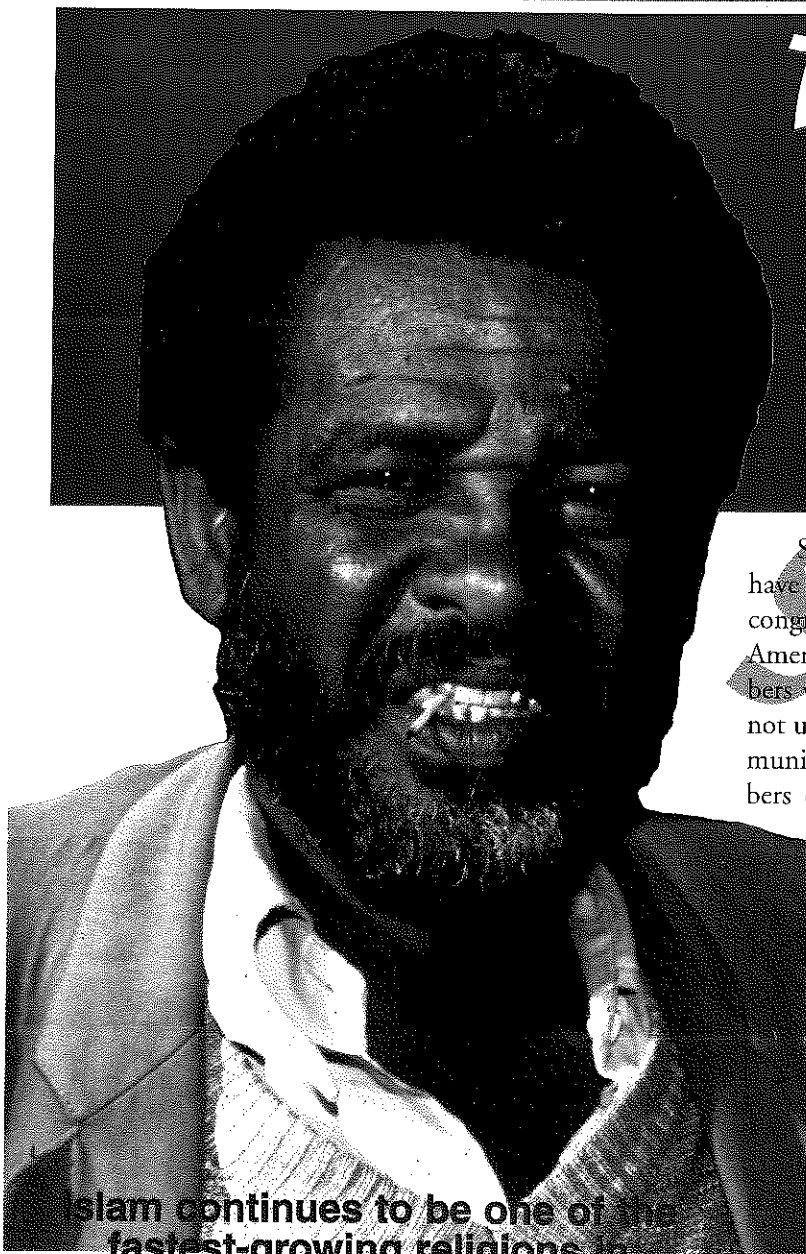


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THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON BLACK AMERICA

Since the tragedy of September 11, many black young adults have taken an even greater interest in Islam. One pastor, whose congregation in Chicago consists almost entirely of African-Americans, says, "Before the event, the congregation had 3 members who converted to Orthodox Islam, so the appeal of Islam is not unprecedented. It has always made its mark in the black community of Chicago. But since September 11, the number of members converting to the Muslim faith has reached up to 23 per month. My colleagues in other districts are reporting similar dramatic increases. While it is ironic that a terrorist attack would herald the entrance of more converts into their faith, the issue perplexes me."

