

Arsi

The Arsi tribe (formerly known as the Arussi) is one of over 200 people groups belonging to the largest tribe in Ethiopia called the Oromo. Classified as Eastern Cushmites, it is believed that they were gradually pushed westward from the Horn of Africa by the Somali around the tenth century until they entered Ethiopia in the sixteenth century. Today they inhabit the territory between central Ethiopia and the Sabaki River in Kenya. The Oromo are of Hamitic origin and number about 23 million. They are related to the Somali and to the Afars in the Denakil region of northeastern Ethiopia.



Location

The Arsi live in central Ethiopia, mainly on a large central plateau of farmland and wooded area, and extending into a dry, arid Rift Valley region with four lakes.

Culture

The Arsi practice polygamy and it is common for men to have at least two wives; some have more. Family units are close knit; fathers are gentle and caring toward small children. Divorce and separation are fairly common. Cattle, goats, sheep, horses, and donkeys are the main source of wealth, and are used to pay the bride price, for religious sacrifices, and legal fines.

Government

The local authority of the Arsi tribe—the *Gadaa* system—is very strong but has not been allowed to be practiced under various ruling governments. The system organizes the Arsi society into groups that assume different responsibilities. It has guided the religious, social, political, and economic life for the Arsi for many years. Under the Gadaa system, the power to administer the affairs of the tribe and to make laws belong to the people. Many representatives come together to make decisions and to create a "check and balance" in their system of rule.

History

The Arsi are an African people of Hamitic origin. It is believed that they were part of a movement of people who were gradually pushed westward from the Horn of Africa by the Somali around the tenth century until they entered Ethiopia in the sixteenth century. Today they inhabit the territory between central Ethiopia and the Sabaki River in Kenya. The Oromo people are related to the Somali and to the Afars in the Denakil region of northeastern Ethiopia.

SIM Involvement

To help reach the Arsi and other groups in Ethiopia, SIM works closely with the Kale Heywet Church (KHC), an association with over 7,000 congregations.

Mission work began among the Arsi in April 1947. Today, about 25 Kale Heywet Churches are spread over a wide area where the Arsi live.

Scripture Availability

The complete Bible was published in Oromo in 1995, but in a different alphabet than the one currently taught. However, since 1998 there is a translation in the Latin alphabet, which is now being distributed. The literacy rate is low, but on the increase. A few Bible charts and gospel recordings with flip charts are available in the Oromo language.

Urgent Prayer Need

Bingham Academy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, urgently needs a [French teacher](#) to join their staff team in August. Pray that God will provide the right person to meet this need.