

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> September**

**Dagomba of Northern Ghana**

**Pop: over 1 million**

**A former worker with the Dagomba in Ghana shared the following:**

There are over 1 million Dagomba people, whose kingdom, Dagbon, is located in Northern Ghana. The Dagomba kingdom became Islamic about 400 years ago and the prevailing opinion is that to be a Dagomba is to be a Muslim. It is difficult for many to conceive of being anything else.

Dagbon is ruled by an overall chief called the Ya-naa, and the kingdom is broken down into different divisional chieftaincies and then village chieftaincies. Although the chiefs now have less power than they once had, they still hold considerable authority.



When a person visits a chief, it is important to show respect. In this culture this is done by squatting to greet and clapping whenever the chief talks. The chief will then distribute some cola nuts for you to share together, which are extremely bitter. It is not accepted to speak directly to a chief, rather you must speak to the 'Wulana', one of his elders, who then passes the message on to the chief.

Dagombas are a proud people and find their identity strongly in Islam. Most Dagombas mix Islam with traditional beliefs (Folk Islam). Fear of evil spirits and curses are prevalent, especially when someone is sick. Verses from the Quran are used to make holy water and amulets for protection.

Every young Dagomba child wears at least one amulet around their neck or waist to protect them from evil. These amulets consist of animal skin wrapped around Quranic verses and special herbs.

There has been a witness amongst the Dagomba people since 1932 but the church has seen little growth. There are Muslim background believers and others who know the truth, but fear of rejection by their communities means they do not feel they can follow Jesus.

The Bible has been almost fully translated into Dagbani. However many Dagomba are illiterate.

- Pray the Dagomba would hear the word of God through social media, radio and TV, as well as through encounters with followers of Jesus.
- Let's pray for chiefs to be impacted by the good news. As people of influence, their opinion has great sway over their communities.
- Ask Jesus to reveal Himself as stronger than any other power.

## **Tuesday 25th September**

### **Dagomba Women**

When a Dagomba woman becomes pregnant for the first time after marriage, the pregnancy can't be talked about for the first 5 or 6 months until certain rites of adulthood are performed called 'pirigibu'. An Afah (religious man) makes an amulet, consisting of Quranic verses wrapped in black and white striped cloth. He also makes holy water by writing Quranic verses on a slate and washing them into water. A sister of the husband is then chosen to put the amulet around the pregnant woman's neck one evening. The sister-in-law then knocks gently on the pregnant woman's head and announces "You were a girl, now you have become a woman." The pregnancy can then be announced to the family and community.

The day after the 'pirigibu' is performed, the holy water is given to the pregnant woman and she continues to take it throughout the rest of her pregnancy. This gives spiritual protection for herself and the child and aids a safe delivery. If the labour is prolonged or difficult the holy water is believed to help.

On the 7th day after birth, a naming ceremony is held for the newborn baby. In the morning the elders meet together and the Imam announces the name he has chosen for the child to one of the women in the family. She then ululates three times if the baby is a boy and four if the baby is a girl, before going back to tell the rest of the family the name. The Imam then leads the elders in reciting Quranic verses and praying for the child, their family and the whole community. When a new topic or prayer request is suggested, the elder puts money in a basket which eventually goes to the Imam.

During the naming ceremony of a newborn child, the baby's head is shaved by a special barber. The old hair is considered bad and shaving it symbolises new life and a break from the old life in the womb. Baby boys are also sometimes circumcised on this day too, but mostly this is done a few days before so that it can heal before the celebration. Family and friends bring gifts for the child's parents and food is cooked for everyone.

- Pray that Dagomba women will come to understand that Jesus is stronger than any evil which may harm them or their children.
- Thank God for the tradition of prayer in Dagomba culture. Pray that God would answer them, bless their families and show them the full extent of his love for them in sending Jesus.
- Pray that many Dagombas will be born again and find new life in Christ.

## **Wednesday 26th September**

**Tuareg              Pop: 3.5 million              Islam 99.9%**

"With all due respect," stated the elderly Asben Tuareg woman, "If we break camp this close to the dry season, we will be taking a big risk. We know there are water holes a couple of miles from our next camp, but so many of the women are late in pregnancy that they cannot collect it. Are any of you men willing to collect the water for a couple of months?" Everyone chuckled and the men

looked sheepishly at one another. There was a long pause. Finally the oldest man said, "She is right. Our donkeys and camels are already slowing down with fatigue. Let's stay where we are." Though a westerner may have asked why the men could not carry the water, the Tuareg women beamed, happy that they were in a tribe where women are honoured and heard ([globalprayerdigest.org](http://globalprayerdigest.org)).