He continues by saying that the former—now turned Muslim—members justify their acceptance of Islam by referring to its simplicity, clarity and equality for all races. Many of them feel resentment towards the government, thus towards the whole system with Christianity mixed in. Others have stated that it wasn't just the September 11 attacks that got them interested in Islam, but it was the anti-Islamic websites, a hostile media and racism directed towards Muslims that sparked their deep interest.

This pastor is perplexed by what is really causing this movement of African-Americans toward Islam. Is it the strength of Islam or is it a reflection on the weakness of the Church? How can the Church have an impact?

In order to understand what is motivating this increased interest in Islam in the African-American community, a historical perspective is needed. The growth of Islam in the United States dates back as far as the importation of black slaves from Africa. Some

continued on page 4

Islam continues to be one of the fastest-growing religions in America, and the massive number of African-American converts—in prisons, colleges and inner cities—is a key factor.

More than 2 million black Muslims live in the United States, and if current trends prevail, that figure will continue to swell.

Until All Have Heard



Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims

*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?
(Romans 10:14)*

Nearly 2.6 million African-Americans comprise almost 42% of the total population of approximately 6 million Muslims in America. Large numbers have converted to Islam in the prison system, college campuses and the inner cities.

In an April 3, 2000, interview with *Christianity Today*, Carl Ellis, Jr., president of Project Joseph, states,

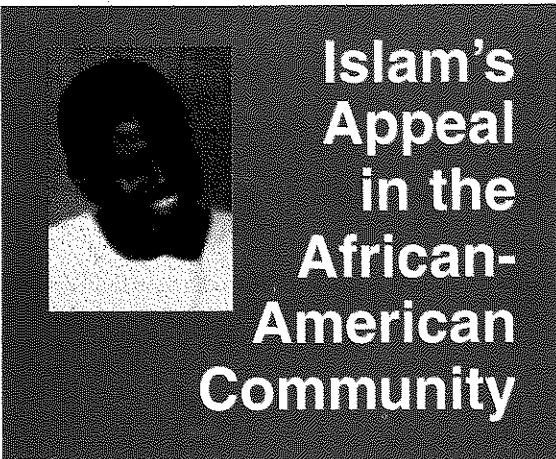
Out of the 2.6 million African-American Muslims, the Nation of Islam makes up only about 18,000 to 20,000. But, with leaders like Louis Farrakhan, it makes the most noise.

We must realize that there are essentially two kinds of African-American Muslims. One group is what I call the Black Nationalist-type Muslims. They would include the six Nations of Islam—the movement has splintered since the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975—plus a couple of other groups. All these groups have a theology based on the historical core cultural issues of African Americans—dignity, identity, significance, empowerment—along with various doctrines that claim God is black and the white man is the devil.

The other group is what I call mainline Muslims. They derive their theology straight out of the Qur'an and the Hadith. The mainline Muslims would include the Orthodox [Sunni] Muslims, the Shi'ites, the Sufis and the Ahmadiyyas. They all fight among themselves as to who is right. The Orthodox sect is by far the largest, with roughly 2.2 million adherents. Granted, most of the Orthodox Muslims in the United States were introduced to Islam through one of the Black Nationalist groups. But as time passes, a smaller percentage will come from those groups.

African-American converts list the following as some of the appealing aspects of Islam:

Simplicity. To the person on the street, Islam often *does not appear* to be as complicated as Christianity. Muslims



Islam's Appeal in the African-American Community

market their faith accordingly, stating that the single requirement for becoming a Muslim is to pronounce the Shahada (there is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah).

Rationality. Muslims *say* Christianity contains irrational beliefs and practices. Concepts such as the Trinity are held up as incomprehensible distortions of Jesus' teaching. Muslim teachings are black and white, containing no

irrational concepts and no miracles to explain.

This-Worldliness. The Quran *is said* to contain a prescription for an ideal political, economic, judicial, social, moral and religious system, revealed by God for His people. Muslims often ask why the New Testament contains no structural information in these areas.

Equality. Islam *appears* to emphasize the equality of all individuals, races, ethnic groups and social classes.

