

The Xamir of Ethiopia



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In the mountainous highlands of northern Ethiopia lives a small group of people known as the Xamir. These people live in the North Amhara Regional State about 150 km northwest of Lake T'and, near the Simien mountains. The three main towns in that area are Sekota, Tsizika, and Dehana.

The language the Xamir people speak is called Xamtanga although their language is also known as Agawinya, Khamtanga, Simt'anga, Xamta or Xamir. Languages in the surrounding area are Amharic, Afar and Tigrigna.

Xamtanga is used in schools and is known by most of the people, although some also speak Amharic. They have a strong desire for Scripture and literature in their language. The Government is also favorable to translation of the Scriptures, since it will inspire a greater interest in reading and literacy.

The Xamir people are agriculturalists and produce primarily wheat and sorghum but poverty wracks families trying to grow what they need in the powdery, draught-ridden soil.

About 100% of the people would say they are Christians (mostly Orthodox) but only 1% are evangelical.

Despite their Christian heritage, the Xamir society staggers under a heavy burden of HIV/AIDS. Because they have never had access to God's Word in their own language, Xamir family relationships hinge on unfortunate traditions, including child marriage and female circumcision.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

Yes

Churches:

Yes

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

In progress

Population (date):

213,000 (Ethnologue)



XAMTANGA HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

History of Christianity

Christianity in Ethiopia dates back to the 1st century AD. This long tradition makes Ethiopia unique among sub-Saharan African countries. Christianity in this country is divided into several groups. The largest and oldest is the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Religious Practices and Ceremonies

100% would claim to be Christian

Is the Word of God Translated?

No but a new generation of church leadership has embraced the urgency of offering God's Word to the Xamtanga people in their own language. A team of two Xamtanga speakers is working on translating the New Testament and significant Old Testament portions.

Other Forms of Gospel Presentations

Recordings: No

Films/videos: yes (JESUS film)

Bilingualism

Most of the people speak Xamtanga and some also speak Amharic [amh] or Tigrigna [tir]

The Xamir of Ethiopia

Group Description

Population all countries

World Population	213,000
World Population (Date)	2007 census (Ethnologue)

Geography & Environment

Location	Northern Ethiopia
Climate	Arid

Alternate Language Names

Percent Monolingual	Nearly 45% speak only Xamtanga
Other Mother Tongues	Some speak Amharic

Linguistically Related Languages

45% similarity with Qimant

Neighboring Languages

Amharic, Afar and Tigrigna.

Literacy

Adult Literacy Program

Government agencies are planning a literacy emphasis among the Xamtanga people. Authorities have taken a positive interest in the translation work. They know that development of the language will mean greater interest among its speakers in community development. This project will help facilitate reading in the language. This will in turn provide the Xamtanga people access to educational, agricultural and health materials to improve their physical lives.

Economics

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Occupation	Farming, growing wheat and sorghum

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Community Development

Health Care (Quality)	Inadequate
Diet (Quality)	Focused around the herding of cattle for milk and meat.
Water	Inadequate due to little rainfall
Shelter Description	Houses are built of local materials including mud and sticks.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Use of wood leading to widespread deforestation.

Society & Culture

Neighbor Relations	Civil unrest contributes to widespread poverty
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Education

Language Of Instruction	Xamtanga
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Status of Christianity

Religion and Response

Translation status	New Testament is in progress; OT portions are planned.
Spiritual Climate and Openness:	The people are eager to have the Scriptures in their language.
Attitude toward Christianity	Nearly 100% would call themselves Christians