

Girls' Day

Every August, in the Tigray and Amhara regions of Ethiopia, women and girls participate in a celebration called Ashenda, or Girls' Day.

The festival of Ashenda comes after the two-week fasting period of Filseta. Filseta and Ashenda are said to honor Mary, the mother of Jesus. But the traditions of Ashenda are actually thousands of years old, and date from before the time that Ethiopia became Christian. The cultural practices of Ashenda originated in the ancient kingdom of Axiom in the 4th century AD.

During Ashenda, girls wear white cotton dresses with colorful embroidery called tilfi. They wear a lot of jewelry, too. They weave ashenda grass into their skirts, put on Kohl eyeliner, and wear five braids in their hair.

Ashenda can last for a week or more. On the first day, the girls and women gather in the town square to perform dances. Then the girls divide into groups and walk through town, singing and dancing and playing instruments.

The girls go door-to-door, collecting money, food, and drinks. Men don't participate in Ashenda, but they do give out gifts and watch the performances. When the day is over, the girls give the gifts to less fortunate people.

Traditional instruments of Ashenda include drums and kirars, which are stringed instruments. Traditional foods include a sourdough flatbread called injera. Stews and sauces are served with the bread. A local beer, called tella, is served. People also drink a honey wine called tej.

Ashenda is a time of celebration. It is also a way for Ethiopian women to pass on their cultural traditions to a new generation of girls.

When does Ashenda take place?

- A. Before Filset
- B. 4th century AD
- C. August
- D. Winter

What is tej?

- A. Sourdough bread
- B. Jewelry
- C. Eyeliner
- D. Honey wine

Which of the following is NOT a purpose of Ashenda?

- A. To celebrate women
- B. To honor men
- C. To pass down traditions
- D. To help the less fortunate

What is Ashenda named after?

- A. The bread they eat
- B. The stringed instrument they play
- C. The grass they weave into their skirts
- D. The dances they perform

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