Individualism. Islam *is perceived* as being a do-it-yourself religion, having no strongly developed hierarchical structure. It is personalized and most rituals may be performed in the privacy of one's own home.

External discipline. Many African-American males long for the kind of structure that Islam provides, especially The Nation of Islam. Perceiving themselves as victims of social disorganization, many African-American males see Islam as a way to redefine one's manhood.

Liberation. Many African-Americans embrace the belief that since "Christians" enslaved Muslim Africans, changing their religion and names and displacing their culture, they must revert back to their cultural and religious roots. Many females convert to Islam in reaction to the feminist subculture that formerly "held" them.

Space does not allow me to point out the many fallacies in the above aspects. However, please read the lead article with an open mind, inform yourself about the African-American Muslim community, and make a concerted effort to pray for, love and reach out to them with a true Christian witness.





Malaysia

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who has led Malaysia for the last 21 years, announced his resignation on June 22. The direction of religious freedom in this Southeast Asian country is threatened not so much by his successor as by the political party Parti Islam si-Malaysia (PAS). After pleadings from his fellow leaders, Mahathir quickly recanted his resignation only to announce three days later that he would step down in late 2003 and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would succeed him. Mahathir was a stabilizing, if controversial, force in this Muslim-dominated, multi-ethnic country made up of Malays, Indians and Chinese. The latter two groups have the largest Christian populations. Malaysia's Constitution upholds religious freedom but prevents proselytizing among Muslims. Many Malaysian Christians are hopeful current religious freedoms will be maintained.

—Compass

Pakistan

The Pakistan government claims that international critics are unfair in allegations that the 1986 amendments to its harsh blasphemy laws target the country's religious minorities. According to Interior Ministry statistics, nearly 75 percent of the country's blasphemy cases registered every year implicate Muslim citizens. But except for a few prominent cases, most Muslim defendants are granted bail soon after their arrest, while judicial proceedings continue on their case. By contrast, Christians charged with blasphemy are routinely refused bail by local judges, who justify their incarceration as "protection" from possible attacks while under trial. As a result, a

Christian victimized by blasphemy charges typically spends years in jail until his verdict by a lower court, and years more while his probable conviction is being appealed to the higher courts. Once acquitted, as all have been to date, most flee the country for asylum abroad in order to escape ongoing extremist threats against their lives.

—Compass

Kazakhstan

Kazakh authorities have denied a Baptist family access to their own home and confiscated their washing machine, as well as denying a regular meeting place to the congregation that used their home. This is part of the continuing Kazakh crackdown on unregistered religious communities. A local official has told Keston that the family was not registered to live in its home, whilst a court official has also defended the ruling.

—Keston News Service

Uzbekistan

A pastor of the Christian Full Gospel Church in the town of Andijan near the border with Kyrgyzstan has complained that members of his church are being openly subjected to pressure by the authorities. Local authorities are blocking the church's application for registration, saying the church is "undesirable."

—World

South Africa

A CMM team member participated in the recent Eleventh Hour Institute held in Johannesburg, South Africa. This Institute brought together missionaries of all nationalities and key church leaders to better prepare them for cross-cultural ministry throughout Africa. The leadership is focusing on the preparation of workers in Africa for what they believe is the eleventh hour harvest, based on the parable of Jesus in Matthew 20:1-16. This meeting included 150 African leaders and teachers from the southern area of Africa. The CMM team member challenged them with the need for the growing number of Africa's Muslims to hear the good news about Jesus and

suggested culturally-appropriate ways to share the message. The growth of the Church in Africa in the last decade has been unprecedented and the leaders want to see it continue.

—CMM

Turkey

Turkish security police ordered a Protestant Christian congregation meeting for 40 years in the southeastern port city of Iskenderun to close its doors in mid June, declaring the church had "no legal basis" and that its activities were harmful to society. The security police of Hatay province served an official notice to Pastor Yusuf Yasmin to close and stop all activities of the New Testament Church in Iskenderun. The church has met in its current location for the past seven years without previous complaints from the Turkish authorities. Yasmin and the majority of his congregation, averaging 80 to 90 worshippers at Sunday services, are Turkish citizens from a variety of ethnic Christian backgrounds. After pastoring for 43 years, Yasmin admitted he had found it very difficult to be forbidden to worship with his congregation for the past month. A lawyer retained by the New Testament Church confirmed on July 9 that he is preparing to file a case before the administrative courts on behalf of the Iskenderun Protestants to regain their constitutional rights to freedom of worship and religious activities.