The Tuareg are a semi-nomadic people who live mainly in Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Southern Algeria and Burkina Faso. They are Berber people whose culture dates back a thousand years.

Tuaregs are divided into seven clans consisting of many tribal family groups. Society is caste-based. They call themselves a variety of names such as Kel Tamasheq.



The Tuareg men are known as 'The Blue Men of the Sahara Desert' because they cover their faces with a blue cloth. Excess indigo dye in the new garments often stains the skin with a blue hue on their fair Berber skin. To show respect, the men always cover their mouths, noses and foreheads while in the presence of foreigners or their in-laws. Interestingly, the women do not wear veils. They are respected, have a voice in decisions and own the tents and livestock.

The Tuareg men still make a living from camel herding, oasis gardening and caravan trading. They also plant and irrigate gardens, while women harvest the crops. Other men produce arts and crafts for the tourist trade or work as security guards in the towns, where a few Tuareg have also become businessmen or teachers.

In both Mali and Niger, Tuareg political leaders have asserted that the Tuareg were marginalised and consequently impoverished and that mining projects had damaged important pastoral areas. Since colonial times, some Tuaregs have periodically armed themselves to achieve an independent homeland in large swathes of territory, though other ethnic groups have been largely unsupportive. Despite ceasefires which have held, since the ousting of Colonel Gaddafi, militant Muslims (including Tuaregs from Libya inspired by Al-Qaeda) have influenced some groups and attacks are on-going. Peacekeeping attempts have not been entirely successful. French, UN and African Union forces have been involved in Mali and the surrounding countries to help control large areas.

- Ask the Lord to save key leaders among the Tuareg who will boldly declare the gospel.
- Pray that the Tuareg will resist joining Islamic militant groups.
- Pray that mission agencies and churches will respond to the challenge to reach the Tuareg. Perhaps over 70 workers are needed to reach the different groups.

Sources of some material:

<http://www.linkupafrica.com/peoples/Interior/114/personal-visit>  
<http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/issue/day/asben-tuareg-people-of-niger/>

**Thursday 27th September**

### **Tuareg beliefs**

Virtually all Tuareg are Muslims. They practise Islam, mixed with folk beliefs and magic. They have a reputation among other Muslims for being rather lukewarm in their faith. Islamic holy men called marabouts are believed to possess a special power of blessing, called al baraka. They educate children in verses from the Quran and they officiate at ceremonies marking rites of passage and Muslim holidays. The Tuareg celebrate Ganni, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, with special songs and camel races.

The small number of Tuareg Christians are the fruit of sacrificial service by workers from many agencies and churches over a number of years. Access to the Tuareg for Christian workers is limited because of their nomadic lifestyle, the environment they live in and, in some areas political instability and militant Islam. Water projects, animal husbandry, education, veterinary and health services are key ways God's people could serve the Tuareg on church-planting teams. Other opportunities could include those studying their music and art.

God has not forgotten or abandoned the Tuareg, but reaching them will involve sacrifice - nomadic groups are often the most difficult to reach. Some workers could perhaps live with settled or nomadic groups or visit nomads from a base city. We have a model to follow: Jesus showed how to reveal the truth of the gospel to nomadic shepherds with an itinerant ministry and often referred to nomadic shepherds and sheep in his parables.

God reached out to one nomad called Abraham and said "all peoples will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:1-3). We can pray that a nomadic church amongst the Tuareg the gospel will spread and bring blessings to others in the region.

Although there are few known Tuareg believers, you can listen to one Tuareg man's testimony of how he became a believer after meeting Christians in this [2-minute video](#).

Prayer is the key to reaching these precious people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Pray that the small number of Tuareg believers will be proactive in taking the gospel to their people.
- As the Tuareg begin to work more and more in towns, let's pray they meet Christians who share the good news with them.
- Let's pray that God will grant wisdom and favour to gospel workers focussing on the Tuareg people.
- Many wear jusjus (amulets) for protection against spirits and disaster, including new believers. May the Tuareg Muslims and new believers see that the spirits have been defeated by Christ (Col 2:15) and trust in Him.

Source: <http://www.linkupafrica.com/people/Interior/114/personal-visit>

## Friday 28th September

**Wolof**

**Pop: 7 million**

**Islam: 99%**

The Wolof live mostly in Senegal, where they make up 43% of the population, and Gambia, but also in southwest Mauritania. In recent years, however, the expansion of peanut cultivation and urbanisation has motivated many of the Wolof to spread out into neighbouring French-speaking countries to find better jobs in the cities.



Many Wolof live in cities and work as merchants, teachers, or government officials, but most still live in rural areas or on the coast and farm for their family or fish from their brightly painted boats.

