

Margaret Konz

Robert Walker

6 May 2013

Questionnaire (put reference #:page # after each entry)

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Afar, Afar (alternate names: Adal, 'Afar Af, Afaraf, Danakil, Denkel, Qafar), Afro-Asiatic

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

aar

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

11.8167° N, 41.4167° E

1.4 Brief history:

“Adal, Adali, Oda’ali, Teltal and Dankali are names traditionally given to the Afar by neighboring people. [...]Despite all the names, the Afar invariably call themselves ‘Afar’, which has no meaning in the Afar language. Rainmondo Franchetti relates the word ‘Afar’ to the mythical Ophir the 11th, in the order of son of Joktan, son of Shem, son of Noah. Whereas the Afar rather believe themselves to be in the line of the generation of Kush, son of Ham, son of Noah, who were among the first Cushites to move from their original home and settle in the Danakil Depression. [...] The land inhabited by the Afar in the Horn region is well known as the cradle for early human origin⁶ and for its abundance of natural resources as well.” (6, 3-4)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

“As the making of the boundaries was entirely based on the vested interest of European expansionists that absolutely ignored the ethnic make-up of societies, similar ethno-linguistic groups were cut up to two or more adjacent states. These divisions, that gravely challenged the traditional administrative as well as socio-economic systems further fuelled conflicts in the Horn region. Among many cases of such tragic partitions, the land of the homogenous nomadic nation of Afar was divided among three states in the African Horn, namely Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.” (4, 1)

“The Arabs desire to exert a dominant influence in the area. Westerners have a fundamental interest in the security of the petroleum tanker routes that pass via Bab-el-Mandeb. The Israelis have a strategic interest in it as a naval base, monitorial center and for accumulating nuclear wastes especially on Dahlak and Fatma islands. There is also the recent US interest in the Horn due to the global campaign against terrorism attracting global attention to the Afarlands in the Horn of Africa.” (6, 5)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

“The land inhabited by the Afar is extremely arid and barren, consisting of stone and sand desert interspersed with salt lakes and lava streams. The Danakil Depression, which lies within this area, is 91 meters below sea level and may be the hottest place on earth. There is only one fertile area, which is along the Awash River, where some cultivation is possible. Conditions are also less harsh in the Mabra Mountains, the Horma highlands, and around Mount Biru.” (4, 2)

“Geo-political features of the Afarland further magnify its strategic importance. For instance, about 75% of all vital roads that link Addis Ababa to the harbors of Assab and Djibouti run via the Afarland. Likewise the most utilized river in Ethiopia, Awash (Afar: We’ayot) that regularly floods over 1200 km runs through the Afar region of Ethiopia. The Afar coastline in Eritrea and Djibouti, which is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East as well as a gateway to the oil fields of the Persian Gulf further magnifies the global importance of the Afarland.” (6, 4)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

1,280,000 in Ethiopia (2007 census). 906,000 monolinguals (1994 census). Population total all countries: 1,379,200.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

“A large proportion of them mine salt from the Danakil Depression, and trade this with the Yemenis across the strait, or with Ethiopians for grain.” (3, 1)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

“The Afar subsistence economy depends on livestock, especially goats, some camels, and, more rarely, cattle. There are some exceptions, such as fishermen in the coastal areas and agriculturalists in the Assau oasis. The Afar also mine and export salt.” (1, 1)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

“Men traditionally sport the *jile*, a famous curved knife. The Afar people are warrior tribe and are very good at using knives and daggers in a warfare” (2, 1)

2.4 Food storage:

Because the pastoralism of the Afar is actually closer to transhumance than nomadism, little food storage is kept as the tribes relocate often. (6, 18)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

“Women run the home and settlement and set up the houses, which they carry on camels when they move. Women milk the goats and make butter or ghee. They are also the musicians in the tribe.” (3, 1)

Men primarily are herdsmen, tending to goats, camels, and cattle, and some are fishermen and agriculturists. (2, 1)

2.6 Land tenure:

“Only one large river, the Awash, flows through the Danakil Desert. However, it dwindles into a series of lakes before ever reaching the sea. Consequently, there is a great need for pure water sources for the Danakil and their herds. In recent years, they have suffered because of famines and drought.” (2, 1)

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

“The people do not eat pork and rarely drink alcohol.” (2, 1)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