—Compass

Yemen

The government granted United Bible Societies permission to import Scriptures. The first Bibles were delivered to Christ Church in Aden, one of only two functioning churches in the country.

Meanwhile America's war on terrorism may give President Saleh his chance to turn Yemen into a one-party Arab state and extend his power over rebellious tribes. He has banned private Muslim schools, sacked Muslim governors and issued rules for Friday mosque sermons. He did not get tribal leaders to hand over two bin Laden associates.

—Pulse 

THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON BLACK AMERICA

estimate that as many as 30 percent of the slaves brought to this country were Muslims. Today the majority of African-American Muslims follow the teaching of the Orthodox Sunni faith. But it was not always so.

Birth of African-American Islam

In 1913 Noble Drew Ali founded the Moorish American Science Temple in Newark, New Jersey. He claimed that all blacks were "Asiatics" and that they were the descendants of the Moabites and Canaanites. He taught that Islam is the "natural" faith of all "Asiatics." Ali's success was partially due to the fact that African Americans were disadvantaged and mistreated in American society. Another contributing factor may have been his teaching that there was no heaven or hell. Noble Drew Ali died in 1926.

A traveling peddler appeared in Detroit in 1930. Though he had more than one name, he was most often known as W. D. Fard. He claimed that he had been born in Mecca of an Arab father who was from the same tribe as Muhammad. He also claimed to be the reincarnation of Nobel Drew Ali.

Fard labored in and around Detroit for three years, gathering approximately 8,000 followers. His teaching was strongly based in Black supremacy. He taught that all whites were evil. He selected an inner circle of trusted disciples, some of whom came to believe that he was the incarnation of Allah. Following some difficulties with the law, W. D. Fard disappeared in 1933. His disappearance was never adequately explained. However, the influence of his teaching continued to be felt for many years.

The next key figure in the development of the Black Muslim movement was Elijah Poole. He was born in 1898 in Sandersville, Georgia, as the son of a Baptist preacher. He moved to Detroit in 1923 at the age of 25 to find work in the auto factories, as did a host of other poor African Americans. Elijah Poole met Fard in 1931. He assimilated Fard's teaching and soon became his trusted helper. His name was changed to Elijah Muhammad, a name that was highly influential in the Black Muslim movement until his death in 1975.

Development of The Nation of Islam

Elijah Muhammad continued the Black supremacist teaching of his mentor. He mixed the teachings from the Bible that he had learned from childhood with some

teachings from the Qur'an. He clearly taught that white people were of the devil. Developing a highly disciplined organization known as The Nation of Islam, he taught high moral principles and preached self-help to many poor African Americans.

In 1947, Malcolm Little, also the son of a Christian minister, was serving a prison term for armed robbery. He was introduced to the teaching of Elijah Muhammad by his sister and was soon converted. Five years later, when released from prison he became fully devoted to Elijah Muhammad and soon was chosen as the national spokesperson for The Nation of Islam. He also served in the prestigious position as minister of Temple No. 7 in Harlem. During his years of close association with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm Little's name was changed to Malcolm X.

Malcolm X was deeply influenced in 1963 by the questions raised concerning the moral ethics of Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm X subscribed completely to the high standard preached by his mentor, but the rumors concerning Elijah Muhammad's sexual indiscretion proved true.

When President John Kennedy was killed, all the ministers of The Nation of Islam were told to remain quiet and out of the media spotlight. Malcolm X spoke out and was suspended for 90 days from his leadership positions. In January 1964, he was removed as the minister of the high profile Temple #7 in Harlem. He completely withdrew from The Nation of Islam on March 8, 1964.

