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1.4.2. Ethnic minorities

○ (a) Bantu/Jareer

Bantu/Jareer, sometimes also called ‘Jareerweyne’ or ‘Gosha’, live mainly in southern Somalia, along the Jubba river. They also have a presence in Bay region. They are partly descendants of slaves imported from the area of today’s Tanzania to southern Somalia in the 19th century. Many Somali-Bantu still speak their original (Bantu-)languages or a version of them.431 There are Ki-Zigula speakers and Af/Ki-Mushunguli speakers in Jilib and Jamame districts of Lower Juba, but also in Mogadishu, Kismayu, and Baidoa, because of migration to these urban areas.432 Lamberti, a linguist known for his extensive research on Somali dialects, found that Mushungul-speakers resided mainly in and around Jamame in Lower Jubba. Af-Mushunguli is a Bantu language. Many Af-Mushunguli speakers also speak Af-Maay, which is a particular dialect of Somali typically not understood by Af-Mahaa speakers.433 Jareer residing in Bay region also speak Af-Maay.434 They are also known for specific cultural practices like music, dance, and agriculture festivals.435

MEDA estimated that Bantu/Jareer ‘number around 1 to 1.5 million people, mostly concentrated in the Lower Shabelle, Juba, and Bay regions.’ They live mostly in agricultural areas and work as farmers.436 They suffered greatly from massive (racialised) discrimination and exclusion throughout the 20th and early 21st century. 437 Somalis often use the derogative term ‘jareer’ - referring to ‘curly hair’ - as insult. Members of majority clans distinguish themselves as ‘Arabs’ or ‘high-born’, distinct from the ‘African’-looking and low-born Somalis. They use also the term ‘adoon’ meaning ‘slave’ to define Bantu/Jareer.438 Bantu/Jareer suffered from dis-appropriation of their farms during the land-reforms in Somalia in the 1970s.439 In the 1990s their land and storages were looted by clan militias.440 In the view of the Bantu/Jareer activist Omar Eno, speaking out at a conference in the early 1990s, the Bantu/Jareer were reduced to slave status in Somalia.441

Bantu/Jareer primarily engage in agriculture, cultivating e.g., maize, cassava, and rice. ‘They are also involved in fishing and livestock herding to a lesser extent. Their agricultural activities have been central to their livelihoods, but they often lack the land

rights and resources enjoyed by more dominant clans.'442

MEDA recently found that Bantu/Jareer children 'experience significantly lower school enrolment rates (ranging from 28 % to 40 %). Barriers such as poverty, lack of educational infrastructure in rural areas, and cultural barriers often contribute to these low rates.'443 They are treated as second-class citizens.444 Their population size is likely much larger 'than that reflected by their representation in government under the 4.5 formula', which favours the majority clans.445 They still face land grabs and forced displacement due to lack of political influence.446 Discrimination also continues in IDP camps, where Bantu are discriminated and their women lack (clan) protection.447 Lack of societal and political participation and protracted discrimination 'pushed some Bantu youth into joining al-Shabaab.'448 For further details, see section 4.2. of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Targeted Profiles, published in September 2021.449

☐ (b) Bajuni

Bajuni are a specific ethnic group residing along the coast around Kismayo and on several islands off the Kismayo coast, such as Koyama, Chovai, and Chula.450 They speak their own language, Ki-Bajuni, which is a Bantu language close to Ki-Swahili.451 Bajuni also reside across the border at the coast of northern Kenya.452 Their culture is influenced by the Swahili and Arab traders.453 Bajuni residing along the coast or on the Bajuni islands engage in fishery. Some also engage in trade and agriculture.454 Bajuni, like other coastal communities practicing fishery, 'suffer from reduced fish stocks due to environmental degradation.'455

Bajuni have long been marginalised by the dominant Somali clans in the region.456 Today, some Bajuni reside also in Mogadishu. In urban settings, they enjoy higher levels of healthcare access.457 In general, the Bajuni are a very small ethnic group of around 10 000 to 15 000 people.458 The Somali government recently estimated that Bajuni constitute 0.2% of Somali population.459 As in other cases mentioned above, demographic data in Somalia have, in the absence of reliable and recent census data, to be considered with caution.460 For more details, see section 4.2. of the EUAA COI Report Somalia: Targeted Profiles, published in September 2021.

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