

# Life in Eritrea & Ethiopia



*Eritrean flag*



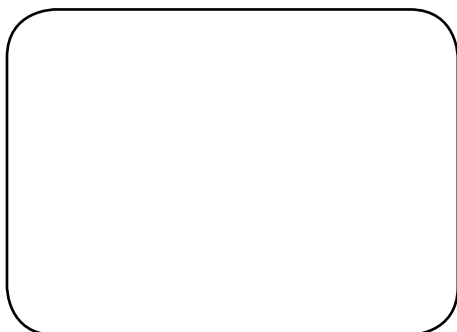
*Ethiopian flag*

Notes for Teachers



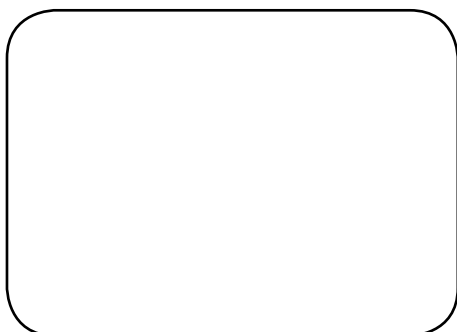
# About the objects

1



Plastic sandals (Kongos). During the liberation struggle every Eritrean fighter was issued with one pair of kongos a year. The Eritrean People's Liberation Army manufactured the sandals in a little factory hidden in the mountains, producing about 100,000 pairs a year. The sandals are cheap and practical for walking on rough ground in hot weather. Similar plastic or rubber sandals, some made from recycled car tyres, are found in many developing countries. But smart fashion shoes are available too. In Ethiopia expensive leather shoes are made for export to Italy.

2



Kid skin. These have many uses. They can be a seat or stool cover or a mat. In villages they are used to cover the traditional stone and mud platform bed which children sleep on. In towns they are often used for decoration.

3



Musical instrument (Tsenatsil). This is used by priests when they sing hymns in the Orthodox Church. The handle is made from a bullet casing - everything in Eritrea gets recycled!

4



Wooden cross (Meskel). Always carried by a qualified priest of the Orthodox Church. They are usually passed down from one priest to another. Most priests have several crosses, some very elaborate and made of bronze or silver. A believer meeting a priest kisses the cross as the priest holds it out in front of him. Ethiopian Orthodox churches are often beautifully decorated with elaborate paintings all over the walls and ceilings. Some of the ancient churches are built inside rocky hills by carving out from above; these have become famous tourist attractions.

5

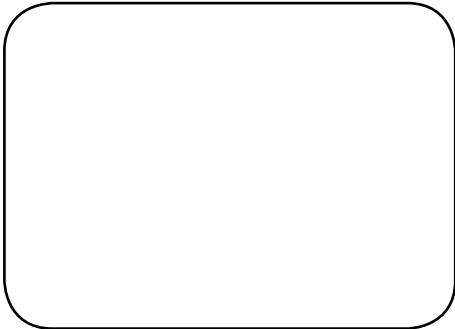


Small drum (Koborro). This is a model of a larger drum. It is made out of a tin can, covered with stretched goat skin and decorated with paintings showing domestic scenes. The decorations on this model are in a similar style to much of Ethiopian and Eritrean traditional painting. Real versions are not usually decorated. In the highland areas the koborro is slung over the shoulder and played with both hands on one end. The drummer often dances round with the other dancers at celebrations like a wedding. In the lowland areas of Eritrea it is always played by a woman, sitting down with the drum between her knees.

# About the objects



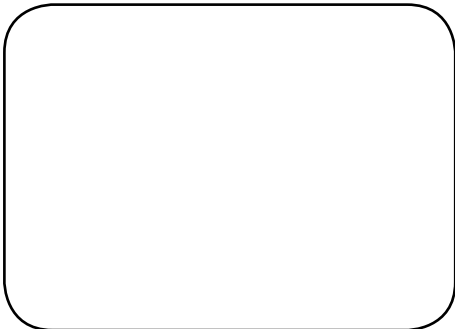
6a



**Coffee Ceremony Materials.** The coffee ceremony is an important part of life in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, although increasingly there is less time to spend on it, especially for people working in towns and cities. Ethiopians are horrified by the way we drink coffee and by instant coffee; they usually drink tea, beer, water or soft drinks as refreshment, coffee is something special. The name coffee comes from an area in Ethiopia where it is still grown. Some of the finest coffee, especially Mocha, is grown in Ethiopia.

a) **Long handled pan** - for roasting the beans.

