B1-12, are decorative. Compound B1-12, incidentally, is considered to be a small *pogora* (*pogora shakka*). Extended families exist within such kinship organization, and clan membership is transmitted patrilineally. An extended family generally lives in one compound, and the first son has priority in inheriting the compound and farmland. The second son and other brothers also have hereditary rights, but inheritances are significantly smaller than the eldest son's. New compounds are made upon marriage, and the compound and wedding expenses are provided by the first son.

In addition to the title for the kinship organization, there are words in Sewgame to differentiate the first son (*garuta*) from younger sons (*kushitta*). These titles also have a very important meaning. The differences between the first son and younger sons is apparent not only in the share of inheritance but also in various aspects of social life in Sewgame. For example, most of the children occupying the work-huts by the Segan river are second or younger sons. They are the ones who are forced to engage in the hardest labor. Their sisters at the work-huts cultivate the farmland by the Segan river and it is common for both boys and girls to live alone. This site is also the point of contact with the Borana people, and thus, grazing and farming in this area is extremely dangerous.

During the dry season after the harvest, these children have to carry the crops they have stored in the work-hut such as sorghum, sweet potato and cassava, up to Sewgame, around 1,000 m higher in altitude. Furthermore, after selling the cattle, goat or sheep that are also raised in Sewgame, another cattle can be delivered from the work-hut by the children to be replenished.

Segregation exists not only in such work practices but also in daily games and play. From the evening until night it is common to hear the boys playing in the square. They play a sort of catch-ball (*kurreila*), in which a ball is tossed high and caught. This game is played in groups of first sons and younger sons. A unique shout of joy echoes through the air when the ball is caught five times in succession. It seems that they are forced into awareness of being either a first son or a younger son through such games. The ranking of the first and younger sons also involves an important relationship with the pot on the roof. I shall refer to this relation in the next chapter.

Last but not least, let me briefly note another important social organization, called *faraida*, which until recently was a sort of political organization. It seems that it was significantly functional before infiltration of the *kebele* organization, since when it has been reduced to a shell and started to lose their meaning. Each *faraida* has a *kalim*, which indicates a sort of age-system and specifies one of three groups: *hiluba*, *kaalugusa* and *meelugusa*. Back when the *faraida* system was strictly practiced, power rotated regularly among these three, with one *faraida* taking on the role of politically unifying the entire Konso as well as governing Sewgame for nine years. All Konso belong to one of these three *faraida* through patrilineage. In other words, a child of a *hiluba* father becomes a *hiluba*. Each village is complete with three *faraida* representatives, called *bolushoota* (for *hiluba*), *helitta* (*kaalugusa*) and *shologoota* (*meelugusa*). These representatives are responsible for resolving any disputes in and between the villages and problems concerning the entire Konso.

Another norm of marriage besides clan exogamy is related with the *faraida* system and allows marriage only during one's own group's period of rule, i.e., in only 9 years of the 27 year cycle of rule. Thus, for example, a child born during the ninth year of his group's rule will get married during the group's next period of rule, i.e., between 18 and 27 years of

age. If this chance is not taken, the next one will arise at between 45 and 54 years of age. Membership of *faraida* in Sewgame is said to be transmitted patrilineally. However, because the *faraida* system has lost its power, we found that several marriages covered by our survey did not observe this norm.

4. THE POT ON THE ROOF

Having examined the social organization and structure of Sewgame, we turn now to the relationship between these and the pots on the roof.

With their outstanding agricultural techniques, the Konso is one of the three ethnic groups in the Ethiopian highlands who cultivate the land and skillfully build terraces on the mountainsides (Amborn 1989). Far from Tigre in the north of Ethiopia and Harer in the east, and in this sense isolated in the south, only the Konso possess the skill of stone-terracing. However, not only do the Konso built stone-terraces to create fields on the mountainside, they are also well known for the cloth which is traded in a wide area of Southern Ethiopia (Kluckhohn 1962). Furthermore, among a number of Konso villages to the east, Sewgame is one of the villages which specializes in making pots.

A typical Konso compound is shown in Fig. 3. This kind of compound would normally be for an extended family. Most compounds are rectangular in plan, but as they stand close together and the fences dividing neighboring compounds are jointly owned, they are often irregular in shape. The unit surrounded by the fence (*ohinda*) is called *tiga*. The wooden fence is quite high, reaching two or three meters, and there are usually one or two gates (*hara*) in the fence through which people and livestock pass.

