

The Daasanach of Kenya & Ethiopia

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The Daasanach are a people with a fairly recent history. Their ties to one another have resulted from a common place of residence rather than from heredity. Exiles from many groups around the area of north Lake Turkana have united in support of one another in this hostile, arid environment. They have developed a unique tradition and culture, and are open to the inclusion of other immigrants who are willing to abide by Daasanach customs and values.

Until the turn of the century, very little was known of the Daasanach, sometimes called the Merille. At that time, formal borders were created for many African countries, and the Daasanach found their traditional lands divided between Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. Since then, these semi-nomadic people have moved as freely as possible across the borders of these countries, but this movement is being more and more restricted by border posts and entry formalities.

The Daasanach are known for their fighting prowess and are feared by many neighboring groups, such as the Gabbra and Turkana. Raids to obtain more cattle are celebrated, and Daasanach warriors are proud of the number of enemy they have killed. Their unique culture is valued, and the Daasanach are reluctant to adopt outside technology. Irrigation systems to aid in agriculture were introduced to this area by American missionaries in the 1960's, but these systems have been disregarded since foreigners were expelled from Ethiopia after the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974.

Today church work is being carried out in Kenya where only ten percent of the Daasanach people live. Here there are less than fifty Daasanach Christians. What is left of earlier church work in Ethiopia is unknown.

Primary Religion:

Tribal Religion

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

19%

Churches:

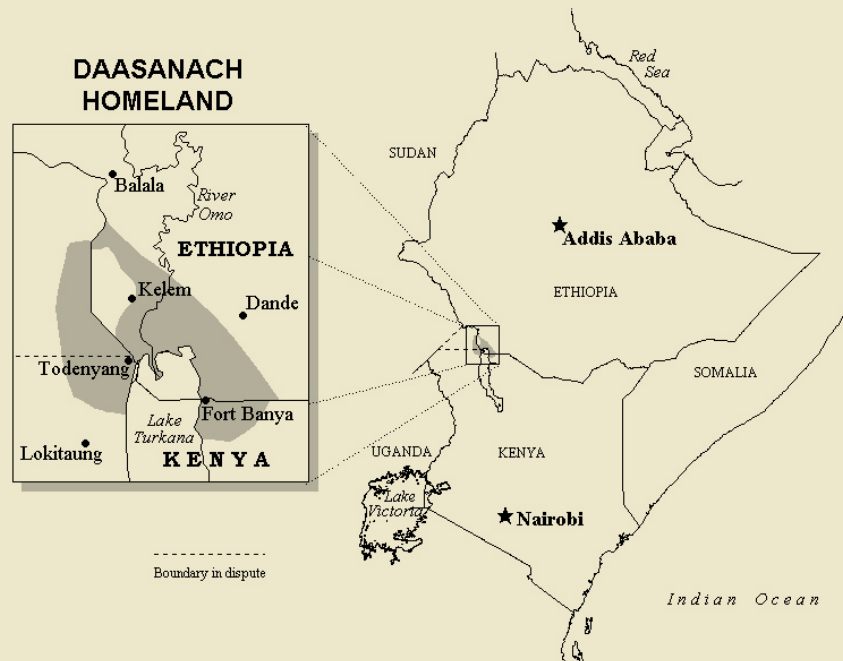
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Only portions available

Population (date):

29,100,000 (1996)



The Daasanach of Kenya & Ethiopia

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	7%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	19%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	.2%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	90%	
Number Of Pastors	4	
Number Of Missionaries Working	6	
Number Of Churches	4	
Comment (Churches)	1 in Kenya/ 2 in Ethiopia	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Gospel of Mark was dedicated in 1998, and more work is in progress.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Lack of literacy and difficulty of access to Ethiopia.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Recordings, literature, and radio. Radio is in Kiswahili, English, and Amharic.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Due to their tendency to resist outside influence, the Daasanach will need significant outside contact by those who are willing to live out Christianity in practical ways. Some economic development such as well construction might be useful, in addition to the existing fishing cooperative, to demonstrate concern for their welfare and the value of other ideas and practices. Literacy work and the completion of the Bible translation project along with evangelism and discipleship are essential.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	29,100,000	
World Population (Date)	1996	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Kenya	
Country Name	Ethiopia	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	North of lake Turkana.	
Country	Kenya	
Ecosystem Type	Desert	
Geological Type	Other	
Elevation	1500ft	
Climate	Hot dry, semi-desert with temps 70-125F.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Alternate Language Names	Merille, Reshiat, Galab, Geleba	
Second Languages	5	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	AMHARIC	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	SWAHILI	
Linguistically Related Languages	ARBORE	
Linguistically Related Languages	RENDILLE	
Linguistically Related Languages	ARBORE	
Linguistically Related Languages	SOMALI	
Linguistically Related Languages	RENDILLE	
Neighboring Languages	SAMBURU	
Neighboring Languages	TURKANA	
Neighboring Languages	OROMO, BORANA-ARSI-GUJI	
Neighboring Languages	HAMER-BANNA	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	19%	
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat receptive	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Pastoralists	
Occupation	Animal husbandry, farming and some fishing.	
Income Sources	Some sale of goats, sheep, cattle, grain and fish.	
Products / Crafts	Mat making for domestic use; men carve spoons, headrests, and milk containers, all for personal use.	
Trade Partners	Ethiopian groups primarily.	
Modernization / Utilities	There is no developed infrastructure. There is a fishing cooperative in Kenya. A system of windmills to provide irrigation was introduced in Ethiopia in the late 1960's, but these have been disregarded since missionaries left the area in the mid 1970's.	
Community Development		Group Description
Health Care (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Health Care)	1 Gov. dispensary in Ileret, Kenya, and 1 in Omorate, Ethiopia. A flying doctors comes in for 1 hour every 6 weeks in Kenya.	
Diet (Quality)	Good	
Comment (Diet)	Milk, sorghum, meat and fish. During the dry season, food is often scarce. At these times some food gathering occurs.	
Water (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Water)	Water is not good away from the Omo River. The development of wells would be big improvement in the water supply.	
Shelter Description	Houses are temporary dome-shaped structures made from sticks and covered with skins.	
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	None	
Comment (Energy)	Wood is collected for fuel. This has the tendency to enlarge the desert.	
Clothing	Women's clothing is made from skins. Clothing for men is made from cloth that is obtained by trade from Ethiopia.	
Transportation	Donkeys are used for transporting goods.	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	Clans are an important part of cultural organization. Women are highly respected since it is through them that future generations will come.	
Neighbor Relations	Outsiders are viewed as enemies and the Daasanach often engage in raids on their southern neighbors to obtain cattle.	
Authority / Rule	The elders have absolute authority. They elect judges for each clan, who then make decisions regarding cultural disputes.	
Social Habits/Groupings	From birth children maintain a close association with others of the same age. These age sets, particularly boys, move through the life stages together.	
Cultural Change Pace	Static	
Identification With National Culture	Distinct	
Self Image	Prestigious	
Judicial / Punishment System	Judges make decisions regarding cultural disputes. The aggrieved person receives some kind of payment, usually in animals. The age set is concerned about its name and will exert peer pressure on its members. The guilty one pays for the judge's upkeep while in the community.	
Celebrations	The Dimi celebration initiates the oldest daughter into adulthood. This is celebrated at age 7-9, with feasts and rituals lasting 6 weeks. The father often kills his whole herd to provide for the occasion. Although the father becomes impoverished by this ceremony, he emerges as an elder in his clan.	