“Girls are eligible for marriage after their tenth year, whereas a man is traditionally not supposed to marry until after he has killed someone in battle.” (6, 20)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

“Divorce rates are high.” (3, 1)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

“Although some Muslims are permitted to have four wives, Afar marriages are usually monogamous.” (2, 1)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

“Betrothal for marriage engagements may begin during childhood. This is done following a nominal payment in cash. The actual wedding however usually takes place when girls reach their mid teens during which there is a transfer of bride wealth (alekum) amounting to about 1000 Birr or more. The amount to be paid in bride-wealth varies from family to family as it is ultimately decided, in negotiations, by the girl’s father.” (4, 1)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

“Descent and marriage, however, follow the father's clan "patrilocal" rather than the mother's "matrilocal".” (3, 1)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

“Tribal endogamy is the general rule, and there is a preference for cross-cousin marriage.” (6, 20)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

“Tribal endogamy is the general rule, and there is a preference for cross-cousin marriage.” (6, 20)

4.18 Do" females enjoy sexual freedoms?

“The Afar practice infibulation, the sewing together of the female vulva, a type of female "circumcision," practiced by other Cushite peoples, and some Bantu peoples. Similarly, boys are circumcised upon coming of age.” (3, 1)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

“A Father-brother may, upon the death of father, replace the biological father and marry the widow of his deceased brother. The same applies for the mother-sister’s children. In short, father- brother and the mother-sister are potential fathers and mothers.” (4, 1)

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

A Father-brother may, upon the death of father, replace the biological father and marry the widow of his deceased brother. The same applies for the mother-sister’s children. In short, father- brother and the mother-sister are potential fathers and mothers.” (4, 1)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

“Afar are now more open to relationships with other ethnicities than in the past.” (3, 1)

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

“Descent and marriage, however, follow the father's clan "patrilocal" rather than the mother's "matrilocal".” (3, 1)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

“Marriages between first cousins are preferred, particularly between a man and his father's sister's daughter.” (2, 1)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

“The night of the full moon is favored for a wedding ceremony, and the presence of someone able to read the Koran is required.” (2, 1)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Marriages are preferred among or between tribes, but not outside of the community. (5, 11)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

“Betrothal for marriage engagements may begin during childhood. This is done following a nominal payment in cash. The actual wedding however usually takes place when girls reach their mid teens during which there is a transfer of bride wealth (alekum) amounting to about 1000 Birr or more. The amount to be paid in bride-wealth varies from family to family as it is ultimately decided, in negotiations, by the girl’s father.” (4, 1)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.31 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.32 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

“On the other hand, rampant corruption and tribalism, the mushrooming of inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts, a developing dependency attitude, loss of grazing and agricultural lands due to ill-conceived ‘development’ interventions, the large scale settlement of immigrants who will soon outnumber the natives, aggressive resource exploitation and rapid spread of epidemic diseases like HIV/AIDS are eroding the Afar claims on self-administration and are gradually becoming a potential threat for the survival of the Afar as a nation.” (6, 23)

4.33 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

“Feuds are common both within and between tribes. Within tribal units, feuds were caused by the death of one or more parties in a dispute, and could be settled with the payment of blood compensation. Disputes between tribes usually resulted in warfare. Today the Ethiopian government takes a more involved role in the resolution of disputes.” (6, 12)

“Vengeance killing has been a strong value, but is diminishing in modern times. Likewise, warfare has been the primary context for much of the culture. A few decades ago, for instance, a young man was not considered an adult until he had killed one man. His victim might be from a different people or from another Afar clan.” (3, 1)

4.34 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

“Their neighbors include the Esa Somali, Ittu, and Enia Galla to the south; the Wallo, Yaju, and Raya Galla to the west; and the Saho to the northwest. There is a long history of hostility between the Afar and the surrounding groups, and, as a result, the Afar are often considered fierce and warlike.” (6, 22)

4.35 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

“The pastoralism of the Afar is actually closer to transhumance than to full nomadism. Transhumance is a patterned movement of people among several regularly visited locations, at least one of which is permanently occupied by a part of the population, or is improved by some structure, such as a house, corral, or storage bin. The encampments established during the seasonal migrations often consist of no more than grass lean-tos. The migrating unit has a more permanent homestead somewhere else, with larger dwelling structures surrounded by thorn-and-brush fences. Often, it is only the younger members of the group who go on the seasonal migrations; they take the more highly valued camels and cattle to higher pastures, leaving the sheep and goats in the care of the older folk at the more permanent location.” (6, 18)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