Inside the gate, the ground is divided into two levels, the lower called *alhatta* and the upper, *oida*. On the lower level there are huts (*kosa* and *laaga*) for the livestock and for storing sorghum and other harvested crops. Living quarters are built on the upper level to suit the number of families, being either traditional Konso houses called *mana*, or *aleeda*, which are thought to be derived from the Amhara people. Thus the *oida* is the living space for the family, while the lower *alhatta* is the space for livestock and grain.

On the *oida* level there are normally two or three *aleeda* or *mana*. In the case of an extended family, everyday life centers around the two wives, the older and the younger. Sucking babies and small children stay with their mothers, but older children and unmarried daughters stay in a separate *aleeda*. The men sleep in the *kosa* on the *alhatta* level or in a separate *aleeda* if there is one. The unmarried men of the family are called *pongora* and they sleep in the *bafta*, a men's hut built in a corner of the village square (*mora*). Many villages no longer have *bafta*, but Sewgame has two in the main squares in the village.

The compounds with their jointly owned fences are linked together like a labyrinth, form-

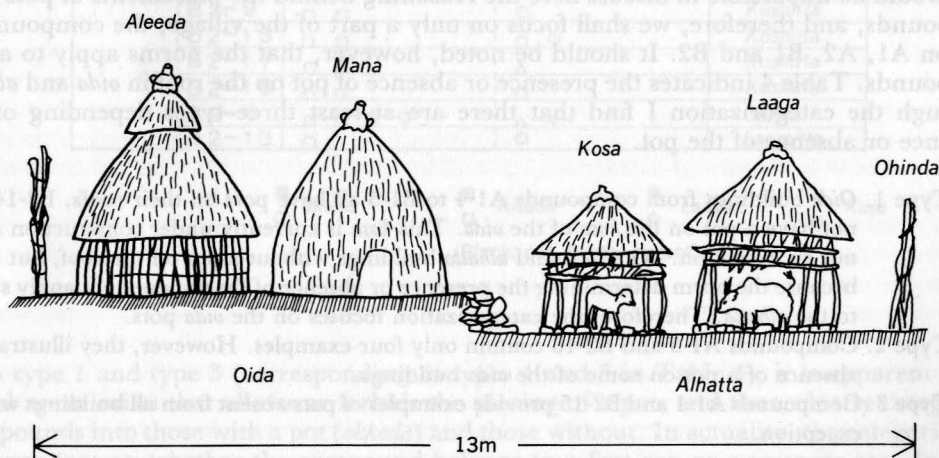


Fig.3. Sketch of compound.

ing a tightly clustered village overall. The village is surrounded by a circular wall of stone, thus it is known as a stone-walled town. The main routes in Sewgame linking compound to compound are seven roads leading to the center and two forming a ring road around the village (Fig. 2). Surrounded by its wooden fence, the compound is the basic dwelling unit for an extended family (men with several wives sometimes have separate compounds for them). At the point where the roads meet is the sacred square, the *mora*. It is here that the Konso perform their important rites and dances. It is where the elders and children can relax, and where the men spin cotton into yarn and weave cloth. The villagers maintain friendly relation with their neighbors by walking along this maze of roads inside the village and going from compound to compound. Such an arrangement of houses is fairly general in Konso villages.

Seen from the village gate, the compounds are crowded together in tiers from the top of the mountain. Also immediately obvious is a certain phenomenon which illustrates the relation between the compound and the pot on the roof. The upper half of a pot is fitted onto the roofs of the group of buildings which make up the compound. This is the pot on the roof mentioned in the title. Close inspection reveals that the pots vary from compound to compound. They can be grouped into the following patterns.

Pattern 1. A broken half-pot is placed on the roofs of all buildings in the compound (*mana*, *aleeda* and *kosa* on the *oida*, and *kosa*, *laaga* and *shonga* on the *alhatta*).

Pattern 2. No pot is placed on any of the buildings in the compound.

Pattern 3. A broken half-pot is placed only on a certain *aleeda* or *mana* in the *oida* (and sometimes on a certain *kosa* on the *alhatta* too).

