

## 2014—Dargin People

The Dargin People of Dagestan are the second largest linguistic group of Dagestan. However, more than any other people group of Dagestan, the Dargin are really not just one group—but rather *a collection of closely-related distinct language circles in south central Dagestan*, which collectively are known as the Dargin (or *Dargwa*). Language experts count 17 to 19 nearly mutually unintelligible languages in the Dargin sphere, and at least 40 additional named dialects within those language circles. As a matter of fact, the very word ‘*Dargwa*’ means ‘*free distinct societies/communities.*’ In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the collection of all these ‘*free societies (Dargwas)*’ became known as the greater Dargin region.

Dargin communities, traditionally strong in trading/commerce, have maintained their ancient family structures, village assemblies and councils of elders. Though their economy is predominantly agricultural, the Dargins have developed rudimentary production and crafts such as carving, stone-working, tanning, and metal-working for weapons and implements—to support farming and livestock-raising. Many Dargin have migrated down from the more than 110 Dargin villages/towns in the mountains to lowland urban regions in Dagestan near the Caspian Sea, including large numbers of Dargin in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan. In many of these urban enclaves Dargin traditions remain strong; in others, due to urban mixture, less so. The Dargin (along with the Avar) are considered one of the two most powerful ethnic groups of Dagestan. All Dargin circles in Dagestan together total more than 500,000 in population.

Sunni Islam first arrived in the *Dargwa* region of Dagestan by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, and became firmly established as the official religion by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The Islam of the Dargins, though, has a strongly syncretistic nature, with a substantial heritage of pre-Islamic beliefs given folk Islamic form. The agricultural calendar & ceremonies and household & family rites have retained many elements of their original animism--practices for warding off evil and other forms of magic. Pre-Islamic traditions are reflected in the rite of the first furrow--the most important and ceremonially richest Dargwa rite—also in the rites for causing and stopping rain, calling out the sun, veneration of sacred trees, and shrines of deceased holy men. Local Islam is ruled by the *jamaat*, the council of elders in each village.

The Dargin come from a powerful ethnic tradition—indeed the very name ‘*Dargwa*’ means ‘strong, free communities.’ However, bondage to superstition, violent power struggles, pervasive male drunkenness, and other endemic forms of human sin, leave this proud collection of peoples far from free. Present-day Dagestan is beset by increasing cycles of violence--squelching trade, tourism, and economic well-being. In the past two decades there are now 40+ Dargin followers of Jesus in Dagestan. Since 2007 *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* have been published in Dargin—*John*, *Acts*, and *Revelation* are nearly ready, with the goal the entire New Testament in the next decade. This incarnational work of the gospel in the Dargin world is crucial. Islam brings a form of law, but not regenerative grace. As John 1 says, “*The law came through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ.*” For these proud Dargin communities, Jesus’ promise is, “*If you continue in My word, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!*”

\* *PRAY for true freedom for the Dargin people. John 8:32*  
\* *PRAY for men and women of peace (Luke 10:6) in each one of the 110+ Dargin towns & villages, to be keys to welcoming the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit into each Dargwa community in the years ahead.*

*Matthew 9:36-38 & Hebrews 2:3-4*

\* *THANK GOD for the new believers among the Dargin—PRAY for their number to continually increase. Col. 1:6*  
\* *PRAY for dreams and visions among open-hearted Dargin, both young and old. Acts 2:17 & II Chron.16:9*  
\* *PRAY for blessing upon God’s Word in Dargin, into many Dargin lives, both urban & rural. Isaiah 55:11*



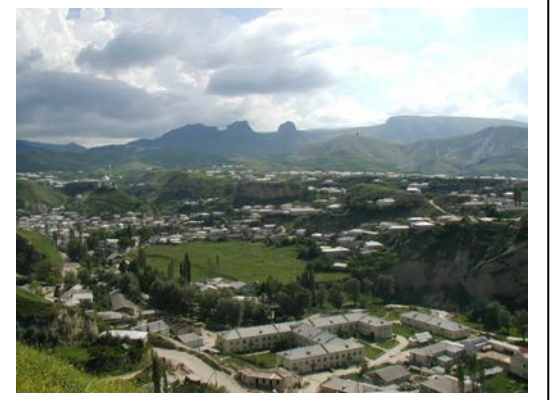
*Dargin Wedding Preparation – in southern Dagestan*