“The Afar maintain a loose confederation of four "sultanates." Rather than being hereditary sultanates, each sultan is appointed by the people, but reportedly is chosen from alternating segments in each of the four sections of the Afar. The four sultanates are Aussa (also Asayita or Asaita) and Biru in Ethiopia, and Tajoura and Raheito in Djibouti. One older source reports a fifth sultanate, Gobad in Djibouti. The Sultan is the religious, as well as the political, leader of his clan of the Afar.” (3, 1)

“Age-sets exist wherein people of the same age group are subject to a chief who settles disputes among them. Beyond this, legal procedure consists of the rules for compensation for adultery—a system of fines to the injured husband or father—and revenge for homicide. Blood feuds are a principal, perennial, and costly occupation, except among the few sultanates, notably at Assau, in which despotic law is backed up with an army.” (1, 1)

5.4 Post marital residence:

“The Afar live in camps surrounded by thorn barricades, which protect them from the attacks of wild animals or enemy tribesmen. Their oval-shaped huts, called ari, are made of palm mats and are easily moved.” (2, 1)

“Like most Muslim groups, the Afar are patriarchal; leadership roles are assigned to men. Residence can be either matrilineal or patrilineal but is predominantly patrilineal. Women are assigned the tasks of building the nomadic hut, collecting wood and water, milking, preparing food, and weaving mats.” (6, 20)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

“Cooperation in larger units such as a sub-tribe or tribe is induced only by warfare against other tribes or neighboring peoples.” (1, 1)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

“Age-sets exist wherein people of the same age group are subject to a chief who settles disputes among them.” (1, 1)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

“Afar are now more open to relationships with other ethnicities than in the past.” (3, 1)

5.8 Village and house organization:

“Tribes are divided into clans, which have an agnatic lineage structure. [...] Like most Muslim groups, the Afar are patriarchal; leadership roles are assigned to men. Residence can be either matrilineal or patrilineal but is predominantly patrilineal.” (5, 20)

5.9 Specialized village structures (men's houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

“The encampments established during the seasonal migrations often consist of no more than grass lean-tos. The migrating unit has a more permanent homestead somewhere else, with larger dwelling structures surrounded by thorn-and-brush fences. (5, 18)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

“Traditionally, the Afar were divided into two classes, the Asaimara ("the red ones") or nobles, and the Adoimara ("the white ones") or commoners. Sometimes Asaimara and Adoimara clans existed as separate territorial groups, but for the most part tribal groups contained a mixture of both, and the Asaimara/Adoimara distinction cut across the whole of Afar society. Adoimara groups living among Asaimara formerly paid tribute, but there were also independent Adoimara tribes and Adoimara tribes that later obtained independent status. In the mixed Asaimara/Adoimara groups, the chiefs and heads of kin groups in whom territorial rights were vested were Asaimara, whereas the client Adoimara had their own herds of livestock with grazing rights on their patrons' land. Today the two classes are territorially intermingled and do not seem to have any distinguishing behavioral characteristics.” (5, 20)

5.12 Trade:

“The Afar people had an independent traditional political system, which possessed clearly defined geographic boundaries. They had an overall control of trade activities and imposed tax on caravans carrying goods across the Afarland to and from the Red Sea.” (5, 7)

“In the early 20th century, the new railroad introduced new economic avenues, notably markets for their meat, butter, milk and hides, putting more Afar in contact with urban economy and the politics of the countries in the region.” (3, 1)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

“Two distinct classes, the Asaimara (“Red Men”) and the Adoimara (“White Men”), constitute the landowning, titled nobles and the lower-class tenants, respectively.” (1, 1)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

6.2 Stimulants:

“Milk is also an important social offering. For instance, when a guest is given fresh warm milk to drink, the host is implying that he will provide immediate protection for the guest. If a person is killed while under the protection of an Afar, his death must be avenged as if he were a member of the clan.” (2, 1)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

“The Afar practice infibrillation, the sewing together of the female vulva, a type of female "circumcision," practiced by other Cushite peoples, and some Bantu peoples. Similarly, boys are circumcised upon coming of age.” (3, 1)