Pattern 4. Sometimes there is no pot on the *mana* or *aleeda* living quarters in the *oida*, but the other buildings have pots on the roofs.

Pattern 5. The pots on the roofs of the buildings on the *oida* are sometimes purely decorative. This is also true of patterns 1 and 3 above. Decorated with superfluous handles and phallic ornaments, it is evident that from the outset only the upper half of the pot was made. The usual pots on the other roofs had been in daily use before they were broken in two and the upper half placed on the roof. In other words, the decorative pots are the upper half of pots that have no use, and not pots that have been broken.

Such is the relation between the compound and the pot on the roof, as deduced from my observations. What remains to be solved is the significance behind these phenomena.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POT AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

It would be impossible to discuss here the reasoning behind the placements of pots in all compounds, and therefore, we shall focus on only a part of the village, the compounds of section A1, A2, B1 and B2. It should be noted, however, that the norms apply to all the compounds. Table 4 indicates the presence or absence of pot on the roof in *oida* and *alhatta*. Through the categorization I find that there are at least three types depending on the presence or absence of the pot.

Type 1. *Oida* buildings from compounds A1-4 to B1-5 all have pots on their roofs. B2-14 does not have a pot on the *kosa* of the *oida*. This *kosa* is currently under construction and is not an exception. We often find *alhatta* buildings without a pot on the roof, but this is because the norm determining the presence or absence of the pot does not apply strictly to the *alhatta*. Therefore, the categorization focuses on the *oida* pots.

Type 2. Compounds A1-5 and B2-18 contain only four examples. However, they illustrate the absence of a pot on some of the *oida* buildings.

Type 3. Compounds A1-1 and B2-15 provide examples of pots absent from all buildings without exception.

Table 4. Constitution of compounds.

Type	No. of Compound	Oida	Alhatta	Garuta Kushitta
1	A 1-4	■ ■ ■ ■	△ * *	Garuta
	A 2-4	● ■ ■ ■ *	△	Garuta
	B 1-1	■ ■ ■ *	△ △ *	Garuta
	B 1-2	● ■ ■ *	△ △	Garuta
	B 1-5	■ ■	△ *	Garuta
	B 1-8	■ ■	△ *	Garuta
	B 1-10	● ■ ■ *	*	Garuta
	B 1-12	● ■ ■ ■ *	*	Garuta
	B 2-1	● ■ ■ *	△ *	Garuta
	B 2-3	● ■ ■ ■ △ * *	* *	Garuta
	B 2-4	■ ■ ■ *		Garuta
	B 2-7	■ *	*	Garuta
	B 2-10	● ■ ■ *	△ *	Garuta
	B 2-11	● ■ ■ *	*	Garuta
	B 2-12	● ■ ■ ○	△ △ △	Garuta
	B 2-14	■ ■ ■ *	△	Garuta
	B 2-19	■ ■ ■ *	△	Garuta
	A 2-1	■ ■	*	Kushitta
	B 1-5	■	*	Lanmitta
2	A 1-5	■ □		Kushitta
	A 2-2	○ ■ ○		Kushitta
	B 2-6	● ■ □	■ ■ △ △	Garuta
	B 2-16	○ ■ *	*	Garuta
3	A 1-1	○ □ ○	○	Kushitta
	A 1-2	□ ○		Kushitta
	A 1-3	□	○	Kushitta
	A 1-6	□ □	○	Kushitta
	A 1-7	□ □ ○	△	Kushitta
	A 2-3	□ ○	○	Kushitta
	B 1-3	□	○	Kushitta
	B 1-4	□	○	Kushitta
	B 1-6	□ ○		Kushitta
	B 1-7	○ □ ○	△ △ ○	Kushitta
	B 1-9	□		Kushitta
	B 1-11	□		Kushitta
	B 1-13	□ □	△ ○	Kushitta
	B 2-8	□ ○	○	Kushitta
	B 2-9	□ □	○	Kushitta
	B 2-15	□ □	□ ○	Kushitta
	B 2-17	□ □	△	Kushitta
	B 2-18	□ □	△	Kushitta
	B 2-5	□ □ ○ ○	△ ○	Garuta
	B 2-13	○	○	Lanmitta

● Mana
○

■ Aleeda
□

* Laaga
○

△ Kosa
△

(Black: pot, White: no pot)

In type 1 and type 3 (corresponding to types 1 and 3 in Table 4), it is apparent that a social norm exists that allows or forbids the placing of a pot, and thus, clearly categorizes compounds into those with a pot (*okkoda*) and those without. In actuality, the categorization is dependent on whether the compound belongs to a first son or a younger son. In other words, the pot on the roof indicates whether the compound belongs to a first son or a

younger son.