Origins of Sunni Islam in the African-American Community

By the time Malcolm X withdrew from The Nation of Islam, he had already questioned some of the teachings, such as the prophethood of Elijah Muhammad and the extreme position of Black supremacy. He had begun examining the more orthodox teaching of the Sunni faith of Islam.

Malcolm X was approved to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca in April 1964. That proved to be an eye-opening experience. In Mecca he found people of all races following the orthodox teaching of Islam.

Perhaps it would be fair to say that Malcolm X was converted to Orthodox Islam as a result of his visit to Mecca. When he returned, he changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-shabazz. His wife said, "He went to Mecca

a Black Muslim and came back a Muslim." He immediately began to preach the more orthodox message of Islam.

Malcolm X was killed on February 21, 1965, just a year and three months after John F. Kennedy. Although Elijah Muhammad continued to lead The Nation of Islam for 10 more years, the dramatic breaking of the relationship between Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X had sown seeds that would bear a harvest when Elijah died on February 25, 1975.

Wallace D. Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad's son, was immediately selected to fill his father's place of leadership. Wallace D. Muhammad's first goal was the complete integration of The Nation of Islam with orthodox Islam as practiced throughout the world. He moved away from racism. He embraced America and the millions of Muslims from many nations who live here. The Black Muslim movement of W. D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad was left behind. He was reaching forward to the global faith of all Muslims and considering what it could do for African American Muslims.

The name of the organization was changed and the leadership decentralized. All races were accepted. The Muslim prophet, Muhammad, who lived 1,400 years ago, is now the leader to whom most African-American Muslims look for advice and counsel.

Louis Farrakhan

It was not surprising that some of these changes were opposed. The high profile figure of Louis Farrakhan, who is often seen and heard today, was the most visible and vocal opponent of reform. He broke off and retained the name, The Nation of Islam. (There are several small splinter groups that are using this name as well.) However, in spite of all the press coverage he receives, Louis Farrakhan has never succeeded in increasing his group to more than 30,000 members. This is rather small considering the 5 to 7 million Muslims residing in America. Because he has found himself increasingly on the fringe, he is now seeking to dialogue with the leaders of Orthodox Islam.

A Fresh Opportunity

It is a sad testimony to the failure of the Church that in the early days of the Black Muslim movement, the sons of two protestant preachers led The Nation of Islam. Today the followers of Jesus have a fresh opportunity to proclaim the truths of Jesus Christ. Will September 11 cause us to be possessed by fear and become an inward-looking people? Or will we see that God has brought, and is continuing to bring, people from many nations to live

in our towns and neighborhoods in order for them to be loved by us and accepted as people of value?

If the gospel means anything, it means the sick are the ones who need a doctor, not the well. Let us reach out to all Muslims whatever their ethnicity and show them the reality of what it means to really know God through Christ!



The Influence of Islam

Carl Ellis, president of Project Joseph, made the following comments about the influence of Islam on African Americans:

The Nation of Islam purports to be the religion of our African roots—which, of course, it isn't. If you look at Islam, the God it portrays suggests more of an Arabic tribal deity. American Christianity, on the other hand, has at times portrayed God with the images of a European tribal deity. So now here I am, an African American, and I've got to decide which of these tribal deities I'm going to worship. Am I going to worship the one that looks like my oppressor, or the one that looks like somebody in my neighborhood?

What usually makes them [Muslims] defect is when they discover that Islam is nothing but a works-righteousness treadmill. For those Muslims who come to Christ, it's as if they hear Jesus saying all over again, "Come to me, all you who are weary and tired, and I will give you rest." I think a lot of them realize that, for all the ablutions and guidelines for diet and dress, when it's all said and done, they're just as much sinners as they were before.

There are three things that a Muslim, Hindu or anybody else has no resistance against: the prayers of the saints, the love of the saints and the wise application of biblical truth to their core issues—whatever those issues are. Every Muslim that I've met who came to Christ always came to Christ for one or more of those reasons, and the one that I hear mentioned mostly is love. We should always remember that Islam is a system, but Muslims are people. We may not like the system, but the people we must love.

