

## LANGUAGE & CULTURE

The languages spoken by the Gurage are known as the Gurage languages. The variations among these languages are used to group the Gurage people into three dialectically varied subgroups: *Northern*, *Eastern* and *Western*. However, the largest group within Eastern subgroup, known as the *Silt'e*, are identified foremost as Muslims .

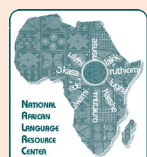
The Gurage live a sedentary life based on agriculture, involving a complex system of crop rotation and transplanting. *Ensete* is their main staple crop, but other cash crops are grown, which include coffee and Khat. Animal husbandry is practiced, but mainly for milk supply and dung. Other foods consumed include green cabbage, cheese, butter, and roasted grains with meat consumption being very limited

The Gurage raise *Zebu* cattle. These cattle give very little milk, which is seldom drunk. Instead, it is churned into butter. a typical Gurage household has a large quantity of spiced butter aging in clay pots hung from the walls of their huts. Butter is believed to be medicinal, and the Gurage often take it internally or use it a lotion or poultice. A Gurage proverb states that “*A sickness that has the upperhand over butter is destined for death.*” Different species of ensete are also eaten to alleviate illness.

The Gurage regard overeating as coarse and vulgar, and regard it as poor etiquette to eat all of the ensete that a host passes around to guests. It is considered polite to leave at least some ensete bread even after a very small portion is passed around. It is typically expected that a Gurage will extend hospitality to their neighbors and kinfolk in dispensing ensete freely to them. However, Gurage often hoard extra food and eat it secretly to avoid having to share it.

## STUDYING GURAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC web site at <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>



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# GURAGE



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