

The Beja of East Africa

The Beja are a pastoral tribe who dwell in the northeastern sections of the Sudan and in smaller areas of Ethiopia and Egypt. They are ancient Hamitic Cushites who have made their home in the desert between the Nile River and the Red Sea for over 4,000 years. It is believed by scholars due to the language and physical features of the Beja that they have derived from early Egyptians. Due to their crown of fuzzy hair, Rudyard Kipling has referred to them as "the Fuzzy Wuzzies".

The primary language of the Beja people is Tigre. They do not speak Beja because they feel it is useless. The Beja do not refer to themselves as Beja, but call themselves by the land in which they are living.

Even though the Beja have never been conquered by a foreign power, marriages and trading contracts allowed them to absorb Islam from nearby Arab tribes in the 13th century. In the Pre-Christian era, the state religion of Egypt was eventually adopted. There is no Bible translation in the Beja language. Christian work has not been done among the Beja of Eritrea.

Some of the Beja customs include rites of passage at birth, circumcision (of males), engagement, marriage, and remembrance or a second funeral. The Beja consider life good if they have numerous livestock and green, well-watered pastures. Town dwellers number less than 3 percent. Currently, the Beja along the Eritrean and Ethiopian border are facing famine.

There is a great need for Christian work among the Beja. There is an urgent need for Bible translation and relief work. Only one Christian is known to exist among the Beja population.

Image
Unavailable

Primary Religion:

Muslim

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

Churches:

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

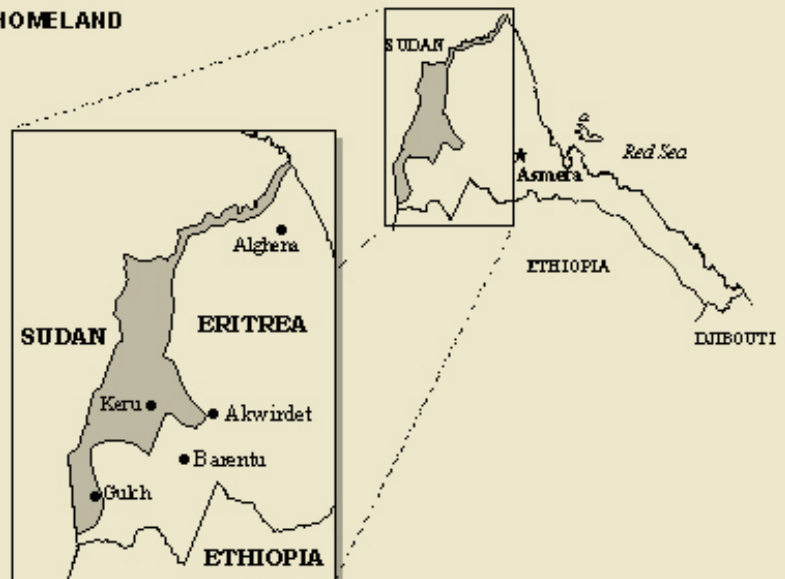
None in their language

Population (date):

3 million (1991)



