

Monday 18th February

The challenge of reaching nomadic pastoralists

Malcolm Hunter spent many years serving in North Africa with SIM (an international mission organisation). He founded the Nomadic Research Programme. In an article published in the International Journal of Frontier Missions, he wrote:

“Bedouin with TV aerials sprouting over their tents. Tuaregs giving up their camels to drive around the Sahara in Toyota Land Cruisers – only their enigmatic eyes peering out between their turbans and veils. Maasai warriors in full regalia and flowing mud-plastered hair, hurling sticks at one another and performing their flatfooted dances for money every afternoon for the benefit of camera-toting tourists.

These and a few other weird and wonderful aberrations of the twenty first century are what most people know of nomadic pastoralist societies. For every one of these commercial manifestations, there are thousands of authentic herdsman, women, boys and girls living a very similar existence to that of our well-documented pastoralist predecessors, Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. They are little known and often live in uncongenial places where tourist buses do not go.

For Christians, these shepherds of the remotest deserts and mountains are not just colourful reminders of the earliest ancestors of our faith but a striking challenge to that faith. They are not just a bizarre anachronism in human society which will disappear if we ignore them. They are the natural descendants and successors of many races who have learned to survive and make a living on some of the world’s most undesirable land, not just in Africa but on all five continents.

There are few pastoralists on earth who can live exclusively as nomads; most are semi-nomadic, operating somewhere along a continuum from pure nomadism to agro-pastoralism. Agro-pastoralism has become so much the norm that it is impossible to define nomads as those who do not cultivate. There have always been examples of this mixed form of agriculture (a harvest from digging in the dirt and a harvest on the hoof).

Nomadic pastoralists can be found in desert or semi-arid regions of the world, as well as the mountains and high plateaus. Many are Muslim because Islam is usually seen as a religion suitable for nomads. All they need is a prayer mat so they can pray anywhere.

Reaching such people is very difficult and challenging for gospel workers. Nomadic pastoralists most commonly appreciate animal and human medicine input. This would have to come from professionals who were willing to go to them. However, of all the people in the world, they are probably the most God-conscious but culturally the most remote from the Western church. If the command and promise of the Lord Jesus is taken seriously, that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world to every ethnic group (Matt 24:14), then these nomadic groups must be included and effective evangelical strategies must be found and employed.”

- Pray for gospel workers who are trained professionals and are willing to go and share the love of God with nomadic people across the world.
- Let’s pray for the church to take the command and promise of Jesus seriously to reach nomadic people where they are and to find effective ways to do this.

- Let's ask that God will lay nomads on peoples' hearts, to pray and intercede for them, so that there will be breakthroughs among the nomadic peoples across the world.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matt 24:14

Tuesday 19th February

Nomads in Somalia

This article from the Global Prayer Digest illustrates problems faced by the nomads in Somalia.

"I was once master of myself." Faarax, a nomad, was telling an aid worker how hard life had become for him and his family in Somalia.

"The economy was good and I had many animals including several camels. But over the years the droughts and war have destroyed almost everything I had. I now only have 12 skinny sheep; at one time I had a 100! My sheep are too weak for me to herd them to a better place to graze. My wife, six children and I have to depend on the rice given to us from the UN. One good thing is my children have been able to go to school. I pray to Allah that their lives will be better than mine."

In Somalia less than a tenth of the land is suitable for farming, so the majority of Somalis are predominantly nomads. The camel is especially important as it provides the family with milk and does not require much water. War, political upheaval and droughts have placed a great burden on these nomads. The older generation now feels that the only hope for the future of their children is to learn new ways of earning a living through education.

- Pray that God will send His servants to these nomadic people to help them both economically and spiritually.
- Pray in particular for vets and teachers to go to this mission field.
- Pray that, as Somalia's nomads go through a painful time of change, they will find their purpose: to joyfully worship the Lord and follow Him all the days of their lives.