Chad gained its independence from France in 1960. The non-Muslim Southerners were politically dominant until 1978, but since 1979, northern Muslim factions have fought among themselves for power, with interventions by Libya, France and others.

The growth of the subsistence economy has been hindered because of lack of rainfall, severe droughts, distance from the sea, civil wars and a rudimentary road system.

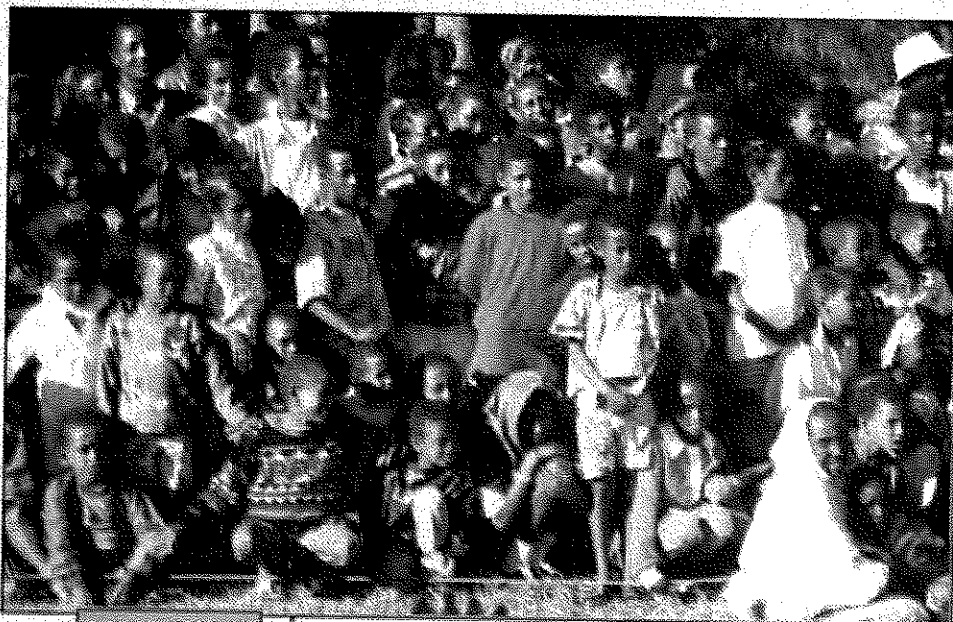
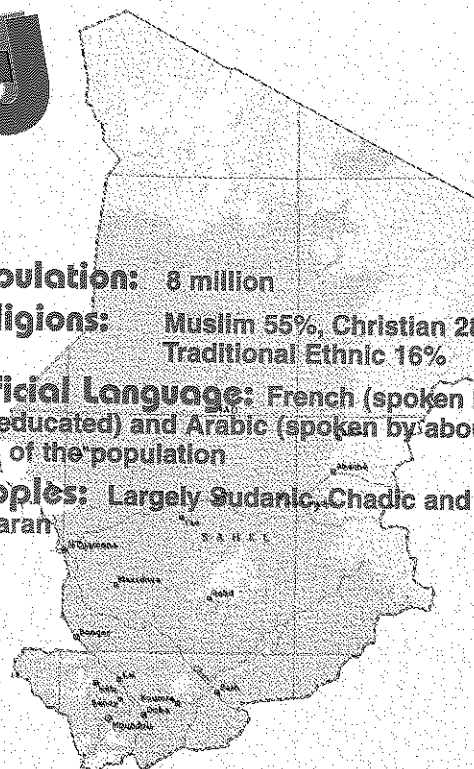
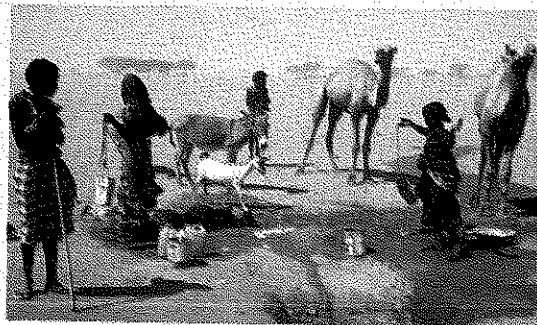
Significant oil deposits near Lake Chad and in the southwest could bring progress if wisely developed.

