

The Parakanã of Brazil



In north-central Brazil, rivers braid the landscape, pouring through the rainforests of the Amazon Basin. There the Parakanã people have made their home for many generations.

Throughout the Parakanã’s Amazon homeland, rivers team with fish. Cashews, oil palms and other forest products are available for the industrious to claim and sell. Gardens provide corn, beans, cassava, yams and various fruits. Many of the people grow sugar cane or keep domesticated stock and fowl.

In mingling with outsiders, the Parakanã know that their traditional lifestyle may be in jeopardy. They need a firm, unshakable foundation to weather the social challenges facing them individually and as a people. Some among the Parakanã have come to faith in Christ through the Scripture portions already available in their language. But many still fear the spirits they have long believed control their lives. In this fear-based system, traditional religion practitioners hold ultimate authority over relationships, health issues and spiritual uncertainties. People pay dearly for consultations with these spirit mediators.

There are no statistics available regarding the number of Christians among the Parakanã. Scripture portions are available in their language, and now Parakanã speakers have been trained as Bible translators themselves. This project will give the Church some seriously needed background from the Old Testament, Church history and pastoral material.

Primary Religion:

Shaman/Christianity/Traditional

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

A few

Churches:

Yes

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

OT stories & NT books

Population (date):

1,350



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Is the Word of God Translated?

The Parakanã translators worked with teams from a dozen other indigenous Brazilian languages as a cluster project to translate the Book of Ruth in just one year. Now the team has had some translation experience and is working on their own with planned periodic input from consultants and advisors. Three eager mother tongue speakers are working in this project. All of them are part time. They are acquiring more skills in translation with the help of qualified trainers. Two of the three trainers in the project carry M.A. degrees in linguistics, and all three are in full-time service in the area. Project facilitators will continue to mentor the translators, providing ongoing training in translation principles and methods.

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Status of Christianity

Scripture

Scripture Use

Leaders look forward to the transformations that will take place as people understand better the nature and love of God through Scripture in their mother tongue. In addition, they anticipate the increased ease with which those people who have been transformed will communicate their experience with Christ to their families and communities. Church leaders will have greater access to the Scriptures in the language people understand best and can use it both within the larger church gatherings and for small groups and individual discipleship.