As mentioned earlier, an extended family usually lives in a compound. If, for example, three generations live together in a compound, several cases can be considered in terms of its composition. If a man in the first generation of this extended family is the eldest son, he will have the right to place a pot on various buildings in the compound. However, if he is a younger son, no pot will be placed on the buildings constructed by him. For a younger son, the placing of a pot is prohibited by the norms of society. A younger son establishes a new compound in Sewgame, Buso or Salaale upon marriage. And the absence of a pot in a compound indicates that it was established by a first-generation man under these circumstances. However, what happens when this man has children, and his first son gets married and established a new *aleeda* in the same compound? This situation gives rise to a compound of type 2. If the first son of a younger son establishes a new *aleeda* in the compound upon marriage, he is considered to be the eldest son, and thus, has the right to place pot on the *aleeda*. Thus, any compound of the Sewgame can shift from type 3 to type 2 and then to type 1 with the passage of generations.

Type 1 thus includes compounds that was founded by the eldest son and have passed through several generations. Type 3 indicates that the first generation is a younger son and that the second generation son is still single. It also indicates that the compound was constructed fairly recently. Table 4 indicates the relationship of the pot on the roof in the case of the eldest son and the younger son, and it can be said that the definition clearly applies in these cases.

Lanmitta, which is present for type 1 and type 3, refers to a compound in which second and third wives and their children live. The first wife does not live here. Regardless of being a *lanmitta*, we find that presence or absence of a pot on the roof is dependent on the man's qualification to place a pot.

There are two exceptions. In the case of A2-1, regardless of this being the compound of a second son, there were pots on every roof. In the case of B2-5, this compound had no pots on any roof despite of being the compound of the eldest son. I was told that this was because the family had moved to *koomaida* (Fig. 1), built a big work-hut by the Segan river, and placed a pot on the roof there instead.

The major Sewgame norm governing the presence or absence of a pot is whether the compound belongs to the eldest son or a younger son. Fig. 2 also illustrates the relationship with the village structure. It shows the developmental process of Sewgame village, in which the outer stone wall around the village was built most recently, the middle stone wall was built earlier, and the smallest stone wall represents the oldest form of the village. Furthermore, the distribution of first and younger sons within the space surrounded by these walls also significantly reflects this developmental process (Fig. 4). In other words, as indicated in Fig. 4, the space between the outside road and the inside road is mainly occupied by the compounds of younger sons, and most of the inner compounds are inhabited by first sons. This circular village has expanded by creating compounds outside for younger sons.

Are there any norms restricting the placing of pots in Sewgame other than those governing eldest and younger sons? In Table 4, compounds of type 2, having pots on some roofs in the compound, represent the process of shift from type 3 to type 1. However, this is not only dependent on the norms mentioned up to this point, but may indicate the absence of a pot due to other norms. Of the four examples of type 2, A1-5 and A2-2 are compounds of a younger son that have a pot on the *aleeda*. This indicates that the man who is not a first born and whose eldest son has got married, placed a pot on the roof of the *aleeda* where he and his wife live. However, this norm does not apply to B2-6 and B2-18. Even though a pot could be placed on buildings constructed by the first son due to marriage, that is, generally the only one *aleeda* of the *oida*, no pot should be placed on other *oida* or *alhatta* buildings, contrary to what is seen in these two examples. Furthermore, it is said that the first generation consists of the eldest sons. In short, there is the contradiction between the former two and latter two in the way pots are placed on the buildings. The former have only one building with a pot, in which the son and his wife live. In contrast, the latter have only one building without a pot on the *oida*. What causes this difference? The reason for the buildings in com-