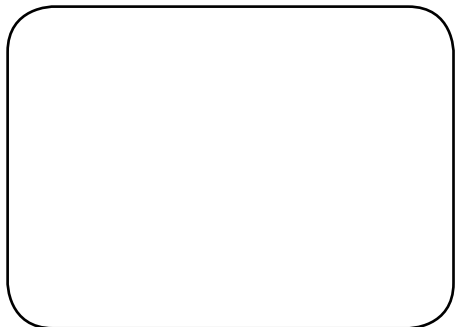
6b



b) **Coffee pot (jebena).**

There are several styles; some have a handle, some don't, and the colour of the pottery differs according to the area, but they are all round bottomed and narrow necked.

6c



c) **Tin pouring pot**

To pour the ground beans into the coffee pot.

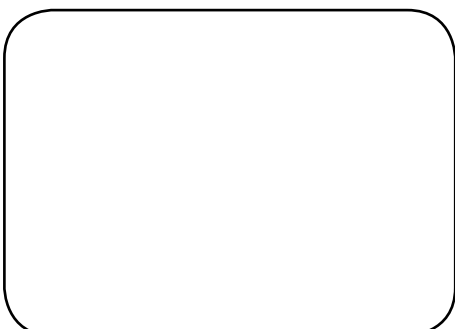
6d



d) **Fan (Mishrafat)**

Used to fan the flames of charcoal or wood in the stove when cooking or making coffee.

6e



e) **Small coffee cup (finjal)**

Ethiopian and Eritrean coffee is served very strong and black (rather like Italian espresso). At least three of these small cups are served to each person at a coffee ceremony.



# About the objects

6f



## f) Tin coffee table (towla boon)

This is a cheap quality version of a typical coffee table, better quality ones are made from wood. This one is made from recycled vegetable oil tins. The round hole in the top is for the coffee pot, the cups and other utensils are stored in the space below.

6g



## g) incense burner (Mebokorria)

A pot like this, or a bowl, is used to hold smouldering pieces of incense and fragrant wood. The scents mingle with the smell of coffee during the ceremony and fill the room. Hot popcorn is also often served, which adds to the rich smells.

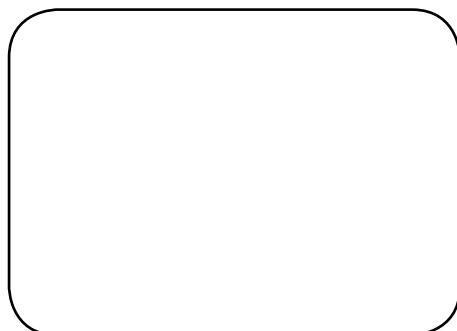
7



## Model of baby sling (Mahzel).

A small model of a sling used to carry babies on their parents' back in rural areas. It would be used with leather straps to tie across the mother's chest. The decorations are cowrie shells from the Red Sea.

8



## Dish cover (Mekombia)

Made from grass covered in wool with a handle fitted with small beans or stones to weight it. This is used to cover a dish of food to keep off flies. Traditional meals are served on a small circular table made of similar materials and brightly coloured. This is not flat topped, but has a hollow into which a tray of food can be placed. Sometimes food is served on a huge piece of flat bread (injera). Diners sit around the table and tear off bits of injera to scoop up food from the centre.

9



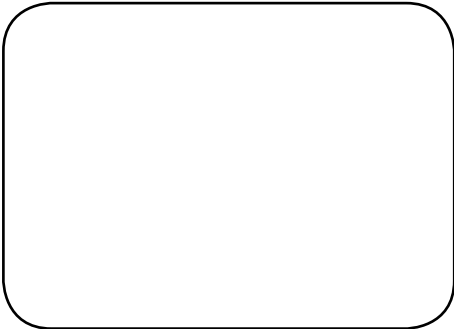
## Shopping bag.

Made from recycled milk cartons. Bags are also made from the plastic sacks in which grain or beans are packed.

# About the objects



10



## Plastic jug

This is made in a plastics factory in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. They make a range of plastic products which are replacing some of the more traditional pottery. Plastic products are also imported in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, but there is concern about the environmental consequences of using too much plastic.

