

1. Description

1.1 Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic, East, Oromo

1.2 hae, gax, gaz

1.3 Ethiopia

1.4 Brief history:

Traditionally the Oromo have had a socio-political structure, the Gada, which has promoted equality. The political side is regulated by an elected official (abba boku) for an 8-year term, along with a council to aid the abba boku, and the defense minister (abba dula) to coordinate the military. Oromo women have their own political institution (siqqee) that helps to promote gender equality, however women are still viewed as inferior. (1)

1.5 The modern Oromo culture has been consistently oppressed by the Ethiopian government, and fights to achieve self-determination. (1)

1.6 Much of the region is in the highlands of Ethiopia, and this area is considered to be the richest region within the Horn of Africa. (1)

1.7 Estimated 28 million (1)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Oromos make their own version of a porridge, bread, and cereal from a local grains (1)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

cattle, milk, cheese, butter (1)

2.3 Weapons:

swords, spears, axes, knives, bows (1)

2.4 Food storage:

pottery for solids like cheese and meat, leather bags for liquids for milk (1)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

men take control of the Gada, the military, and lead ritual activities, women participate in ritual activities, and both aid in farming and pastoral work (2:109)

2.7 Ceramics:

pottery (1)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

No data found

2.9 Food taboos:

aversion to pork for some Oromos who have converted to Islam (1)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

No data found

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

No data found

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

No data found

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

as early as 9-10 years old (3)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

No data found

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

No data found

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

about 2 years (4)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Between 16-24 for males (1)

18-20 for females (4)

- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
divorce is heavily looked down upon, all other options to save a marriage are attempted before considering a divorce (5)
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
less than 10% polygynous marriages (6:3)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
yes, consisting of money and a domestic animal (3)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:
patrilineal (1)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
No data found
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
No data found
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
“There is no clear rule of clan exogamy among Oromo; instead there is a rule of not marrying within the hidda groups of close relatives, reckoned five generations back.” (16)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
Males are kept away from the pregnant wife as well as the birthing of the child (7)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly?
child bearer (7)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
No
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape?
No data found
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):
Within the Oromo group (1)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
Women seem to be protected from sexual abuse, but as Oromos are a patriarchal society, women do not seem to have as much freedom (15:1056)
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:
No data found
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
No data found
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio:
approx. 1:1 (8:13)
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades:
No data found
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older):
No
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
High respect for elders (1)
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
No data found
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:
patrilineal (1)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules:
No solid evidence found, incest is avoided, but not sure what the rules of avoidance are
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
No, generally just exchanging of gifts (7)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
No data found
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
outside the local group, but still within the Oromos (1)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
Parents (1)

- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
No evidence for conflict over the marriage decision found

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
many modern Oromos are killed just for being Oromo by the Ethiopian government and their supporters, percentages not known (1)
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
Outgroup violence due to the belief that all Oromos are part of, or supporting, the Oromo Liberation Front, rebels against the Ethiopian government (1)
Ingroup violence is on a much lesser scale than outgroup (9)
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
"Oromos have been threatened, murdered, or imprisoned for sympathizing with the Oromo national movement..." (1)
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
No data found
- 4.18 Cannibalism?
none

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
No data found
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
Seasonal movement (10)
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
Highly democratic political system, age-based classes (1)
- 5.4 Post marital residence:
No data found
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
"Oromos call their nation and country Oromia. They have been living in the Horn of Africa for all of their known history." Colonization of Ethiopia has put a government in place that encroaches on Oromia, but many Oromos attempt to fight back (1)
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
Age-based social structure, generally on an 8-year increment (1)
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
No data found
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
No data found
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):
none
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
Most sleep on beds with netting to protect from malarial mosquitoes (14)
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
"Traditionally Oromos had five *gada* (grades) or parties. The names of these grades varied from place to place. In one area, these grades were *dabalee* (ages one to eight), *rogge* (ages eight to sixteen), *follee* (ages sixteen to twenty-four), *qondaala* (ages twenty-four to thirty-two), and *dorri* (ages thirty-two to forty). There were rites of passages when males passed from one *gada* to another. These rites of passages were called *ireecha* or *buuta*." (1)
- 5.12 Trade:
"Oromia is considered the richest region of the Horn of Africa because of its agricultural and natural resources. [...] Farm products, including barley, wheat, sorghum, *xafi* (a grain), maize, coffee, oil seeds, *chat* (a stimulant leaf), oranges, and cattle are raised in abundance in Oromia." All of these are possibilities for trading, coffee especially. (1)
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?
Cerimonies are performed when a male is moving up to the next grade. (1)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

No data found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

No data found

6.2 Stimulants:

No data found

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

"Since children are seen as having great value, most Oromo families are large. The birth of a child is celebrated because each newborn child will someday become a worker. Marriage is celebrated since it is the time when boys and girls enter adulthood. Death is marked as an important event; it brings members of the community together to say goodbye."

Also, there are rituals for males moving up the hierarchical age-based social status (1).

6.4 Other rituals:

No data found

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Waaqa was the creator god who lived in the clouds. He kept the vault of the heavens at a distance from the earth and covered it with stars. He was a benefactor and did not punish. When the earth was flat *Waaqa* asked man to make his own coffin, and when man did this *Waaqa* shut him up in it and pushed it into the ground. For seven years he made fire rain down and the mountains were formed. Then *Waaqa* unearthed the coffin and man sprang forth, alive. Man tired of living alone, so *Waaqa* took some of his blood, and after four days, the blood became a woman whom the man married. They had 30 children, but the man was ashamed of having so many so he hid 15 of them. *Waaqa* then made those hidden children into animals and demons. (11:12)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

"There are Oromos who specialize in making musical instruments such as the *kirar* (five-stringed bowl-lyre), *masanqo* (one-stringed fiddle), and drums. Iron tools such as swords, spears, hoes, axes, and knives have been important for farming, fighting, and hunting. There is a long tradition of woodworking in this society. Carpenters make such objects as platters, stools, spades, tables, plows, bows and arrows, wooden forks, and honey barrels." (1)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

No data found

6.8 Missionary effect:

The original Oromo religion has been heavily suppressed by the spread of Christianity and Islam

6.9 RCR revival:

none

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Ancestors are believed to still be around the living (12)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

No data found

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

none

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

The traditional religion of the Oromos consists of a creator god (*Waaqa*) (1) as well as some worshipping of ancestors. (12)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Some face paint (13)

7.2 Piercings:

No data found

7.3 Haircut:

none

7.4 Scarification:

No data found

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

Beaded and woven headbands and necklaces, some made with shells as well (13)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

none

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

No data found

7.8 Missionary effect:

none

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

None required

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

No data found

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

No data found

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

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