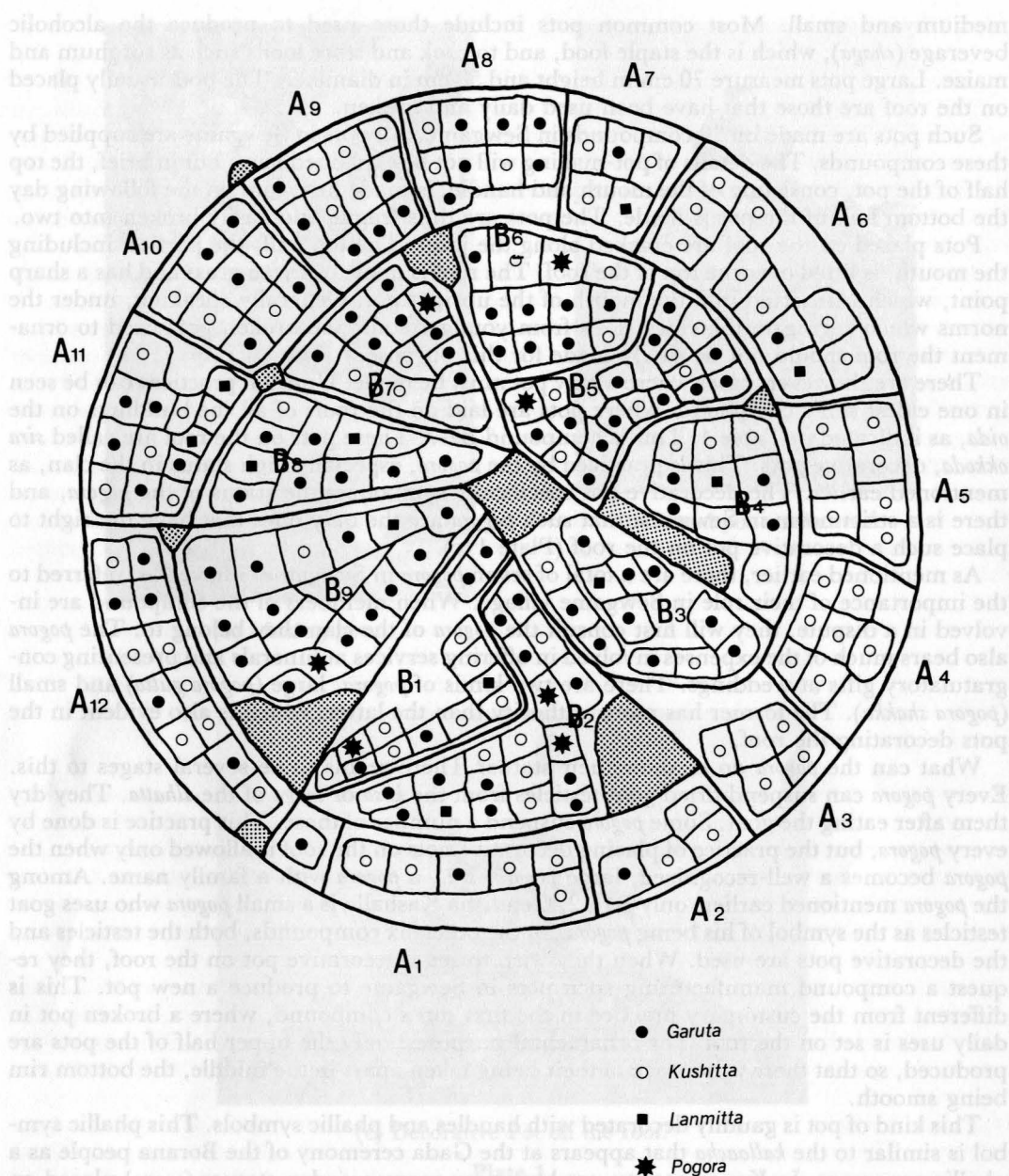


Fig.4. Distribution of Garuta and Kushitta (Using the same figure of Fig. 2).

pounds B2-6 and B2-18 without a pot indicates the one of the spouses who used to live in the building has died within the past five years. In Sewgame, it is the norm to remove the pot for five years from the *aleeda* or *mana* of residence of someone who has died. The period of removal was reported as either one year or five years depending on the informant. Whatever the case, the pot is removed at least for a while. Removal of the pot indicates that the family is in mourning for the deceased. There are a lot of norms about mourning, but they are omitted here.