11



## Toothbrush stick

Please don't throw this stick away! Twigs like this are used as tooth polishers in many countries. The ends are bashed to fray them and then they are used just like toothbrushes. Western-style toothbrushes are also used, but these wooden ones are free, environmentally friendly and work well.

12



## Enamel plate

Enamel plates, mugs and jugs are common. This one is imported from China.

13



## Pasta packet

This bit of ephemera is included to show one aspect of Eritrea's and Ethiopia's close links with Italy. Pasta is very popular and is made in both countries. There are pasta and pizza restaurants in most towns and cities and takeaway pizzas are also popular.

14



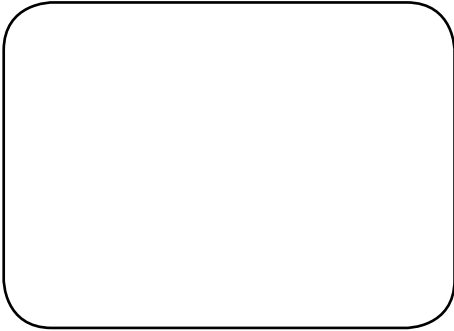
## Coca Cola bottle

Coca Cola, Pepsi and most of the other popular international soft drink brands are available, some of them are made and bottled locally. Alongside these are available some delicious, and much healthier, local specialities like exotic fruit juices, sometimes combined in carefully poured separate stripes, served in tall glasses.



# About the objects

15



## **Stool**

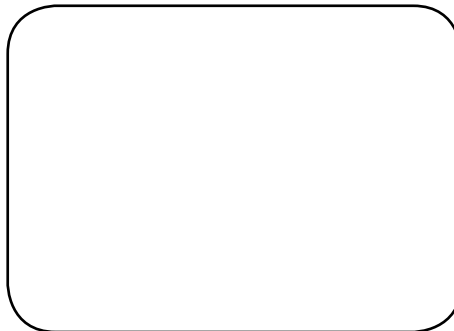
Stools are more commonly used than chairs in many homes; they are easy to carry around and can be taken to markets or outdoor meetings. In some areas children have to take their own stools to school.

16



## **Letter with Eritrean stamps**

17



## **Tape of Ethiopian music**

Ethiopian and Eritrean music and dance is quite distinctive. One traditional dance involves complicated shoulder movements. At dances and discos music from all over Africa is played.

18



## **School text book**

At secondary school level the medium of teaching is English in both countries. Eritrea has a national curriculum and schools are inspected several times a year! Most city schools are badly overcrowded with between 50 and 100 pupils in a class.

19



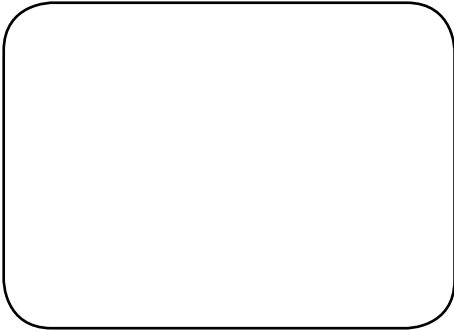
## **Two school exercise books**

One of these has work in English, one in Tigrinya. They belonged to an 11 year old Eritrean girl.

# About the objects



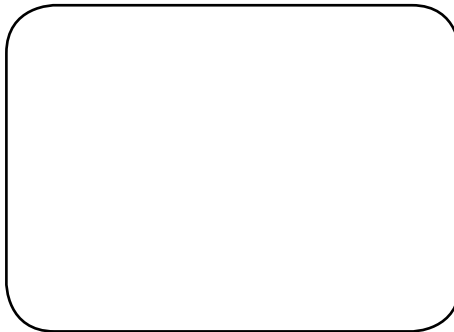
20



## **Cloth ball**

Children in poorer families rarely have many shop-bought toys, although these are available for those who can afford them. Many children make their own toys, like this ball; some are very clever and complicated, like model cars, diggers etc made from recycled wire and tin. In organised sport Ethiopia & Eritrea are best known for their athletes and gymnasts. Football is also very popular and many young people watch European matches on satellite TV. Basketball is also played in many schools.

21



## **Packet of tea**

Grown in the highland region of Ethiopia, where the climate is ideal for it.