"Any of you who are his people may go to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. And may your God be with you!" Ezra 1:3

Source: <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/issue/day/nomadism-in-somalia/>

Wednesday 20th February

Afar people in East Africa

Pop: 2.5 million

Islam: 99%

South of the Red Sea lies a vast lowland desert where the world's highest temperatures have been recorded. This land is home to the Afar nomadic pastoralists. They live in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea. They have learned to survive in one of the world's harshest environments. They efficiently move herds of cattle, camels, goats and sheep in search of scarce grazing and an adequate water source for their animals.



The Ethiopian highlands get monsoon rain from July to September and some of it reaches the lowland deserts. Nomads take advantage of this and whole families move out into the dryer eastern regions as soon as pools of water and grass appear. Each family loads everything it owns, including their portable house, on one camel. When the pools in the desert dry up, everyone comes back to where rivers from the highlands provide water.

During the dry season when it rains in some areas, the male herders take their herds there even if it is far away.

Men must take risks to protect themselves and their animals from predators and raids from neighbouring clans and tribes.

Women prepare food, fetch water, build the house and take it down prior to the next move. Young boys and girls herd the kids and lambs, while the older boys tend the calves and young camels. Women and older girls are often responsible for herding sheep and goats.

These days, many of the traditionally nomadic peoples find their way of life threatened as available grazing land decreases. Because of this threat and various outside development efforts, some Afar are beginning to settle down around urban areas.

For hundreds of years, Afar have followed the culture and practice of Islam and continue to do so today, observing the five pillars of Islam. Yet God is moving among the Afar and today there are believers among them.

- Ask God to send His Spirit to guide nomadic desert people to know Jesus as their Saviour.
- Pray for peace between neighbouring tribes and that the life-changing power of Jesus will enable them to live in harmony.
- Pray for gospel workers with a heart to go and live among the Afar people.
- Pray for the small number of Afar believers and ask God to give them opportunities to share Christ with their own people.

Source: Information from the Afar Team

Thursday 21st February

Rashaida – nomads of Sudan and Eritrea

Pop: 155,000 Islam: 99.9%

Watch a short 90-second video about the Rashaida people [here](#)

The Rashaida people are closely related to the Bedouin of Saudi Arabia and mainly live in Sudan and Eritrea. Those in Sudan live in the northeastern region of the country, near the city of Kassala. There are both nomadic herders and sedentary landowners. Many nomadic Rashaida live in the area between the Atbara and Gash rivers, following seasonal migration routes. Others are partly nomadic, living in the Khashm Al Qirbah agricultural scheme.

Nomadic Rashaida live in tents made of goatskins. Men work as herdsmen, breeding goats, sheep and camels. Although largely illiterate, they memorise the pedigree of their animals in great detail, keeping mental records of their herds over seven or eight generations. Their camel breeds are highly prized across the Arabian Peninsula for camel racing, and fetch very high prices. Rashaida camels are small, stocky and a reddish colour, with a high milk yield and are especially hardy and drought-resistant.

Women work in grinding grain, churning milk, tanning animal skins, weaving, making tents and jewellery making. Wool sheared from camels can be used for tents and cloth. Some Rashaida have settled, where they either work in agriculture, or are supported by family members who have found work in Saudi Arabia or in the Gulf.



The Rashaida are known for their brightly coloured turbans (or emmas) and their coloured robes (dashdashas). These garments are the most colourful of all tribes in the country. Rashaida women wear a distinctive veil (ginaa) which covers their nose and mouth. Sometimes the veil is decorated with tiny lead beads around the face. The purpose of the veil is that from teenage years a woman's face is never seen by a man besides her husband.

The Rashaida maintain many of their Arab customs, and are known to live in isolated communities, where they prefer to live separately from other tribes. Communities tend to be made up of fifteen to thirty extended households who migrate together, headed by a prominent respected man who resolves disputes within the camp and with other tribes.

Because of their nomadic lifestyle and mobile tents, they generally worship in family prayer houses, rather than mosques. In addition to pure Islam, many Rashaida believe in spiritual beings such as ghosts and believe certain territory to be haunted.

- Pray that the Church will hear the call to love the Rashaida.
- Pray for the Lord to reveal Himself to the Rashaida through dreams and visions.
- Pray for God to raise up teams of people to reach the Rashaida in a way that is effective among them as a nomadic people group.

