

## **Revisiting Gamo: towards a better internal classification of the Ometo group**

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*This paper is an endeavor to a better internal classification of the Ometo group. Ometo is a linguistic group within the Omotic language family comprising several related languages and dialects spoken in the southern part of Ethiopia. In the existing internal classification of Ometo, Gamo is considered as a member of the North Ometo subgroup along with Wolaita Gofa, Dawuro, Oyda, Malo, etc. (Fleming 1976). This study will show that unlike other members of the North Ometo subgroup, Gamo is heterogeneous and it has a large diversity within it. Besides, the speakers of the various dialects of Gamo identify themselves and their speeches primarily as the small ethnic groups to which they belong such as Dorze, Ochollo, Boreda, Dac'e. The existing classification mistreats the dialect variants of Gamo as sister members to Gamo. The present study demonstrates that Gamo is non-existent as a speech variety. Gamo is manifested via its dialects that differ significantly phonologically, morphologically and lexically. This study suggests appropriateness of inclusion of a new subgroup within the North Ometo, namely GAMO, which comprises its own members. This paper also forwards some corrective remarks on the existing classification of the North Ometo variants. Some members which were identified as direct decedents of the North Ometo branch are reconsidered to occur under GAMO. This paper is based on lexical and grammatical data collected recently from the field.*