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Item Name	Item Note
Recreations	Games, story telling and dancing. Men often will spend a week at a time away from the community to engage in these activities.
Art Forms	Body painting, scarification on men's chests, metal decoration of girls skirts, wedding necklaces, and head decoration for warriors and age sets.
Local Language Broadcasting	None

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Boys tend sheep and goats, and guard fields from birds, etc. Girls do domestic tasks including gathering firewood and bringing water.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Education is not valued by the parents. Often the second child or the least able one is sent to school.
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Instruction is needed in the Daasanach language through grades 1 and 2. 99% currently drop out of school. A full primary school would be good, and is in the plans.

Education

Group Description

Primary Schools	2
Primary School Enrollment	100
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	30
Language Of Instruction Early Years	Amharic
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	Amharic
Language Of Instruction Later Years	Swahili (specific)
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	Swahili (specific)
Comment (Education)	Amharic in Ethiopia, Swahili in Kenya.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status	Engaged
Total Baptized	5
Lay Leaders	5
Bible Schools	1
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	1
Comment (Church Growth)	Also 25 R.C. believers, 15 of whom are baptized; plus 2 pastors, 10 lay leaders and 1 church.

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Religion and daily life are not separated. Many practices are related to ancestor appeasement. Their belief is in one god who has gone far away from his creation.
Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat resistant
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat resistant
Resistance / Receptivity	The Daasanach are proud of their culture and traditions and are quite resistant to change.
Religious Analogies & Bridges	The sacrifice of an unblemished sheep is required to cleanse a warrior after a raid in which he killed a person. The healing properties of blood.
Spiritual Climate And Openness	There is little hostility. The people will listen, but are not readily willing to change.
Recommended Approaches	Scripture is needed in the Daasanach language. Literacy work is needed. Trained Daasanach leaders are needed who will model the value of being open to ideas outside the culture. Be friends and establish relationships. Live out faith in actions. Evangelism in the local language is essential and some audio tapes of Christ's life and scripture portions are just now becoming available. Additional Daasanach Christian music tapes are needed.
Current Needs	Scriptures in Daasanach. Literacy program. Trained leadership. Community development: medical, veterinary, agricultural.

The Daasanach of Kenya & Ethiopia

Item Name

Items For Prayer

Item Note

Current church workers and Bible translators need to maintain motivation in difficult circumstances.
Educated Daasanach leaders are needed who will return to help their people.
Inter-ethnic conflict and violence needs to come to an end.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

1962

By Whom

Reformed

Significant Events

In the early 60's, Robert and Morrie Swart with the Reformed Church in America began work in Ethiopia.
Late 60's-early70's: camping safaris by AIM into Kenya Daasanach area.
Mid 70's: Roman Catholic church began a work, and a school.
1974: AIM put in a water system in Ileret, Kenya.
1976: Paul Teasdale set up a fishing cooperative and worked for two years.
1978: Swarts leave Ethiopia when Haile Selassie was deposed. They worked in Kenya for 18 months until the Kenyan government asked them to relocate.
1983: Jim and Sue Ness initiate Bible translation project in Ileret.
1990: Collin and Rebecca McDougall continued church development work with Africa Inland Church.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

Portions

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Comment (Scripture)

Used in local churches.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

Yes, Gospel of Mark

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

Yes, Audio recordings of the life of Christ now in use

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

Yes

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

African Inland Mission

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1972

Number Of Adherents

15

Number Of Expatriate Workers

2

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Organization Name

Bible Translation and Literacy

Year Started

1983

Number Of Expatriate Workers

4

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Audio Recordings Available

Audio recording of the life of Christ now in use.