WHERE WOMEN SMOKE & BANANA TREES GROW NO FRUIT



Anthropologists at Work Challenges



Over the course of their field research, the expedition team faced several difficulties. One challenge for their research was the low population density at their destinations. Usually, they camped near the homesteads of local headmen, but apart from them and their families only few other compounds were in near walking distance. In the 1950s not only was the population of southern Ethiopia significantly lower than today, settling in villages was also uncommon.

Once informants were found, it was not easy to make them aware of the purpose of the expedition. While some did not understand the intentions of the anthropologists, others were suspicious that they were government spies.



Since informants often had to travel many hours, the anthropologists asked both individuals and entire groups to visit them in their camp, e.g. to perform dances.



The expedition team did not realize how difficult it would be to purchase local items. As most items were handmade or rare, only few people volunteered to sell or prepare new items for the anthropologists.



Most conversations relied on dual interpreting. This was of course not ideal, since many translators were policemen, which might have been intimidating for informants.