

Gypsy Muslims



Quick Facts

Population: 5,000,000

Iran: 1,600,000

Egypt: 1,500,000

Turkey: 550,000

Iraq: 150,000

Religion: Islam

Believers: 0.01% (MBB)

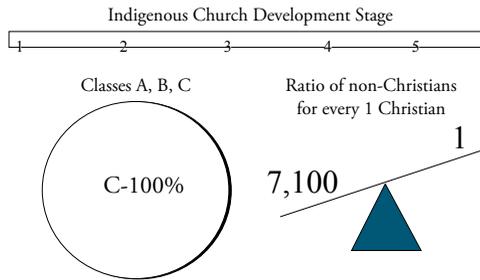
Scriptures: None

Ministry Tools: None

Church Status: 0

Mission Status: 1

MS Subgroups: 50+



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 Gypsies are a cluster of nomadic peoples which originated in India, and began migrating into the Middle East and then Europe beginning in the 3rd century A.D. After the rise of Islam in the 7th century almost all the Gypsy tribes in Muslim lands gradually, though superficially, began converting to the new religion.

Lifestyle: Gypsies typically travel in caravans from place to place, engaging in a wide range of entrepreneurial activity depending on the demand. Men are skilled in making a variety of products, such as drums, shoes, bird cages and utensils. Women take these products to market, and may also sing and dance to either draw attention or simply to entertain and collect money. It is this tradition, along with their nomadic lifestyle that has given the gypsies a reputation as beggars and thieves.

Customs: Contrary to popular perception, Gypsies have high moral stan-

dards concerning sexual conduct. Before a girl can be married, she must prove that she is a virgin. Deviant behavior is treated with great severity, and can result in one being considered an outcast for life, or in ultimately being driven out of the tribe.

Religion: The Gypsy Muslims have tended to adopt the version of Islam most prevalent in their host country. They are often regarded as godless and heretical due to their traditional practices, and syncretism with their ancient beliefs which are rooted in Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. Their annual festival, Hirdelezi, is held to commemorate the dead. During this festival they light fires in front of their homes and jump over them in a ritual to purify their sins, and as a kind of self-exorcism. Visits to mosques are limited to Islamic festivals, especially Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha.

Christian Outreach: The Gypsy Muslims are the least evangelized and most

neglected people cluster in the Middle East. There are reported to be a few isolated believers who have come to faith in more permanent settlements where the Gypsies have adopted a sedentary lifestyle. Reports of increased openness among nominal Muslim Gypsies in the Balkans is believed to be a sign that many thousands may soon come to faith in Christ in those regions.

How to Pray:

☞ There is a mass movement underway among European Gypsies to Christ, many of which were nominally Catholic or Orthodox, or followed their traditional religion. Pray that among these thousands of new believers, dozens of missionary teams would be raised up to evangelize and disciple their Muslim Gypsy cousins throughout Eastern Europe and the world.

☞ Pray for creative ways to “plant the church” among nomadic Gypsy peoples, and for a biblically based rethinking of what it means to be a community of Christ-followers and worshipers.

☞ Pray for the adaptation and publication of the Romani language (European Gypsy) Bible into the many related Domari (Middle Eastern Gypsy) dialects.

Every year 45,000 Gypsy Muslims die without Christ.

Gypsy Muslim (cont.)

22 Gypsy* Muslim Sub-groups People, Country, Population

Zott Domari	Iran	1,300,000	Syrian Domari	Syria	35,000
Halebi	Egypt	1,200,000	Maced. Romani Ms.	Macedonia	35,000
Turkish Domari	Turkey	550,000	Kalderash Muslims	Romania	35,000
Ghagar	Egypt	300,000	Lybian Halebi	Lybia	35,000
Indian Domari	India	220,000	Emirati Zott	UAE	21,000
Vlachi Muslims	Bosnia	150,000	Arhagar	Pakistan	15,000
Ghorbati Domari	Iraq	140,000	Albanian Vlach	Albania	14,000
Ghorbati Koli	Iran	140,000	Mussulman Gypsy	Israel	10,000
Bulg. Romani Ms.	Bulgaria	100,000	Afghani Kowli	Afghanistan	7,000
Balkan Romani Ms.	Ukraine	50,000	Palestinian Nawar	Palestine	7,000
Serbian Romani	Serbia	40,000	Algerian Rom	Algeria	3,000

Zott Domari- Also known as the Nawari in Iran, this group is the largest of the Muslim Gypsy peoples. They are almost entirely nomadic, and remain unintegrated with Iranian society. Few are citizens, and they are essentially a law unto themselves. Most men carry shotguns, though it is illegal for Iranians to own firearms. Women travel through towns and villages with their children, selling various kitchenwares, as well as telling fortunes and reading palms for money. Women's clothing is distinctive, consisting of brightly colored skirts over puffy pants, along with a plethora of tin bracelets, charms, and bells. Extended families travel together in caravans using camels and horses. For the most part they are regarded with fear and suspicion. It is widely believed that they kidnap little children and drink their blood.

Halebi- The second largest Muslim Gypsy group, the Halebi live primarily around the Nile delta. They consist of four tribes which claim to have migrated from Yemen. Many have been migrating south into the Sudan for economic reasons. Some live on floating islands, which they have constructed in the Nile. They make their living through raising horses and selling them, along with practicing folk medicine and fortune telling. Since most are not citizens, nor reliably counted in any census data, it has been estimated that the Gypsies in Egypt may number 3 or 4 times the present estimates (or as high as four million people).

Ghorbati- Also known as Koli (Farsi for "Kalo," which means "dark-skinned" in Domari), this group often refers to themselves as Haddad, which means iron-worker. Unlike other Gypsy groups, they attempt to blend in more with their host-county by adopting their clothing and customs. They tend to look down on other Gypsy peoples, which they regard as beggars. They often serve as blacksmiths and musicians (during festivals and other occasions) to pastoral peoples such as the Kurds and Qashqai.

Note: The term "Gypsy" is considered pejorative by the people themselves. It is a misnomer given them by Europeans who thought they were from Egypt. It is of course possible that some of the European "Gypsies" came to Europe through Egypt, though most seem to have come to the continent through Turkey and then the Balkans. Almost all of the other common appellations for the group, such as Nawar (fire-worshiper) and Ghorbati (stranger) in the Middle East, are also considered pejorative. The people's name for themselves is usually "Rom" or "Dom," depending on the dialect, both of which mean men or "man," as in "human," a common self-appellation among many tribal peoples around the world.