“Spirits of the dead are believed to be very powerful, and a "feast of the dead", called Rabena, is celebrated each year. They also give annual offerings to the sea to ensure safety for their villages.” (2, 1)

6.4 Other rituals:

“There are still traces of the Cushitic religion, which can be seen in shrines erected on mountain tops to offer sacrifices to the sky/god Zar/Wak. Zar/Wak, the father of the universe, perhaps provided an easy transition to Allah and Islam. *Jenile*, or oracle dancing, is also connected to the Cushitic religion, and aspects of the dance may have been incorporated into Sufi Islamic ceremonies.” (6, 21)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

“Zar/Wak, the father of the universe, perhaps provided an easy transition to Allah and Islam.” (6, 21)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

“*Jenile*, or oracle dancing, is also connected to the Cushitic religion, and aspects of the dance may have been incorporated into Sufi Islamic ceremonies.” (6, 21)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

“The Afar practice infibrillation, the sewing together of the female vulva, a type of female "circumcision," practiced by other Cushite peoples, and some Bantu peoples. Similarly, boys are circumcised upon coming of age.” (3, 1)

6.8 Missionary effect:

“Those who can afford to do so, make a pilgrimage to Mecca.” (2, 1)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

“Spirits of the dead are believed to be very powerful, and a "feast of the dead", called Rabena, is celebrated each year.” (2, 1)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

“They believe that certain trees and groves have sacred powers.” (2, 1)

“The Afar are nominally Muslim, but a minimal level of orthodoxy in practice is attained only in the coastal regions and in the sultanates. The nomads of the interior are lax, and, though they hold Islam in great esteem, their own practices are imbued with the earlier Cushitic religion.” (1, 1)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

“The red coloration of their faces is from a red ochre dye that Afar women sometimes use.” (3, 1)

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

“Many people wear protective leather amulets that contain herbs and verses from the Koran.” (2, 1)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

“They also have various religious rites such as anointing their bodies with ghee (a type of butter).” (2, 1)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

“Afar women typically go topless, wearing a "sanafil" or waistcloth that is typically dyed brown or sometimes blue. A married Afar woman can be identified by her wearing the traditional indigo-dyed headdress or headscarf called a "shash" in the Afar language.” (3, 1)

7.8 Types of clothing:

“The women usually are bare-breasted, unusual for professed Muslim peoples.” (3, 1)

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

“Indeed, the Afar pastoralists who inhabit the African Horn coastal lines, which is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East as well as a gateway to the oil fields of the Persian Gulf, are all followers of the faith of Islam. This occurs to none as a current link with Al-Qaeda. But it shows the possibility that as they are strategic minorities, forgotten by regional and international bodies, they might be good candidates for recruitment by Al-Qaeda or any other terrorist group’s chain in the Horn region.” (6, 2)

Numbered references

"Afar." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013. Web. 07 May. 2013.

Afar of Djibouti Ethnic People Profile. RSS. U.S. Center for World Mission, 1999. Web. 07 May 2013.

<<http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=11486>>.

Jenkins, Orville B. *Cultural Profile of the Afar of the Horn of Africa. Cultural Profile of the Afar of the Horn of Africa*. N.p., 09 May 2004. Web. 07 May 2013. <<http://strategyleader.org/profiles/afar.html>>.

Kwekudee. "Trip Down Memory Lane." Web log post. *Afar People: The Ancient Cushite People and the Nomadic Dagger Fighting Experts of the Horn of Africa*. N.p., 6 Apr. 2013. Web. 07 May 2013. <<http://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/04/the-afar-people-also-known-as-adal.html>>.

McGinley, Mark. "Biological diversity in the Horn of Africa". In: *Encyclopedia of Earth*. Eds. Cutler J. Cleveland (Washington, D.C.: Environmental Information Coalition, National Council for Science and the Environment). First published in the *Encyclopedia of Earth* August 26, 2008; Last revised Date August 26, 2008; Retrieved May 7, 2013.

<http://www.eoearth.org/article/Biological_diversity_in_the_Horn_of_Africa>

Yasin, Yasin M. *Political History of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Afar Forum*. 2008 GIGA Institute of African Affairs, Hamburg, n.d. Web. 07 May 2013. <http://afarforum.com/index.php?option=com_content>.