The norms mentioned hitherto are observed in Sewgame village and probably by the western part of Konso. Then, what kind of pots are placed on the roof? These can be categorized into two types. The most common type comes in three sub-types, large,

medium and small. Most common pots include those used to produce the alcoholic beverage (*chaga*), which is the staple food, and to cook and store foods such as sorghum and maize. Large pots measure 70 cm in height and 50 cm in diameter. The pots usually placed on the roof are those that have been used daily and broken.

Such pots are made by 30 compounds in Sewgame. All pots in Sewgame are supplied by these compounds. The details of pot-making will not be explained here; but in brief, the top half of the pot, consisting of the mouth and handle, is made first, and on the following day the bottom half of the pot is made. The pots are thus fragile and easily broken into two.

Pots placed on the roof are cracked along the joint. The top half, the portion including the mouth, is fitted over the top of the roof. The roof is made of *aegitta* grass and has a sharp point, which is inserted into the mouth of the upright pot. Generally speaking, under the norms which segregate the eldest sons from younger sons, the broken pots used to ornament the roof should not be newly made for this purpose.

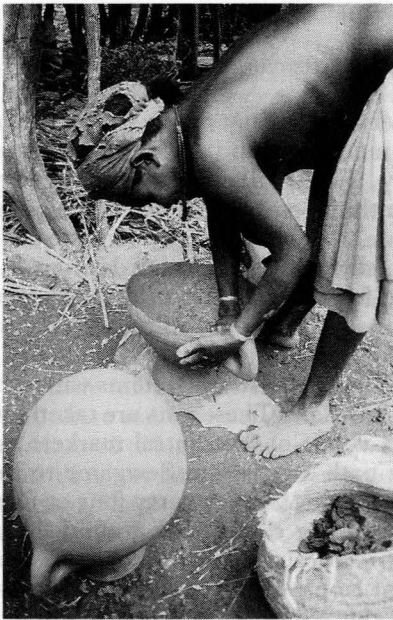
There are, however, cases where a new pot must be made. Unusual practices can be seen in one eldest son's compound, where pots are laid on the roofs of all the buildings on the *oida*, as indicated in Table 4. This is compound B2-7. These pots on the roof are called *sira okkoda*, decorative pots. This is practiced by the *pogora*, especially high status in the clan, as mentioned earlier. The decorative pot specifically symbolizes the status of the *pogora*, and there is a strict norm in Sewgame that such *pogora* are the only ones that have the right to place such a decorative pot on the roof (Plate 1-c).

As mentioned earlier, there are a total of seven *pogora* in Sewgame. I have also referred to the importance of their role in Sewgame village. When members of the compound are involved in a dispute, they will first consult the *pogora* of the clan they belong to. The *pogora* also bears much of the expenses involved in offering services at funerals and presenting congratulatory gifts at weddings. There are two kinds of *pogora*, large (*pogora gutta*) and small (*pogora shakka*). The former has more authority than the latter, which is also evident in the pots decorating the roof.

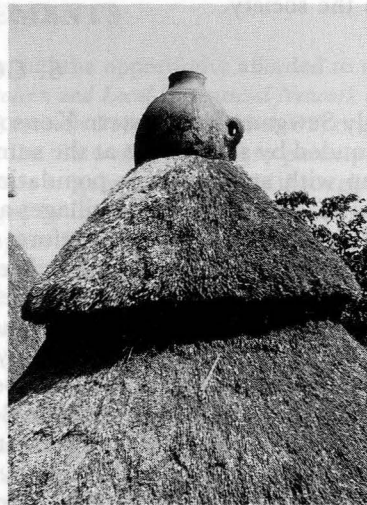
What can the *pogora* do to show their status? There seems to be several stages to this. Every *pogora* can suspend dried goat testicles from the *kosa* or *laaga* of the *alhatta*. They dry them after eating the goat. Some *pogora* suspend a number of these. This practice is done by every *pogora*, but the practice of placing decorative pots on the roof is allowed only when the *pogora* becomes a well-recognized, large *pogora*, i.e., a *pogora* with a family name. Among the *pogora* mentioned earlier, only B1-12, Gendisha Kashalla is a small *pogora* who uses goat testicles as the symbol of his being *pogora*. In the other six compounds, both the testicles and the decorative pots are used. When they wish to set a decorative pot on the roof, they request a compound manufacturing such pots in Sewgame to produce a new pot. This is different from the customary practice in the first son's compound, where a broken pot in daily uses is set on the roof. For ornamental purposes, only the upper half of the pots are produced, so that there is no trace of their being taken apart in the middle, the bottom rim being smooth.