Chad

Population: 8 million
Religions: Muslim 55%, Christian 28%,
 Traditional Ethnic 16%

Official Language: French (spoken by the educated) and Arabic (spoken by about 60% of the population)

Peoples: Largely Sudanic, Chadic and Saharan



Unreached People Group Bagirmi Fulani

Location: South-central Chad, as well as in parts of the Central African Republic
Population: 40,000
Religion: Muslim (Sunni), 99.9%
Language: Bagirmi Fulfulde

The Bagirmi Fulani are a subgroup of the much larger Fulani, a tribe that is spread across much of West Africa. Many believe the Fulani to be of Caucasian origin because

of their straight hair and noses, thin lips and copper-colored skin. It is thought that they came from North Africa or the Middle East as herdsmen centuries ago.

The Fulani live in a semi-arid, tropical zone. They are confined to an almost horizontal area across Africa, bound by the Sahara Desert to the north and by the disease-carrying tsetse fly to the south.

The Fulani were one of the first groups in Africa to convert to Islam. Today, the Bagirmi are 99.9% Muslim. However, they still continue to practice many of their old Fulani traditions. To a Fulani, the important things in life are family, cattle, strong morals and beauty. They also value excellence in poetry, singing and dancing.

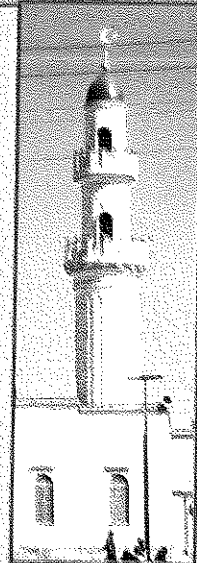
Pray that...

...the Lord of the harvest will send dedicated missionaries to live and work among the Bagirmi Fulani of Chad.

...God will reveal himself to them through dreams and visions.

...God will give the few Bagirmi Fulani believers opportunities to share Christ with their own people.

...the Holy Spirit will guide those who are working among the Bagirmi and give them fruitfulness.



Information from Operation World, 2001 edition and Bethany World Prayer Center's "The Unreached Peoples Prayer Profiles."

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!

Friday, November 1, 2002. Please pray

...for the Eleventh Hour Institute being held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from November 5-21. A CMM team member will be sharing and encouraging the workers to reach out to their Muslim neighbors. Pray that each one will be motivated toward such outreach.

...for the thousands of people suffering and dying with AIDS, especially in Africa. Pray that God will use this tragic condition to bring healing and the gospel message to many Muslims.

...for the many devout Muslims who will begin their Ramadan fast on the 6th or the 7th. Pray that those who are earnestly seeking to have an encounter with God will experience the truth of Jesus Christ in a supernatural way.

Friday, November 8, 2002. Please pray

...that churches may not forget to uphold the persecuted church in an ongoing basis, but especially on Sunday, November 10, International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

...for Zayed Yasin, the Harvard graduate who gave a graduation address on "American Jihad" this year. Pray that the Lord will send him a Christian friend who will be able to show him God's love.

...that God will strengthen and encourage the Church in Iraq. Pray that God will overrule the designs of the government on the Church.

Friday, November 15, 2002. Please pray

...that peace will hold in the islands of Indonesia and the Laskar Jihad will be dealt with decisively and reined in by the Indonesian government so that the killing may not continue.

...for Arab Christian leaders in Palestine who feel increasingly isolated from the Church because of the strong support of Israel by Western Christians. Pray for God's provision for them.

...for the three Turkmenistan believers who are in hiding from the Secret Police because they refuse to renounce their faith.

