

Beja



Quick Facts

Population: 2,500,000

Sudan: 2,200,000

Eritrea: 200,000

Egypt: 80,000

Language Group: Cushitic

Religion: Sunni Islam

Believers: 0.0003%

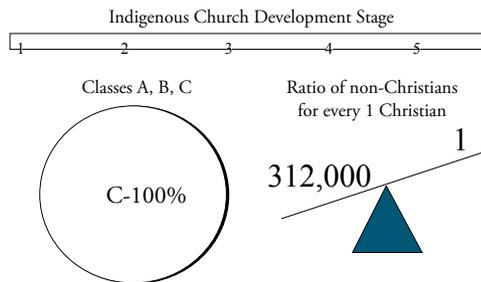
Scriptures: None

Ministry Tools: G

Church Status: 0

Mission Status: 1

MS Subgroups: 20+



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

Identity: The Beja are an ancient Cushitic people who have inhabited what is now Northeast Sudan for at least 4,000 years. Considerable mixing between African and Arab tribes over thousands of years has given them a unique appearance, and influenced their language. There are 5 major tribes among them and numerous subgroups.

Lifestyle: The Beja are nomadic pastoralists, traditionally herding camels and goats. They inhabit 120,000 square miles, with each clan having an allotted region for their herds. When a campsite is chosen, women will assemble the tents, which are made of woven palm matting. Since livestock are only butchered on special occasions, the Beja diet consists mostly of milk and grains. Coffee is such an important part of life they may spend up to 25% of their income to purchase it.

Customs: After a marriage contract is settled, the groom's family will give

livestock, weapons, and other goods to the bride's parents and oldest maternal uncle. The kinswomen of the bride will then construct a home for the couple near the residence of the bride's father.

Religion: The Beja were first introduced to Islam in the 7th century with the Arab conquests of the region, though it wasn't until the 15th century that the religion firmly took hold among them. Shariah law is practiced among most communities and interpreted by *qadis* (religious judges, usually uneducated). However Shariah law is always trumped by the ancient Beja tribal law, known as *Salif*, which is governed by a council of elders. Black magic is practiced against enemies, and sacred fire is used to ward off spirits causing sickness and accidents. Children are admitted to Islam shortly after birth during a ceremony in which a sheep is slaughtered.

Christian Outreach: Missionary work among the Beja has been limited due

to the political situation in Sudan, and a number of missionaries have been expelled from the region. The first known Beja believer in the 20th century was baptized in 1991. Since that time, a few more Beja have come to faith in Christ.

How to Pray:

☞ The Beja are one of the largest, most difficult groups to reach with the gospel and only two mission agencies are committed to planting the Church among them. Pray for God's blessing on these faithful pioneers and ask the Lord of the Harvest to greatly increase their capacity and numbers.

☞ Pray for spiritual breakthrough among the five major Beja tribes: Bisharin, Hadendowa, Amara, Ababda and Beni Amer. The first four have no known believers among them.

☞ The Bible has yet to be translated into the Beja language (To Bedawie), though most can understand Sudanic Arabic. Pray for those whom God has called to complete this translation task, and also for the wide distribution of the Arabic Bible in the meantime. Pray also for favor with the government to proclaim God's Word among the Beja.

Every year 22,000 Beja die without Christ.