### **NAMES OF MAJOR DARGIN TOWNS:**

- |               |                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Akusha     | 5. Manas [mixed population]        |
| 2. Sergo-kala | 6. Karabudakent [mixed population] |
| 3. Urkarakh   | 7. Izberbash [mixed population]    |
| 4. Leva-shi   | 8. Mamedkala & Chinar [mixed]      |

### **NAMES OF DARGIN VILLAGES:**

- |                             |                     |                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Kakamakhi                | 38. Bur-deki        | 74. Chakh-dikna     |
| 2. A-chisu                  | 39. Mama-aul        | 75. Dzhur-machi     |
| 3. Kadar                    | 40. Balta-makhi     | 76. Tree-sanchi     |
| 4. Karamakhi                | 41. Ai-nurbi-makhi  | 77. Megeb           |
| 5. Chan-kurbekh             | 42. Nizhni Mulebki  | 78. Ur-gani         |
| 6. Kach-kaliik              | 43. Verkhni Mulebki | 79. Goolad-tii      |
| 7. Chaban-makhi             | 44. Gerkh-makhi     | 80. Mir-zita        |
| 8. Vanashi-makhi            | 45. Mur-gookh       | 81. Soot-bukh       |
| 9. Dzanga-makhi             | 46. Kanasi-pari     | 82. Ur-tsakhi       |
| 10. Ullooo-ayah             | 47. Ger-ga          | 83. Urkh-nisha      |
| 11. Khadzhal-makhi          | 48. Druzhba         | 84. Urari           |
| 12. Kakamakhi(south)        | 49. Mech-va         | 85. Tsoog-ni        |
| 13. Nas-kent                | 50. Gahp-sheema     | 86. Nakh-ki         |
| 14. Karlahbko               | 51. Tahn-ti         | 87. Nah-tsii        |
| 15. Ebdalayah               | 52. Oo-seesha       | 88. Toosla-makhi    |
| 16. Tsookh-ta               | 53. Geeba           | 89. Kooleyah-makhi  |
| 17. Tebek-makhi             | 54. Zil'-mook-makhi | 90. Ura-gi          |
| 18. Ali-khan-makhi          | 55. Kurki-makhi     | 91. Karshulah-makhi |
| 19. Kavka-makhi             | 56. Geenta          | 92. Urkh-ulakar     |
| 20. Urkh-oochi-makhi        | 57. Bootri          | 93. Kassagoo-makhi  |
| 21. Kuri-makhi              | 58. Day-bookh       | 94. Urkuta-makhi    |
| 22. Tsoondra-makhi          | 59. Meh-ooseesha    | 95. Doo-akar        |
| 23. Burgumakh-makhi         | 60. Tsees-gari      | 96. Dzi-lebki       |
| 24. Chini-makhi             | 61. Tsoo-rai        | 97. Soor-Surbachi   |
| 25. Doobri-makhi            | 62. Veekri          | 98. Karbuchi-makhi  |
| 26. Tsoondi-makhi           | 63. Keesha          | 99. Bakhni          |
| 27. Moo-gi                  | 64. Boos-kri        | 100. Mukra-kari     |
| 28. Gadzh-alal-makhi        | 65. Kalk-ni         | 101. Khoorshni      |
| 29. Shink-balakada          | 66. Chi-shili       | 102. Koon-ki        |
| 30. Novi Day-bookh          | 67. Choom-li        | 103. Ash-tii        |
| 31. Moog-ri                 | 68. Goo-li          | 104. Itsari         |
| 32. Novi Moog-ri            | 69. Soorkh-achi     | 105. Sanzhi         |
| 33. Ayah-lizi-makhi         | 70. Zil'-bachi      | 106. Sanakari       |
| 34. Khab-kai-makhi          | 71. Khar-bookh      | 107. Chakh-rizhi    |
| 35. Ai-yee-makhi            | 72. Dib-galik       | 108. Dirbak-makhi   |
| 36. Kichi-Gamri             | 73. Ira-gi          | 109. Goos-bayah     |
| 37. Verkhni Makhar-gi-makhi |                     | 110. Shuk-tii       |



*Central Dargin town of Akusha – [the Akusha Dargwa language is used as basis for literary Dargin]*



*Dargin mountain region, near ancient village of Sanzhi (#105)*



*Mountains of Dagestan, behind Druzhba (#48)*



*Two Dargin men at a mountain village shrine – the tomb of a deceased sheikh – a holy place in Dargin folk Islam.*