

Circassian Muslims



Quick Facts

Population: 1,400,000

Turkey: 600,000

Russia: 550,000

Jordan: 80,000

Georgia: 80,000

Religion: Islam

Believers: 0.001%

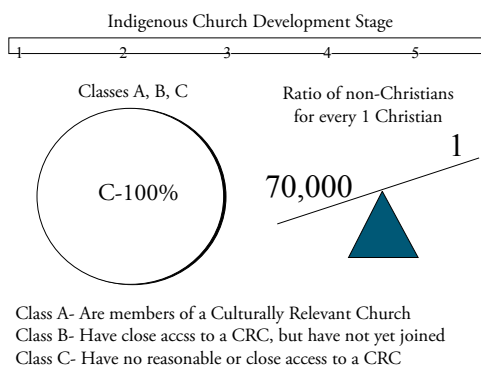
Scriptures: NT (2)

Ministry Tools: JT

Church Status: 0

Mission Status: 1

MS Subgroups: 5



Identity: The Circassians are a Northwest Caucasian people, who are divided into two main sub-groups, Adyghe and Kabardian. They are closely related to three other smaller peoples, the Abkhaz, Abaza and Ubykh, which were once part of one large group. Due to mass-genocide by the Russians (between 1800-1860), most Circassians were either killed or driven into the Ottoman empire and absorbed into Turkish society and culture.

Lifestyle: In rural areas, the Circassians cultivate a variety of grains, including millet, maize and rye. Villages are typically built along rivers, and are a collection of family compounds called *wunas* which are strung out like a chain. Included in the compound is the main house, a vegetable garden, barns for livestock, a guest house and satellite houses for the families of sons.

Customs: After paying the bride-price, the groom and his friends come by

night to “kidnap” the bride. The family of the bride will then engage in a token pursuit, only to allow the kidnapping party to escape. The girl will then be taken to the compound of her new in-laws where there will be several days of celebration, horse-racing and feasting.

Religion: The Circassians converted in mass to Sunni Islam around three hundred years ago. Before that time, many of the Circassian had been influenced by Christianity, and remnants of this influence still survive in various forms (e.g., sacrificing cattle before a cross). Superstitions still abound, and it is believed that certain individuals (warlocks and witches) possess the power to control the weather or curse people through the evil eye. In the past, Circassian princes performed religious ceremonies, but today Muslim Imams are elected by the community.

Christian Outreach: There has been little effort to reach the Circassian Mus-

lims with the gospel over the last twenty years, and today they are still largely underserved, especially in Turkey. In Jordan, several organizations have ministered among the small population of Circassians with some success. Generally speaking, the Kabardian Circassians have shown greater interest and response than the Adyghe.

How to Pray:

✞ Praise God for an evangelistic team that is now working among Circassian young people. Pray for good responses on campuses, and for the emergence of a youth movement to Christ led by Circassian collegians.

✞ A correspondence program has been launched among the Russian Circassian that introduces the gospel through a “Chronological Bible” approach, beginning in Genesis and moving through to Christ. Pray for the wide acceptance and use of this program, and for its eventual launch among all the Middle Eastern Circassian populations.

✞ The Circassians deeply resent Christians due to the genocide committed against them by the Orthodox Russians. Pray that God might use born-again Russians to be his agents of reconciliation, peace and forgiveness.

Every year 12,000 Circassian Muslims die without Christ.