The main cash crop for the peasants is peanuts and the earnings are used to provide new clothes, household utensils, blankets and tobacco. Okra, peppers, beans and tomatoes are also planted in gardens around their houses.

Their staple crops include sorghum and millet.

A Wolof village usually houses several hundred living in compounds around a village square. The compounds contain houses made of mud or reeds. Fences just inside the compound block the view of strangers. Public events, such as dancing and wrestling, take place in the village square. A mosque is located on the square's east side.

Few Wolof have come to know Jesus, perhaps less than 1,000, mostly in one group – the Lebou Wolof. The Wolof are resistant to Christianity. Global Prayer Digest wrote: *Her children are gone, taken against her will. This Wolof mother may never see them again. This is the price she pays for following Christ. As punishment for leaving the family faith, she lost everything. She no longer lives with her parents, eats with her friends, or has a paying job.*

Despite such persecution, we can praise God that the small Wolof church has grown over recent years. Mission agencies have focused on each of the groups and most of the Wolof groups have a number of Christian resources available to them. However there is a great need for labourers to work among the Wolof and to share Christ's love. Some estimate that 140 workers are needed for church-planting effort to progress further. There are many opportunities for aid workers, teachers and medical workers.

- Let's pray for the few Wolof believers to have the courage to share the love of Christ with their own people and be strong through persecution.
- There is a great need for labourers to work among the Wolof and to share Christ's love. Let's pray for more workers who will persevere to bring the gospel message and who may find those who want to study Scripture, obey Jesus and share what they have learned with their communities.
- Pray that their traditional Muslim culture will become more receptive, creating open doors for the Good News.

Sources of some material: <http://www.linkupafrica.com/peoples/Rim/39/personal-visit>  
[https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/15414/GA](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15414/GA)

**Saturday 29th September**

**Soninke**

**Pop: 2.5 million**

**Islam: 83%**

The Soninke are a people group mainly found in eastern Senegal, western Mali and southern Mauritania, although they also live in other West African countries. The Soninke were the founders of an ancient empire in this region called Ghana which existed from about 750-1240AD and grew rich on the trans-Saharan camel caravan trade in gold and salt. It came to an end as the result of Muslim Berber invasions from Morocco. (Modern Ghana was named after this empire, but there is no geographic overlap of the two).

Predominantly Sunni Muslims, the Soninke were one of the early ethnic groups from Sub-Saharan West Africa to convert to Islam in about the 11th century. The remainder follow animistic religions (believing that non-human objects have spirits).

They are farmers who raise sorghum, rice, peanuts and their staple crop, millet. They also raise goats, sheep, horses, chickens and cattle. In villages away from the Senegal River Soninke often arrange for people from neighbouring people groups such as the Fulani to herd their animals - particularly useful during the dry season when the animals have to be taken distances to fresh pasture. They trade in local markets and the traders travel to markets in other regions. The griots are a caste acting as tribal historians, storytellers, praise singers, poets and musicians, common in many West African people groups. At night you can hear them play traditional stringed instruments, drums and the xylophone-like balaphon.



Photograph taken by a colleague visiting the Soninke

Christians. One Christian couple worked in a town for 20 years before seeing the first Soninke believer. Muslim background believers are severely persecuted; therefore, evangelising is extremely difficult. Most Soninke have not yet heard a clear presentation of the gospel. Frontiers workers are living among the Soninke to try and change this.

Water projects, medical and agricultural aid work are ways to bless the people and see the church established, particularly in areas away from tarmacked roads.

Historically, Soninke men cleared the land and farmed and gardens were cared for by women. Now, many men work in other countries for several years at a time and with women, old men and children left behind, a form of matriarchal society has evolved. Soninke villages often consist of round huts with brick walls and thatched roofs or rectangular houses with brick walls, interior courts and flat terraced roofs. Houses line both sides of the main street, and a mosque is typically located in the village square.

Among all the Soninke, there are only a few Christians. One Christian couple worked in a town for 20 years before seeing the first Soninke believer. Muslim background believers are severely persecuted; therefore, evangelising is extremely difficult. Most Soninke have not yet heard a clear presentation of the gospel. Frontiers workers are living among the Soninke to try and change this.

- Let's pray for the few Soninke Muslim background believers who face such persecution for following Christ. Ask God to encourage and strengthen them and help them to reach out to family and friends.
- Thank God for the few workers who are persevering in sharing Christ's love among the Soninke people. Perhaps 50 new workers are needed to reach this people-group. Let's ask God to put the Soninke on people's hearts so they would want to go and live amongst them.
- Pray that their traditional Muslim culture will become more receptive, creating open doors for the Good News.

Sources of material: <http://www.linkupafrica.com/peoples/Interior/80/personal-visit>  
[https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/14996/SG](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14996/SG)