

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

1. Description

- 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Their native language is Oromo (also called Afaan Oromoo and Oromiffa), which is part of the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family (1).
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): gax (2).
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Ethiopia 9.4969° N, 36.8961° E
- 1.4 Brief history: The Oromo are believed to have originally adhered to a pastoralist/nomadic and/or semi-agriculturalist lifestyle. Many historians agree that some Oromo clans have lived in the southern tip of present-day Ethiopia for over a millennium. They suggest that a Great trade-influenced Oromo migration brought most Oromos to present-day central and western Ethiopia in the 16th and 17th centuries. Historical maps of the ancient Aksum/Abyssinian Empire and Adal/Somali empires indicate that Oromo people are newcomers to most of modern-day central Ethiopia (1).
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The politico-religious aggression that took place in the expansion of Islam and Christianity have affected the culture of the Oromo people very much. The invasion of Oromo land by Muslims in the east and south and by Christians in the north have left their mark on the Oromo culture (10).
- 1.6 Ecology (natural environment): About 95% are settled agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists, practising archaic farming methods and living at subsistence level. A few live in the urban centres (1).
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: With ~30 million, they constitute the single largest ethnicity in Ethiopia and approximately 34.49% of the population according to the 2007 census (1).

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): A fermented flat bread made from teff flour and is commonly eaten by Oromos. A spicy barley dish mixed with butter is a special delicacy. Butter is added to most porridge and stew or soup dishes (5).
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Meat is an important part of the diet, both smoked and fresh, but pork is not eaten (5).
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: No specific information was found.
- 2.4 Food storage: No information on food storage was found. Cattle and cereal crops are parts of the Oromo livelihood (9).
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Girls and boys have different roles depending on the composition of the family. Girls are taught cooking, cattle tending and gathering of firewood while boys are thought horse riding, spear throwing, hunting, farming, cattle tending and survival techniques. The Oromo culture expects men to feed, shelter, cloth and protect the family while women are expected to rear children and care for the whole family from home (5).
- 2.6 Land tenure: No information on land tenure found.
- 2.7 Ceramics: There are Oromos who specialize in making other utensils from horn, pottery, and leather. Mugs, spoons, and containers for honey wine are made from horn. Basins, dishes, water jars, and vessels are made from pottery. Various kinds of bags to hold milk are made from leather. (7)
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: No information was obtained.
- 2.9 Food taboos: Muslim Oromos do not eat pork for religious reasons. (7)
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? No information on this topic was found.

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Females height 155.5 cm (13).
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Female weight 46.9 kg (13).

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): No information found.
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): No information was found.
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Typically, the husband has one-two children but since children are considered assets, some families have more children. (7).
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): No information found.
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Women marry starting about fifteen years of age and are expected to be virgins until then. During "Gadaa" tradition however, a young man may not marry until the age of 28, a practice that is considered "built-in" family planning (5).
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce is discouraged in Oromo society (7).
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: The typical Oromo man has one wife. But because of religious conversion to Islam and other cultural influences, some Oromo men marry more than one wife. Oromo women have begun to resist polygyny (7).
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: On the date of the wedding, gifts for the bride's family are brought by an assembly of well-respected elders who join the wedding party (5).
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: The men of a given lineage will then collectively own the goods and property passed from father to son. People are born into a certain descent group and remain in this lineage for the whole of their lives (11).
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: At around the age of eight, the girls start helping the women with household chores and the boys help the men with "manly" activities (10).
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: No information on this subject was found.
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): both cousin marriage and clan endogamy (marriage within one's Gosa) is in a complete contradiction with Oromo kinship system and matrimonial strategy based on a strict prohibition of clan endogamy (12).

- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?: no information on this was found.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): A woman is considered to be the child bearer and rearer.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? According to information obtained, no such belief exists.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: No such evidence found.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Marriage is with a non-relative. Relatives are those whose seven or less ancestors converge (4).
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Yes; it is not uncommon for women to have lovers while married (11).
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: It is very common to find married women who have lovers. The relationship between lovers is a reasonably open matter. It is a relationship that may last for long periods of time. Often it becomes a more or less permanent union in which case we should think of it as a secondary form of marriage rather than a variety of extramarital relationship. However, no evidence of gift-giving was found (11).
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? No information found on this subject. It is assumed a close female relative takes over.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: No numbers were found.
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: No. If a woman was ready to deliver in Oromia, she might notify a female friend but not her husband. Men are not supposed to participate in the birthing process at all (5).
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): Although no specific information was found, it is assumed that potential fathers are of the same generation as the mother.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? The Oromo do have kin avoidance systems. This is under the “Built in family” system. (5)
- 4.24 Joking relationships? There are reports of dating relationships. (5)
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: patrilineal.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: This also falls under the “Built in family” system as described above. (5)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? On the wedding day, the boy comes to the girl’s parent accompanied by horsemen, called hamaamota. On this day, the girl and the boy officially come and sit together. They are blessed by the girl’s parent before she is officially handed to him. Soon they arrive at the boy’s parent; they are also ceremonially received by his families and get the blessings of his grandparents, fathers, mothers and other relatives. In traditional Oromo marriage, the blessings of the elders are quite enough. (6).
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Each person has one main name, their given name. They are often given other personal "love names" by family members. Their second name is the main name of their father. A third name is usually the name of their paternal grandfather. Traditionally, the father picks Oromo children's names but the mother has great influence in naming the daughter of the family (5).
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): Marriage is with a non-relative. Relatives are those whose seven or less ancestors converge (4).
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Once the boy has demonstrated responsibilities, not only for his own livelihood but also for the society in which he lives, he picks the girl he is interested in. He will inform a family member, usually his father, who then contacts the family of the girl. Usually the girl knows of the boy's intent and, in many instances, she encourages him to pursue her in this way. There are mediators, such as the girl's best friends, who convey the girl's wishes to the boy (5).
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: No such documented information was found.

Warfare/homicide

- 4.31 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: No numbers were found for this topic.
- 4.32 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: In addition to the protracted wars, the passing of major trade routes through the area and the subsequent expansion of trade gained the war leaders more wealth. Thus the wealth, fame and power they gradually gained enabled them to command a larger number of followers in the area they were defending. Thus they usurped the political power that belonged to the Gadaa officials and the people and finally some of them declared themselves "mootii" (kings) (10).
- 4.33 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 4.34 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Today when nearly all of the African peoples have won independence, the Oromo continue to suffer under the most backward and savage Ethiopian settler colonialism (10).
- 4.35 Cannibalism? No evidence of cannibalism found.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: No information was found in this regard.
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): They are a state level society therefore it tends not to move.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): One highly developed self-sufficient system, which has influenced every aspect of Oromo life is the Gadaa system. It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups or sets (about 7-11) that assume different responsibilities in the society every eight years. The Gadaa system has served as the basis of democratic and egalitarian political system. Under it the power to administer the affairs of the nation and the power to make laws belong to the people. Every male member of the society who is of age and of Gadaa grade has full rights to elect and to be elected. All the people have the right to air their views in any public gathering without fear (3).
- 5.4 Post-marital residence: The bride moves to her in-laws house with her husband.
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): No direct information provided.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): No evidence of such divisions found.

- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Dating is an important step for a boy and a girl. Usually a young boy begins by expressing his love for a girl whom he wants to date. When a girl agrees that she loves him, too, they start dating. Premarital sex is not accepted, but kissing and dancing are acceptable. Parents are not usually told about a dating relationship. Dating may or may not lead to marriage. Having girlfriends and boyfriends gains young people social status and respect from others (7).
- 5.8 Village and house organization: In Oromia, living in extended family households is the norm. In Seattle, Oromo family households include one to eight persons on average, and nearly half of those people are children under 12 years of age. (5)
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): No evidence of this was found.
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? No specific was found.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The Borana system of kinship involves clan or moiety (at the macro-level), followed by the *mana*—house, the *balbala*—door, the *warra*—nuclear family or descent group, and last, the *ibidda*—hearth. This last classification of *ibidda* is referring to the nuclear family or mother-child household. On the moiety level there are two separate halves of the one Borana society: the Sabbo and the Gona (11).
- 5.12 Trade: Coffee is grown as a cash crop. There is also mining done.
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? No such indications were discovered during research.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6.0 Time allocation to RCR: The believers visit the Galma for worship once or twice a week, usually on Thursday and Saturday nights (3).
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): There are many saint-like divinities called ayyaana, each seen as manifestation of the one Waaqa or of the same divine reality. An effective relationship is often maintained between ayyaana and Oromo by Qaafu (male) and/or Qaafitti (female). A Qaaiu is like a Bishop in the Christian world and an Imam in the Muslim world. He is a religious and ritual expert who has a special relationship with one of the ayyaana, which possesses him at regular intervals. Although the office of Qaaiu is hereditary, in principle it is open to anyone who can provide sufficient proof of the special direct personal contact with an ayyaaria (3).
- 6.2 Stimulants: The Oromo people drink honey wine (called dhadhi) and beer (called faarso). Other drugs and stimulants are foreign to the culture (7).
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Marriage is one of the most important rituals in the Oromo culture. There are three things Oromos talk about in life: birth, marriage, and death. These are the events that add to or take away from the family. Before the onset of foreign religions, namely Christianity and Islam, Oromo marriage rituals included exchange of gifts, mainly by the bride to be. (5)
- 6.4 Other rituals: Just before the beginning of the harvest season every year, the Oromo have a prayer ceremony called irreessa. The Irreessa has become illegal and anybody who attempts to practise it is now likely to be imprisoned (3).
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): Oromos believed that Waaqa created the sky and earth from water. He also created dry land out of water, and bakkalcha (a star) to provide light. With the rise of bakkalcha, ayaana (spiritual connection) emerged. With this star, sunlight also appeared. The movement of this sunlight created day and night. Using the light of bakkalcha, Waaqa created all other stars, animals, plants, and other creatures that live on the land, in air, and in water (7).
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The Oromo celebrate ceremonial rites of passage known as ireecha or buuta, as well as Islamic and Christian holidays. The Oromos have also begun celebrating an Oromo national day to remember their heroines and heroes who have sacrificed their lives trying to free their people from Ethiopian rule. (7)
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: No documented evidence found.
- 6.8 Missionary effect: Several works have been written in Oromiffa using Roman, Sabeian and Arabic scripts. Printed material in Oromiffa include the Bible, religious and non-religious songs, dictionaries, short stories, proverbs, poems, school books, grammar, etc. The Bible itself was translated into Oromiffa in Sabeian script about a century ago by an Oromo slave called Onesimos Nasib, alias Hiikaa (3).
- 6.9 RCR revival: The practice never diminished or died down, therefore it did not need a revival.
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: The Oromo believe that after death individuals exist in the form of a spirit called the 'ekeraa'. They do not believe in suffering after death. The ekeeraa is believed to stay near the place where the person once lived. One is obliged to pray to and to give offering by slaughtering an animal every so often to ones parents' ekeeraa. The offerings take place near the family or clan cemetery, which is usually in a village (3).
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No information is provided on this subject.
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? Teknonymy is not practiced among the Oromo people.
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Waaq (also Waq or Waaqa) is the name of God in the traditional Oromo religion. In the 2007 Ethiopian census in the 88% Oromo region of Oromia, 47.5% were Muslims, 30.5% Orthodox Christians, 17.7% Protestant Christian, 3.3% Traditional. Protestant Christianity is the fastest growing religion inside the Oromo community. In urban areas of Oromia, Orthodox Christianity constitutes 51.2% of the population, followed by Islam 29.9% and Protestants 17.5%. But adherence to traditional practices and rituals is still common among many Oromo people regardless of religious background (1).

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: Adorning the eye area and the cheeks with colored pigment known as kula is a recent phenomenon. Today, women no longer utilize natural mineral pigments on the face but instead, invest in more fashionable and easily applicable substances: bottles of nail polish. Nail polish is today applied to the bridge of the nose, between the eyebrows, and to the cheeks (15).
- 7.2 Piercings: No information was found.
- 7.3 Haircut: No information on special haircuts was found.

- 7.4 Scarification: Scars are usually incised with a sharp thorn or razor that lacerate the first few layers of skin above the eyebrow, along the bridge of the nose, and on the cheeks and that heal in a recessive dell. These marks, which are usually made at the onset of puberty, become meaningful on several levels (15).
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Females wear a lot of beaded jewelry (14)(15).
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Oromos have clothes designated for special days. They call the clothes that they wear on holidays or other important days kitii (7).
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: No specific information was obtained but readings show men adorn themselves minimally or not at all.
- 7.8 Missionary effect: No information found.
- 7.9 Types of clothing: Some Oromo men wear woya (toga-like robes), and some women wear wandabiti (skirts). Others wear leather garments or animal skin robes, and some women wear qollo and sadetta (women's cloth made of cotton). Modern garments from around the world are also worn. In cash-producing areas and cities, Oromos wear modern Western-style clothes. Oromos have clothes designated for special days. They call the clothes that they wear on holidays or other important days kitii and the clothes that they wear on working days ligo (7.)

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: No information was found on the sibling classification system. However, the age-classification system of Gaada is practiced.
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: Levirate marriage is practiced in parts of Kenya but information specific to the Oromo people was not found.
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): No specific information found.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

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