This kind of pot is gaudily decorated with handles and phallic symbols. This phallic symbol is similar to the *kallaacha* that appears at the Gada ceremony of the Borana people as a phallic ornament. In Konso society, we have seen many wooden statues (*waga*) placed on both sides of the entrance in front of village gates. These statues commemorate the heroes who fought and were killed in battles to defend that village. The statues represent legendary figures with leopards, lions and snakes which are carved on their bodies. They also wear a *kallaacha* on the head which resembles the one seen during the Gada ceremony of Borana people. This is an important cultural element shared by the Konso and the Borana.

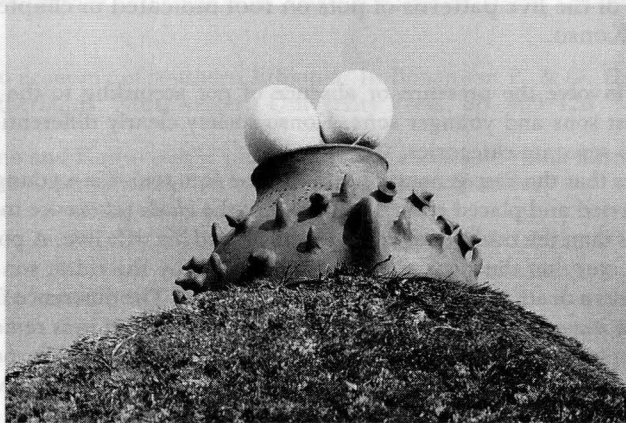
The phallic symbol appearing on the decorative pots used by *pogora* are intended not merely as symbols of *pogora* but also to display the authority in the village. This indication of authority is strengthened in the case of a large *pogora* by the placing of two ostrich eggs on the edge of a decorative pot. When an *aleeda* in a *pogora* compound is newly built or roofs are newly thatched, yellow fruits and wild plants are added to the decoration of the pot. Sometimes cylindrical quartzite stones are put into the pot. When the father dies in such a compound, the decorative pot is not removed from the *aleeda* or *mana* where the father lived,



(a) Making pot



(b) Usual pot on the roof



(c) Decorative Pot on the roof.

Plate 1.

but the ostrich eggs are taken down instead. B6-2, the Attama Ailatte compound, was an example of this.

There are ten open spaces in the village of Sewgame which are called *mora*. Three of ten are important squares for various ceremonies. These are called the *mora karagutta*, *mora oibetaale*, and *mora olupaiya* (Tadesse 1991). The *bafta* in these *mora* are now places for the young people to lodge, but in ancient times when day-to-day battles took place, warriors used to lodge there. Decorative pots can also be found on the *bafta* of *mora oibetaale* and *mora olupaiya*. As in the case of the *pogora* in Sewgame, the importance of *bafta* in the square is indicated in this fact. As is clear from the above, we can see what the pot on the roof signifies in Sewgame. The pots are not mere ornaments but social symbols that sharply reflect

phases in the society.

6. CONCLUSION

Not only Sewgame but western Konso villages employ the pot on the roof. Konso villages are surrounded by stone walls at the summit of a mountain, and the compounds are densely built-up with an incredible population density. These villages are often referred to as Konso towns. The paths in the villages are labyrinthine, and the numerous compounds are separated by wooden fences. Therefore, the pots on the roof are not systematically lined up and do not immediately reveal the existence of an effective social norm. However, through close observation several patterns can be extracted from the appearance of these pots, as indicated in chapter 4. I also found that these patterns project concepts of the social structure idealized by the people in Konso society. Pots are important utensils in daily life, used in cooking, storing and making alcoholic beverage. They are also trade items within the Konso market (*urumara*) as well as with the Borana and Gidole. These pots are taken by women along with Konso cotton textiles to Teltele which is one of the central markets in Borana situated south of the Segan river. They take the path down from Sewgame to the Segan river at an altitude of 1,000 m, then climb again to Teltele. They carry four or five pots on their head with the hope of selling them. The walking distance is around 20 km. The Borana people also purchase agricultural goods, textiles and pots that the Konso people deliver to Teltele. There are even some permanent Konso stores in Teltele selling alcoholic beverage (*chaga*). Borana people come to drink the Konso *chaga*. The Konso have also affected the housing style in Teltele, where pots are placed on the roofs of Borana households. We have mentioned the importance of the pot as a daily utensil and a trade item as well as its role in symbolizing the social structure of the Konso. Finally, we can summarize significance of the five patterns of pots on roof indicated in chapter 4 in terms of the social structure of Konso.

