



# ORIGINS OF THE **KARRAYYUU**

---

## **MADDA WALABU**

Thought of both as a natural lake located between Borana and Bale and a mythical primordial lake, Madda Walabu is the place from which all Oromos trace their origin. According to Oromo oral traditions, Madda Walabu is where the Oromo creation story took place.

The story goes like this: In the beginning, there was nothing: neither light nor darkness, neither day or night or time - only Waaqa. Waaqa was everything and everything was within Waaqa. Waaqa then wanted to create life, and knowing that the source of life is water, Waaqa first created a body of water and called it Hora Walabu - the lake of Walabu.

Hora Walabu was imbued with the essence of life, and here he placed the seed of life from which all things can grow. From that seed, life came to be. Life became the trees that cover mountains, the gazelles that hop across the plains, and the birds soaring in the skies. Life also became man. Man lived and multiplied, and spread across the Earth, becoming its nations and peoples.

In this line of creation, the first was Orma - the father of all Oromos. Orma sired two sons, Borana and Barentu. Borana and Barentu themselves had many children, and all the Oromos of today are descendants of their line. While Karrayyuu clans are found in

both Borana and Barentu groups today, the ancestor of the Karrayyuu people is Barentu. Barentu is said to have fathered five sons: Karrayyu Barento, Xummugaa Barento, Morowwa Barento, Qal'oo Barento, and Humbannaa Barento. Karrayyuu Barentu is the father of today's Karrayyuus; it is he whom they regard as their ancestral father.

The Karrayyuu now live as two moieties. As the Karrayyuu oral story goes, Karrayyuu had two sons, Dullachaa Karrayyuu and Baaso Karrayyuu, who together make up the two major branches of Karrayyuu. These two moieties are divided into groups called Gosa, and each Gosa is furthermore subdivided into Balbalas.

It is these Karrayyuu, under their moieties, their Gosas, and Balbalas that now live in Fentalle, the Awash Valley area, where they lead a pastoralist nomadic lifestyle.

As the sun sets on the Great Rift Valley, Karrayyuu men perform group ceremonies preceding the Baallii - Gadaa power transfer