Friday 22nd February

Hemat Baggara people **Pop: 26,000** **Islam: 99%**

The Baggara are spread from the Lake Chad region eastward to the Nile River in the countries of Sudan, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

Most of the Baggara people are nomadic. Each year, their herds are moved south to the river lands during the dry season and north to the grasslands during the rainy season. Before moving, the Baggaras usually plant sorghum, sesame, millet and beans in their fields and they harvest the crops on their return.

The men are primarily involved with caring for the herds. They also plant and harvest the crops. The women are responsible for milking the cows, which is a staple part of the Baggara diet. They sell the raw milk to factories and processed milk either at the marketplace or door-to-door. They also build dome-shaped tents which are their homes and can be easily packed and moved along with the herds. Women also tend to the children, go for water and prepare the daily meals. Since the women are capable of adequately maintaining the household, the men will sometimes leave for one or two years at a time to work in other countries.

The Baggara depend entirely on their animals for survival. The people feed on milk and cheese during the winter. They use animal fat and dung as healing ointments. Animal skins are used to make clothing and tents. Even the bones are used to make ornaments and weapons.

The Baggara have been Muslims since the thirteenth century. They wear the clothes prescribed by the Muslim religion and bury their dead facing Mecca. They also mix spirit worship into their Islamic faith.

Very few Hemat Baggara follow Jesus. Their nomadic lifestyle makes it very difficult for workers to reach them. Concentrated prayer and evangelism efforts are needed in order to reach the hearts of Hemat Baggaras with the gospel.

- Let's pray for more workers among this people group, who have a servant heart for the Baggara.
- Pray that through a relationship with Jesus, the Baggara communities will be blessed and transformed.
- Let's pray for key spiritual leaders among the Baggara to receive Jesus as their Lord and saviour and lead others to Him.

Sources: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12083/CD
<http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/>

Saturday 23rd February

Fulani Pop: 40 million Islam 99.5%

The Fulani people are the largest nomadic people group in the world and probably the largest unreached people group in Africa. They number around 40 million, stretching all the way from the eastern part of Africa to the west. Some are now settled, some are semi-nomadic, but many still follow the traditional nomadic lifestyle. In one year they can walk over 2,000 miles without losing their way. They do not use mobile phones or satellites to guide them.

They have large populations in Nigeria, Guinea and Senegal. They are also live in Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Gambia, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali and as far east as Sudan.

They work largely as cattle herders; their cattle are highly prized. The decreasing availability of land and drought has led to conflict with neighbouring farmers of different tribes.



The Fulani nomads live in "wet season camps" while planting and harvesting. The pastures are lush and green, and the cattle graze freely. These camps consist of beehive-like huts made of woven twigs, leaves, and grass. During the dry seasons they camp in portable huts, moving the cattle or sheep to well-watered lands in the flood plains.

Fulani men hunt, trade livestock and tend to the herds. While the older men exercise leadership of the tribes, it is the duty of the younger men to move the herds. They are far from the light of electricity, the sound of motor vehicles or from water running from a tap. Young boys are responsible for helping their older brothers with the herds. Some of them take responsibility for leading the herd, even before they reach the age of 10 - while some of them are born during such journeys. The women usually milk the cattle and sell butter in the markets.

Over the years, some of the Fulani have advanced from being exclusively livestock herders to being scholarly, influential leaders in their communities.

The Fulani are almost entirely Sunni Muslim. Currently there are a few groups of believers, but still very few compared to their total population. However, last October, Africa Inland Mission reported some very encouraging news from east Niger. One of their colleagues said that he is still seeing many Fulani come to faith in Jesus. Another has held a Fulani Bible Teaching Week in East Niger in the grazing lands for the past ten years. He said that during the last teaching week, there were over 20 new believers and also over 30 who were baptised.

- Let's pray for more compassionate believers to take Christ to the Fulani people.
- Pray for courage and safety for gospel workers who take the Good News to the Fulani.
- Let's ask for a widespread move of God's Spirit, with thousands and thousands of Fulani turning to Christ.

Source of most material: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/11774/NI
<https://prayafrica.org/project/fulani-west-africa/>