

Warjih people

The **Warjih** (Oromo: *Warjii*, Amharic: ወርጅ, Somali: *Warjeex*, Arabic: ورجي [wɔrdʒi]), fully known as the **Tigri-Warjih**, are an ethnic group inhabiting Ethiopia. The prefix for their traditional name, ***Tigri***, comes from the word *Tijaari*, which is an adjective in the Arabic language that literally translates to "merchant." Their tribal name ***Warjih*** is eponymous with the name of their ancestral homeland. Thus, Tigri-Warjih essentially means "merchant of Warjih."^[2]

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History

According to the Warjih, their forefathers have two separate origins, one ancestor emerging from Tigray region while the other arrived from Hararghe.^[3] Warjih are credited for transmitting Harari Semitic influences into modern Amhara region mainly Shewa.^[4] The Werji were among the first people in the Horn of Africa to become Muslim, having accepted Islam by the 8th century. Alongside another ancient Muslim group to their west, the Gebel, who would eventually procreate the Argobba people. Worji were under the Sultanate of Showa in the 9th century.^[5] The Werji in the following centuries participated in many battles against Christian Abyssinia. They sided with the Ifat in the Middle Ages, and Adal Sultanate during the Ethiopian-Adal War.^[6] It was this time of military conflict that opened the door for the northerly expansion of Oromos, and thus began the assimilation of conquered populations, such as the Werji. It is based on this historical tale that some members classify themselves as a separate ethnicity. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that over centuries of living in Oromiyaa, the Werji have well assimilated among the Oromo, with no cultural distinction evident between the two.

Demographics

Warjih



A medieval map of Ethiopia locating the ancestral homeland of the "Werjih." It indicates the approximate location of a province named for them that lied between the Great Rift Valley and the Ahmar Mountains

Total population
20,536 (1994 census) ^[1]
Regions with significant populations
Ethiopia
Languages
Oromiffa , Amharic
Religion
Islam
Related ethnic groups
Oromo , Jebertis , Argobba , Gurage , Harari , Silte , Afar

The Werji historically populated an area in south-eastern Ethiopia within the Oromia Region. Today, they are found primarily in their modern hometown of Daleti and in numerous pastoral communities scattered throughout the regions of Shewa and Wollo. Some have settled in major cities within these former provinces, most prominently in Addis Ababa and Kemise. Due to their longstanding livelihoods as merchants, members of the Worji community can be found transiently in cities all across Ethiopia

According to the 2007 Ethiopian census carried out by the Central Statistical Agency, the Worji population numbered 13,232 individuals.^[1]

Language

The Werji today primarily speak Afaan Oromoo as their mother tongue (14,066 in 1994) and Amharic as a second language, although this order of primacy may be vice versa depending on where a person lives. Both languages belong to the larger Afro-Asiatic family.

Politics

Prior to the 2010 General Elections, the current Ethiopian regime approved the creation of the *Tigri Worgi Nationality Democratic Organization*, which represents a minority of the tribe.^[7]

Notes

1. "Census 2007" (<https://msu.edu/~hudson/HECcensus.pdf>), Hudson, Table 3.
2. "The Tigri Warjih 'Jeberti' People" (http://www.jeberti.com/Or_index.php?jbr=wergji+jeberti), Chapter 1 pg. 1.
3. Ayenachew, Deresse (3 November 2016). "A historical overview of the Wārǧəḥ Muslim community in the Christian highland of Šäwa" (<https://journals.openedition.org/afriques/1944>). *Afriques. Débats, Méthodes et Terrains d'Histoire*.
4. Mordechai, Abir (2013-10-28). *Ethiopia and the Red Sea: The Rise and Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty and Muslim European Rivalry in the Region* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=7fArBgAAQBAJ&q=produced+semitised+culture+of+the+adare&pg=PR17>). Routledge. p. xvii-xviii. ISBN 9781136280900.
5. Ayenachew, Deresse (3 November 2016). "A historical overview of the Wārǧəḥ Muslim community in the Christian highland of Šäwa" (<https://journals.openedition.org/afriques/1944>). *Afriques. Débats, Méthodes et Terrains d'Histoire*.
6. Hassan, Mohammed. *Oromo of Ethiopia 1500* (<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/29226/1/10731321.pdf>) (PDF). University of London. p. 21.
7. "National Electoral Board of Ethiopia: List of Registered Political Parties" (<http://www.electionethiopia.org/en/political-parties/active-political-parties.html>)

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- Grover Hudson, "Linguistic Analysis of the 1994 Ethiopian Census" (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/northeast_african_studies/v006/6.3hudson.html), *Northeast African Studies*, Volume 6, Number 3, 1999 (New Series), pp. 89 – 107.
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- Pankhurst, *Borderlands*, p. 79.

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