Friday, November 22, 2002. Please pray

...for the Erfani family who are immigrating to Canada from Iran via Turkey. Praise God for His intervention on their behalf. Pray for their adjustment and for God's provision for their every need. Atefeh, the mother and wife, has MS.

...for the country of Chad. Like many African countries, Islam is advancing and controlling the country. Pray that Christians will continue in their determination to spread the gospel even in the face of intense resistance and persecution.

...that God will intervene in Uzbekistan. A government religious affairs official has demanded that churches stop preaching in the Uzbek language in order to prevent Muslims from hearing the gospel.

Friday, November 29, 2002. Please pray

...for the Church in Nigeria that continues to suffer violence being perpetuated by Islamic extremists who are determined to make Nigeria a Muslim state. Pray for God to protect the lives of His people, to bring them spiritual freedom and an end to sharia law.

...that God will grant the Church in Eritrea the freedom to meet and worship the Lord. Pray for the release of all the closed churches.

...for a house church outreach to Muslims and Buddhists in the Bangkok, Thailand slums. Pray that many will accept Christ as Savior and Lord.



Urge, then, first of all
that requests, prayers,
intercession and
thanksgiving be
made for everyone.

—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)



Prayer, then, first of all
that requires prayer,
intention and
thanksgiving by
us to the persons
(1 Thim 2:10 NIV)

Friday, December 6, 2002. Please pray

...for the southern Sudanese people who are suffering intensely at the hands of Muslims. Slavery is endemic, aerial bombing is routine and the government of Sudan continues to orchestrate famine as a weapon of mass genocide.

...for an 18-year-old Pakistani girl who was gang raped to shame the family because of a violation of Islam by her 11-year-old brother, walking unchaperoned with a girl. Pray that God will heal her wounded body and spirit and that she will come to an understanding of her value to the Lord. Rape victims are ostracized and can never be married, so suicide is a common recourse.

...for God's intervention in the lives of Arab Muslim immigrants living throughout Europe. An estimated 100,000 live in London. Many are lonely and poor. Ask God to send a loving Christian friend to each Muslim immigrant to bring hope in the midst of despair.

Friday, December 13, 2002. Please pray

...for the Christians in Ethiopia. They have suffered several violent attacks since the bombing of terrorist forces in Afghanistan last year. Several churches have been destroyed and church leaders imprisoned. Pray that Christians in Muslims areas of Ethiopia will continue faithful in witness.

...for women in Muslim countries, both expatriate and local, who find the treatment they receive demeaning. Pray that the expatriate workers will find ways to build bridges of friendship that will enable them to share the love of Christ and help local women to see their true value in Christ.

...for the many churches in Turkey that are facing trouble—possible terrorist attacks, bogus charges, wearisome legal cases, negative press, aggressive Sunday morning demonstrations. Pray for God's wisdom and courage for the pastors. One is facing a possible five-year sentence.

Friday, December 20, 2002. Please pray

...that God will remove the vengeance and animosity toward the Saudi Arabian authorities for the mistreatment and injustices done against the Christians who were jailed for so many months. Pray for continued witness in this very closed country.

...for Reza, an Afghani who has come to the Lord at a Persian fellowship in Greece. Pray that God will continue to teach and train him and that eventually he will be able to attend Bible school and become an evangelist among his own people.

...for protection of Christians in Kashmir. A Bible school student was martyred. Missionaries and students had been instructed to leave the area, but he and several others had remained there to witness and minister to thousands of refugees.

Friday, December 27, 2002. Please pray

...for endurance and faith for the persecuted Christians in Turkmenistan, perhaps the most repressive of the former Soviet republics. The government has expelled all known foreign Christians.

...for young Muslim-background believers who are becoming active participants in churches that are being planted. Pray that God will raise up hundreds of Spirit-led workers to plant contextualized churches among Muslims.

...for at least seven Christians who are being imprisoned in Pakistan without bail on questionable blasphemy charges. If convicted, they must be given a death sentence. Pray for Ayub Masih, Ranjha Masih, Aslam Masih, Jhang Amjad, Asif Masih, Augustine "Kingri" Masih and Pervez Masih.