BEJA HOMELAND



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	99	
Number Of Communities	There are five communities.	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	There is no Bible translation.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	The Beja are mainly Muslim and there will be strong opposition. Christianity is considered to be a foreign religion to the Beja and they cannot be Christians.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	There are no other forms of Gospel presentations.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Those working among the Beja should be knowledgeable about Muslim traditions and issues.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	3,000,000	
World Population (Date)	1991	
Comment (World Population)		
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Egypt	
Country Name	Sudan	
Country Name	Ethiopia	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	The Beja homeland is located by the Red Sea and is north of Ethiopia. It borders Djibouti and Sudan.	
Ecosystem Type	Desert	
Geological Type	Coastal	
Elevation	500-2000 ft	
Climate	It is moderate to cold in the highlands, but hot in the lowlands, especially along the coast.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Comment (Language)	The Beja of Eritrea do not speak Beja because they do not feel the language is useful. Beja is for those who plan to be herders.	
Alternate Language Names	Khasa, Xasa	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Second Languages	100	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	TIGRE	
Linguistically Related Languages	ARABIC, EGYPTIAN SPOKEN	
Comments (Related Languages)	Many scholars believe the Beja descended from early Egyptians because of their language and physical features.	
Comments (Related Languages)	The Beja mainly speak Tigre but a few speak Arabic and English.	
Neighboring Languages	ARABIC, SUDANESE SPOKEN	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	20	
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat receptive	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Comment (Literacy)	The Beja of Eritrea are somewhat receptive to literacy, but feel that the opportunities for it are limited.	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Pastoralists	
Occupation	The Beja are herders and agriculturalists. They herd camels, goats and some sheep and cattle. They also grow grains, wheat, bananas, and coconuts.	
Income Sources	The Beja sell fruits, vegetables, and milk.	
Products / Crafts	The Beja make carpets and rugs that are constructed with fibers from special trees. They make jewelry with mud, soft stones, or wood.	
Trade Partners	They trade animals, oil and butter with the Nara, Kunama, Saho, and Blen.	
Modernization / Utilities	There is limited electricity in the towns.	
Community Development		Group Description
Diet (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Diet)	The main staple is Ingera and Accalet which is grain, wheat, or millet that is ground and then cooked. Ingera is soft in texture and is eaten with stew. Accalet is harder and is eaten with milk, butter, or honey.	
Shelter Description	City homes are made of stone. Village homes are round, grass thatched huts with mud walls.	
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Energy)	The villages do not have electricity, only the towns.	
Clothing	The Beja wear white robes made of cotton fibers.	
Transportation	Many people walk or use camels for local transportation. There are some public buses along the main road.	
Leading Cause Of Death	Pneumonia and hepatitis	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	The family consists of a mother and father and their children. Some men marry more than one wife, and each wife has her own home with the children. The husband lives with each wife periodically.	
Neighbor Relations	The Beja get along well with their neighbors and are usually praised by them.	
Authority / Rule	Their local government consists of the elders.	
Social Habits/Groupings	The Beja like to be mobile and to travel for trading. However, they like to remain in their own area to live.	
Cultural Change Pace	Slow	
Identification With National Culture	Distinct	
Self Image	Prestigious	
Judicial / Punishment System	The Beja solve disputes by talking it out. They could also go to the local government of elders who will give them advice and mediate disagreements. Individuals are usually required to pay fines for crimes instead of being physically punished.	
Celebrations	Rites of passage at birth, circumcision (of males), engagement, marriage, and remembrance or a second funeral. They have Muslim religious celebrations.	
Recreations	The Beja enjoy performing and listening to music. Their form of dancing is jumping with swords.	
Media	None	
Local Language Broadcasting	None	
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat resistant	
Attitude To Change	Somewhat resistant	
Comment (Culture)	The Beja are suspicious of outsiders because they do not know their intentions.	
Youth		Group Description
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	The youth are expected to be active in all manner of society. They are full participants.	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Total Baptized	1	

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Item Name

Item Note

Comment (Church Growth)

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies

The Beja celebrate two major religious holidays. One in which they fast for 31 days, and the other in which they sacrifice sheep.

Attitude To Christianity

Somewhat resistant

Attitude To Religious Change

Somewhat resistant

Items For Prayer

1. Pray for someone to provide Scriptures in the Beja language.
2. Pray for the physical well-being of the Beja as they suffer from famine, civil war and drought conditions.
3. Pray for a sense of openness among the entire populace of the Beja to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Comments (History of Christianity)

No Christian work has been done among the Beja of Eritrea.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

Definite

Available Scripture

None

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Literature Available

None

Audio Recordings Available

None

Films Available

None

Radio Programs Available

None

Videos Available

None

Audio Visual Available

None