- (1) Pattern 1 and 2 involve the presence or absence of pot according to the norm based on the categories of eldest sons and younger sons. Konso society clearly differentiates eldest sons and younger sons into separate categories.
- (2) Pattern 3 indicates that the first-generation male of the compound is a younger son, and that his eldest son has married and placed a pot on the roof of the *aleeda* (*aleeda* are more common among newly built houses than the traditional *mana*) where he and his wife live. A pot on the *kosa* or *laaga* of the *alhatta* indicates that the storage house is controlled by the eldest son.
- (3) Pattern 4 symbolizes a death in the first generation or higher. The difference from pattern 2 is that only the pot on the *mana* or *aleeda* of the *oida* that the deceased lived in is removed. However, this norm does not apply to the *pogora* compounds. Instead of removing the pot, they remove the ostrich eggs that are attached to the decorative pot. The duration of removal is said to be five years.
- (4) Pattern 5 is fixed after nine generations and indicates that a compound with a *pogora* title has been earned. The decorative pots are used to symbolize compounds with the title of large *pogora*. The attachments to the decorative pots on the roof of the *mana* or *aleeda* are removed when someone living in the household passes away. The duration in this case is also five years. When a new pot is placed on the roof, it must be newly made.

The Konso are a group of skilled farmers as well as skilled craftsmen. The structure of society is as complex as the village structure. What we have noted here is only a part of its structure, that pertaining to the various norms concerned with the pot on the roof in the Konso compound. The pot on the Konso roof is indeed a symbolic communication tool filled with meaning. When an outsider, entering a completely new world, would make an effort to understand the world of the Konso, the pot on the roof might be one of the first things to investigate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is the result of support from many people and the opportunity afforded to me to participate in the *Anthropological Study on the Subsistent Pastoralism and Local Commercial Network in Northern Area of East Africa* (Monbuscho International Scientific Research Program, 1990-1992) organized by Dr. Shun Sato of Tsukuba University. I deeply thank Dr. Sato allowing me to participate in this study. It must also be noted that the survey in Ethiopia was largely made possible through the efforts of Dr. Katsuyoshi Fukui of Kyoto University. I engaged in the anthropological study in Ethiopia under a joint project with I. E. S. (Institute of Ethiopian Studies) entitled *Comparative Studies on Agricultural and Pastoral Societies in Northeast Africa*, under an agreement between Addis Ababa University and the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Taddese Beyene and Mr. Ahmed Zakaria of I. E. S. for assisting me in various ways as contacts in Ethiopia. I also extend my thanks to the Japanese Embassy of Ethiopia and JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) for their information and material support. Furthermore, Mr. Tadesse Worde of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Arba Minch was of great help in the survey of the Konso. My deep appreciation is owed to him in every respect. Last but not least, I extend my sincerest appreciation to Gaiyana and his family for opening their house to me in Sewgame and to the people of Sewgame for their kindness and hospitality in making this survey meaningful.

REFERENCES

- Amborn, H.
1989 Agricultural intensification in the Burji-Konso cluster of south-western Ethiopia. *Azania* XXIV: 71-83.
- Hallpike, C. R.
1972 *The Konso of Ethiopia — A Study of the Values of a Cushitic People*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Kluckhohn, R.
1962 The Konso economy of southern Ethiopia. In Bohannan P. & G. Dalton (eds.) *Markets in Africa*. Netherlands: Northwestern University Press, pp. 409-428
- Tadesse, W.
1991 Some Gamo and Konso public places and their social and ritual functions. Paper prepared for the XIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies.