

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

Africa

Mauritania

Snapshot Section

Country Name: Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Country Founded in: November 28, 1960

Population: 3,177,388

Government Type: Officially, Mauritania's government is a republic, but the CIA Factbook also says that a military council currently controls the government.

Geography/location in the world: Mauritania is located in West Africa south of Algeria and Western Sahara. It lies west of Mali and north of Senegal. Mauritania has outlet to the Northern Atlantic Ocean. It is about three times the size of the state of New Mexico.



Picture of flag:



Number of people groups: 25

Religion Snapshot

Religions: According to the CIA Factbook, Mauritania is 100% Muslim, but www.joshuaproject.net states that at least two people groups have some Christians. The U.S. State Department also reports the existence of two churches in Mauritania. Operations World suggests up to 2000 Catholics and under 400 non-Catholics. Some expatriates, especially among the Koreans, are believers. The government officially recognizes no religion but Islam. No freedom of religions exists. Witness to Moslems is prohibited by law and imprisonment is possible even for expatriates who seek to evangelize.

Government interaction with religion: The government promotes and protects the establishment of Islam as the state religion. Judicial courts follow traditional Islamic law. Extreme forms of Islam are also unacceptable to the current government. Several men known as Islamists were arrested or detained for questioning.

Mosques were also searched for certain Islamists' texts that were thought to enhance the extreme forms of Islamic practices.

While there is a Catholic Church and an Evangelical church, neither are officially recognized by the government. Four West African churches were told to stop meeting or to move their meetings to the courtyard of the Catholic Church. No Bibles or other Christian religious materials may be printed or sold in Mauritania. One man was detained when he supposedly distributed a copy of Christian material. Islamic law does not technically prohibit the owning of a Bible in a private home, but because of the interpretation of the printing law, Bibles are not commonly owned.

All boys and girls attend either Koranic school or public school. Both types of school have religious instruction. Any international groups must register with the government and must be in the country to help with humanitarian needs only. No proselytizing is allowed under Islamic law.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51484.htm>

Mauritania Country Profile

Basic Facts

Name: Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Demographics :

The estimated population of Mauritania is 3,177,388.

Children up to fourteen years of age account for 45.6% of the population. There are 726,376 male children in this age group. There are 723,013 female children between these same ages. Adults between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four years of age account for 52.2% of the population. There are 818,408 males in this age category and 839,832 females. In the last age category, sixty-five years and above, there are 28,042 males and 41,717 females. The 65 plus age group accounts for 2.2% of the population. The median age for males is 16.8 years, and the median age for females is 17.3 years.

The birth rate is 40.99 births for every 1,000 people. There are an estimated 5.86 children born to every woman. The infant mortality rate is 69.48 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is 12.16 deaths for every 1,000 people. The life expectancy for the total population is 53.12 years. The life expectancy for males is slightly lower at 50.88 years, while the life expectancy for females is slightly higher at 55.42 years.

The risk of infectious diseases is very high. Travelers should be aware that bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, schistosomiasis, and typhoid fever may all be contracted from polluted water or food.

Language:

Arabic is the official language of Mauritania.

The people use an Arabic dialect called Hassaniya. French is also used frequently, but the government is currently promoting the use of Arabic as the national language by teaching boys and girls to read and write in Arabic. Other trade languages include: Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61581.htm>

Society/Culture:

There are four national holidays in Mauritania and several lunar holidays as well. January 1st is New Year's Day, and May 1st is Labor Day. May 25th is Africa Day, and November 28th is Independence Day. Mauritians also celebrate Eid El-Fitr which signals the end of Ramadan. Eid El-Maouloud is celebrated as well because that is Mohammed's birthday. Finally, Eid El-Adha is celebrated as Sacrifice Day.

Because of the dryness of the climate, water is very precious in Mauritania. As a guest, people will often be invited to bathe or enjoy a tea ceremony. The tea ceremony will be served in three rounds with the tea getting progressively sweeter. Another traditional drink called zrig may also be offered. Some Mauritians go to the marabout (Islamic religious leader) and obtain special water that they consider holy. The water is made when the marabout washes Koranic verses off of a tablet and collects the water. People use this potion in order to help them recover from many different types of illnesses.

When one person has a problem with another person in Mauritania, the two people don't usually discuss the problem directly. Usually an intermediary is used. Thus, when children need

to discuss a problem with their father, they will first talk with their mother. This occurs in work situations too. Visitors who work in Mauritania need to be sensitive to this issue as they work with Mauritians. Instead of a direct confrontation, diplomacy should be used.

Mauritania has had many ethnic tensions in the past. Tensions arise between the Arabized northern people groups and the southern black African groups. While all people groups have converted to Islam, racial tensions remain. There are also many reports of human rights abuses between the groups including the enslavement of at least 90,000 black Africans. Slavery was a traditional form of securing labor in Mauritania. The French attempted to abolish the practice in the early colonial days, but anti-slavery groups have said that the practice still continues. In 1980, the Mauritanian government officially abolished slavery and now says that slavery no longer exists. News reporters and anti-slavery organizations have claimed to interview escaped slaves who report physical and mental abuse. Most of the anti-slavery organizations that report on this issue say that current slaves are actually descendents of people who have been enslaved for centuries. Their position in society and their ancestry ties them to their masters.

Women also face many issues in Mauritanian society. Most of them are married at young ages to husbands of their family's choosing. They may face harsh penalties for attempting divorce. In most areas, women do not have the ability to protest when their husband chooses to take multiple wives. Young girls must also face female circumcision and *gavage* (the practice of forcing a girl to eat in order to make her fatter and more attractive to prospective bride grooms).

<http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2002-mauritania.htm>

<http://mauritania-usa.org/country.htm#offholidays> <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61581.htm>

<http://peacecorps.gov/wvs/educators/enrichment/africa/lessons/Mslang01/Mslang01sup01.pdf>

Government:

Officially the government is a republic of an Islamic state, but the government is actually in transition. In 2005, Ely Ould Mohamed Vall took control of the government. Currently he and a military junta lead the government.

The Vall government has scheduled multi-party elections for March 2007. In 2006, a new constitution limited the number of terms that a president could remain in office. Currently, there are 12 regions of Mauritania. Nouakchott, the capital city, is also considered a special district. The judicial system is dependent primarily on traditional Islamic law with some influence from the French law system that was used during Mauritania's years as a French colony.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Mauritania

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mr.html#Govt>

Economy:

Mauritania is one of the world's poorest countries. When the French recognized Mauritania as an independent country, most of the people were still nomadic or were engaged in some form of agriculture. Today that is changing due to the severe droughts faced by nomadic peoples and agriculturalists in the 1970's and 1980's. Many of the people are being forced to leave their traditional lifestyles and seek other types of work. Mining for iron has been one of the main sources of revenue for the faltering Mauritania economy since the inception of the country in

1960; however, as the demand for iron ore has dropped in the international market, Mauritania's iron production companies have suffered.

The exploitation of copper resources was attempted in the 1960's but the international demand also dropped so copper industries stagnated. Fishing has become an important industry in Mauritania since the Mauritanian government has begun insisting that international fishing endeavors co-partner with Mauritanian companies.

Oil has been discovered in the coastal waters of Mauritania as well. An Australian oil company had contracted with the former Taya government to produce the oil. The current transitional government has some disputes about the contract signed between the Australian company and the former government. Currently the GDP of Mauritania is \$6.891 billion.

The unemployment rate is 40%. Fifty percent of the labor force is involved in agricultural pursuits while 10% are involved in some type of industries. The remaining forty percent work in a service related capacity. In all, 40% of the population lives below the poverty level.

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mr.html#Govt>

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/mrtoc.html>

Literacy:

The French colonists began a system of public education in Mauritania but most of their efforts were focused in the more hospitable southern end of the country.

Some attempts were made by the French in the north after World War II, but many of the nomadic tribes still favored the traditional Koranic educational system. Thus, many of the school teachers and educated peoples of Mauritania were from the southern black population. In 1960, the new Mauritanian government tried to use educational efforts as a way of uniting the different people groups, but attendance remained somewhat low and the cost of education was very expensive.

Beginning in the late 1980's different foreign investors such as the World Bank co-partnered with the Mauritanian government to attempt to improve the educational system. Initially all classes had been held only in French. In the new initiatives launched by the government, Arabic was taught as a part of the increasing Arabization process approved of by the government. Also, other local languages such as Pulaar and Wolof were used in the primary schools.

Today, the literacy rate for the total population is 41.7%. Males have a slightly higher literacy rate at 51.8% while females have a much lower literacy rate at 31.9%. Most students attend either Koranic school or public school. Some may attend both. Islamic religious instruction is offered in both types of schools. <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mr.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Mauritania

Land/Geography:

Mauritania is located on the Western Coast of Africa below Morocco and Western Sahara. Much of the northern part of the country is covered by the sand dunes of the Sahara, and

desertification is causing great ecological problems for both people and livestock. Very little rain occurs in the Saharan area and *harmattan* winds affect the area that lies closest to the Saharan.

The Senegal River Valley once was an area where vegetation thrived and people lived, but because of the advancement of the desert due to drought and overuse of soil, many people are having to move further south. Those that do continue to live in the area engage in agricultural pursuits and fishing industries.

While the Sahara is in the north, Mauritania does have a coastal area that gives them access to the Atlantic Ocean. Fishermen have had good catches in the past, but overfishing is causing economic problems as well.

The fourth and final geographic area in Mauritania is the Sahelian zone. This zone usually receives good rainfall and has more moderate temperature fluctuations. People in this zone engage in farming and herding. Ethnic tensions are rising as people from the northern areas wish to move further south to find better acreage. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Mauritania

History

The first people who lived in the area now called Mauritania were probably the Bafours who may have been the ancestors of the Soninke people. They once lived in Northern Mauritania which at that time may have had lakes and fertile land, but they eventually moved further south as the Berbers and the Sahara began to come into the North.

Berbers began to invade Mauritania during the fifth to seventh centuries. The introduction of the camel and the continuing spreading of the Sahara in the northern parts of Mauritania helped increase the likelihood of a nomadic lifestyle which suited the Berber peoples. The nomads traded in gold, salt, and slaves collected from the south.

The Almoravids took power away from the ancient Ghana Empire in the eleventh century and saw that Islam was spread throughout the peoples. They retained power until sometime during the seventeenth century. To this day there are ethnic tensions between the northern ethnic groups of the Moors and the people groups that are considered to be black Africans (Soninke, Wolof, Bambara). Many human rights groups and the U.S. State Department have maintained that Arab and Berber groups also have continued to keep black Africans as chattel slaves. (Please see the society/ culture section for more information.)

European colonization began when the Portuguese first explored the coast in the 1400's. The French officially took control of the area at the end of the nineteenth century, and established Mauritania as a territory in 1904. Most of the French influence was felt in the southern part of the country which was more fertile and easier to colonize. The northern desert stretches which were largely controlled by the Berber nomadic groups were not completely subjugated. The French officially abolished slavery in Mauritania in 1905, but the practice still continued.

In 1960, Mauritania gained its independence from France. Moktar Ould Daddah was appointed as the first prime minister and leader of Mauritania. Although he had earlier seemed to promise

to see the development of a multi-party process, he established an authoritarian one party state of which he was the head until 1978. Initially he was popular with the different people groups because he seemed to be able to soothe tensions between different ethnic groups. His regime began to experience troubles when Mauritania tried to occupy the lower half of Western Sahara.

The Polisario Front (rebels in Western Sahara) fought the Mauritanian efforts, and this helped to undermine the regime. Daddah lost power to Lt. Col. Mustafa Ould Salek in 1978. Salek was supposed to end the war with the Polisario Front, but he began to increase the Arabization process. He lost power to Lt. Col. Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Louly in 1979. Louly retained power until 1980 when Mohamed Khouna Ould Heydalla took power. Louly did end the war with the Western Sahara. Heydalla was deposed in 1984 by Maaouiya Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya. Taya retained power until 2005. During Taya's regime, ethnic tensions flared between the Arabized groups and the southern black Africans. Peoples of Senegalese descent that were living in Mauritania were forced to go to Senegal—even if they have been living in Mauritania for years. Tensions over the ownership of the fertile land of the south as well as several reports of genocide and rape intensified feelings of outrage. Taya's government attempted to soothe the international community by having multi-party elections beginning in 1992, but he still maintained power. In 2005, while Taya was overseas attending a funeral of the Saudi King, a military group under the leadership of Ely Ould Mohamed Vall took control of the government. Vall and his group promised a return to multi-party elections within two years. Most Mauritians were encouraged by the passage of a new constitution in 2006 which limited the number of years that a president could retain power. Interestingly enough, the Mauritanian government also is one of Islamic states that officially recognizes Israel.

Many problems remain in Mauritania today. Corruption at different levels of the transitional government as well as continued ethnic tensions between the southern black groups and the northern Arab groups still cause unrest. While the government says that slavery does not exist, anti-slavery groups and several news reports still insist that at least 90,000 people are enslaved. Economic and educational reform will need to be instituted before Mauritians can begin to thrive.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/africa/mauritania/essential?a=culture>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0859541.html>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107771.html>

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61581.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritania#History> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moktar_Ould_Daddah

Christian History

The Roman Catholic Church started work in the early part of the twentieth century. There is one Catholic Church that still exists in Mauritania although the current government has not officially recognized it. Different Protestant groups have tried to start work in Mauritania in the past century, but all work eventually faltered.

The Worldwide Evangelization Crusade withdrew its expatriate missionaries in 1965. Most Christians in Mauritania are from overseas. There was a report of a small Evangelical Church. The government only recognizes Islam as the state religion. Proselytizing is not allowed. Bibles and other Christian materials are illegal to print, but they are not illegal to own in private homes.

The distribution of Christian materials is illegal as well. Humanitarian groups may have religious affiliation but may only deal with the current health and food needs of the people. From the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51484.htm>

Religions

Non-Christian

Islam—Islam is the official state religion. Estimates place the Muslim population at 99.84 % of the population. Most people follow the Sunni tradition. There are imans and marabouts throughout the country. Boys and girls are taught in Koranic schools. Shar'ia law is used by the judicial system. Radical Islamists were detained and often arrested. Mosques were searched for radical Islamic texts.

Traditional Religions—Some ethnic groups, for example the Bambara, Mandinka, and the Tamasheq, along with peoples in the Senegal River Valley, still practice animist rituals or a mixture of Islam and ethnic religions. Folk Islam may well be widely practiced and offer some entrance of witness.

Jehovah's Witnesses—This church began in 1976. As of 1995, there was one congregation with four members in all. The group has, however, reported a growth rate of as high as + 3.0%/

Catholic and Orthodox

Catholics/Orthodox Churches

Roman Catholic Church—The Roman Catholic Church began work in Mauritania in 1900. In 1995, there were eleven congregations and a total of 4,386 members in all. Ninety percent of the members were expatriate French. The number of members tends to fluctuate drastically since most of the attendees are from the international community instead of national Mauritians.

Christian

All peoples in Mauritania are unreached. No indigenous churches under local leadership are found among the peoples of Mauritania.

Eglise Evangelique—This church was started around 1964. In 1995, there were three congregations and a total of 200 congregants in all. Most of the congregants were expatriates. The number of members tends to fluctuate drastically since most of the attendees are from the international community instead of national Mauritians.

Korean Full Gospel Church—This church was started around 1985. There is one church with about 100 members in all. The church members were primarily Korean fishermen who were living in Mauritania at the time.

Indigenous West African Churches—Some reports indicate the presence of different West African congregations meeting in homes. Most of these congregants were migrant workers from

other West African countries. Four of these home churches were warned to refrain from meeting or were asked to move their meetings to the courtyard of the Catholic Church.

World Christian Encyclopedia; <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51484.htm>; *Operation World*

People Groups

13579

Bambara (13,000)

The Bambara people live in the Bauchi State. They speak a language called Bamanankan and are part of the Malinke-Bambara people cluster. Some alternate names for this people group include: Kpeera and Noumou.

The Bambara people are predominantly Sunni Muslim, and they practice folk Islam. The use of fetishes and spirit worship is quite common. People go to sorcerers or witches for spiritual help if they experience misfortune. When boys and girls are circumcised, they join secret societies that teach them the practices of their society. Many of these practices are ritualistic and based upon the original animistic religious beliefs of the ancestors of the Bambara people.

The Bambara highly value the traditions and customs of their family and social groups. It is very difficult for individuals to believe in Christ against the strong pressure of their families and friends. The complete Bible has been translated, and the Jesus Film is available. Gospel recordings can also be heard. Although these tools have been translated into the Bambara language, the government restricts their distribution. Proselytizing is illegal in Mauritania.

The Bambara men have complete control over the women. Marriages are arranged by the families of the bride, and she and her children are considered the property of the husband. Marriages contracts are made for the mutual advancement of the families and the community—not the choice of the bride. Men may take up to four wives. Most of the time extended families will live together in a single compound. It is very important for a man to have multiple wives as having wives is seen as a sign of prosperity. Even elderly women will be expected to remarry following the demise of their husband.

The Bambara are farmers and hunters. Their life and customs are heavily influenced by their economic choice of livelihood. The society of the Bambara is stratified into three major groups—the Komo, the Kore and the Ntomo. The Komo are the elders. Each group has different types of head dresses that signify their level and importance. These head dresses are made by talented craftsmen. Statues and other important religious objects are also hand carved by the artisans of the Bambara.

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Berabish Bedouin

The Berabish Bedouin usually migrate. They speak a language called Hassaniyya. Some alternate names for the Berabish Arabs include Bidan and Kunta Bedouin.

The Berabish Bedouin are primary Sunni Muslims from the Malikite tradition. Some are from the Sufi tradition as well. Usually all of the Berabish Bedouin believe that jinnis affect the fortunes of the clan and family. The Berabish Bedouins are one of the least reached people

groups. There is no Bible translation although the Jesus Film and gospel recordings can be found. The Berabish Bedouins are a very close-knit group and do not welcome the influence of outsiders who wish to proselytize them from their Muslim roots.

The Berabish Bedouin, in the past, have been completely migratory; however, in recent years, they have sometimes settled to grow crops or to even take wage-paying jobs. Modernization and the closing of international borders have hindered their nomadic lifestyle. In the past, each clan had their own specific route that they would travel every year. The route had no road signs but the knowledge of the route was passed down from one generation to the next.

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British (300)

The British speak English and are expatriates involved in some form of humanitarian aid or are working for an international company. With the implementation of the oil industry, this population may increase. The British may belong to many different religious groups although officially their primary religion is Christianity.

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Deaf (unknown)

The Deaf do not have an official form of sign language that they use.

13581

Duaish, Idaouich (17,000)

The Duaish people live between Mederdra and the Atlantic Ocean in southern Mauritania. They speak a language called Zenaga and are part of the Berber-Saharan people cluster. Most also can communicate in the Arabic dialect Hassaniyya. Some alternate names for this people group include: Berber, Masna, Zenaga, Idaouich, or Nimadi. They are one of the least reached people groups. One hundred percent of the people are Sunni Muslims. No ministry tools are available in their language.

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French (11,000)

The French speak French and are either expatriates or people of mixed ancestry. The French were the Europeans that colonized Mauritania during the early part of the twentieth century.

Fulakunda—The Fulakunda are part of the Fulani people group.

The Fulakunda people are descendents of Fulani peoples who intermarried with Mandingos. They speak a language called Pulaar. Their primary dialect is Fulacunda. Some alternate names for this people group include: Fouta Toro, Fula Cunda, Fula Macina, Fulacounda, Toucouleur, Peuhl, and Peul

The Fulakunda are Sunni Muslims, but they practice a form of folk Islam. They are very dedicated to their families and villages. The Fulakunda hate to feel lonely or to be separated

from their family and friends. Portions of the Bible have been translated, and the Jesus Film is accessible. Gospel recordings exist.

The Fulakundas are herders and farmers. They consider cattle to be a sign of wealth. Other herd animals will be kept as well, but the Fulakunda only eat meat on special occasions. Normally they eat millet and drink milk. Milk production and its sale is another important part of the Fulakunda society.

The Fulakundas are a polygamous people. At fifteen, a boy will marry, but he will later take other wives as well. He usually resides in the house of his first wife and just visits the houses of the other wives when he wishes to do so. The women will attend to the rearing of their children and to the production of milk products. The men will care for the herds and will sometimes hire out themselves or their children as herders to neighboring people groups.

13582

Fula Macina (6,149)

The Fula Macina are a subgroup of the Fulakunda. They speak Pulaar. They are predominantly Muslim.

42190

Fulbe Futa Toro (24,598)

The Fulbe Futa Toro are another subgroup of the Fulakunda. They speak Pulaar. They are predominantly Muslim.

13583

Imeraguen (11,000)

The Imeraguen live near Nouakchott in the region stretching from Cape Timiris to Nouadhibou. They speak a language called Imeraguen which is thought to be a variation of Hassaniya with a Soninke base. Most of the people are fishermen. One hundred percent of the people are Muslims. There are no ministry tools in their language.

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=ime

13584

Jola (2,500)

The Jola that live in rural areas are primarily farmers. Before there was easy access to modern roads, most Jola children lived in the same village as their parents and ancestors. The Jola were and still are very family oriented. They live in a patrilineal society where a nuclear family consists of the grandfather, his wives and children, his son's wives and children, and any unmarried women of the family. Each nuclear family also tends to live close to extended family members. Most of the Jola villages would have anywhere from 200 to 2000 inhabitants. Usually a group of older men serve as advisors.

As a group, the Jola are very strong Muslims. Because of the importance of familial ties, people who are interested in Christianity often find it very difficult to actually convert. The Jola began accepting the Muslim faith in the late 1800's. Muslim traders would come and sell goods in the market and also talk about the glories of Islam. A marabout from Mauritania named Sharif Mahfuz also evangelized the Jola. Most Jola don't follow a specific marabout, but they do

belong to the Sufi tariqa. The Jola will also keep certain beliefs and traditions from their animistic past. Most young boys go through an initiation ceremony called the bukut where they go on a retreat and are taught about important Jola ideals. Some Jola will also still visit the animistic shrine called the sinaati when they are ill.

Portions of the Bible have been translated into the Jola language, and the Jesus Film has also been reproduced. Gospel recordings exist. In Mauritania, the distribution of such materials is illegal under Mauritanian law.

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Korean (65,000)

The Koreans living in Mauritania speak Korean. Their primary religion is unknown.

42184

Lebou (207,000)

The Lebou people are actually considered to be a subgroup of the Wolof people. They speak Wolof, but their particular dialect is called Lebou. The Lebou are Muslims. The New Testament has been translated into their language, and the Jesus Film is also available. Gospel recordings also exist. In Mauritania, the distribution of such materials is illegal under Mauritanian law.

13585

Mandinka (9,800)

The Mandinka speak a Manding language called Mandinka. They are sometimes called the Sose people. The Mandinkas primarily practice a form of Sunni folk Islam. Centuries ago Muslim traders came to the great Mali Empire from whence most Mandingo peoples originated and converted the Mandingos to Islam.

Most modern Mandinkas really don't have a firm grasp on deep Islamic thought. Rather, they follow the outer rituals like circumcision and going to the mosque. However, they will also still consult marabouts for amulets or other types of magical helps. They may also sacrifice chickens in order to appease the spirits. They are considered to be a least reached people group. The New Testament has been translated, and the Jesus Film is available. Gospel recordings can also be found.

The family unit is very important in Mandinka life. The father is the supreme authority of the family. There are three distinct social strata too. Artisans are greatly respected and held in great awe for their talents. The other two classes are free-born. Marriages may be polygamous for men. Girls' marriages are arranged for them by their fathers. Life is hard because of the continual droughts.

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Masna (1,700)

The Masna people speak Zenaga and are part of the Berber-Saharan people cluster. They are one of the least reached people groups. They are predominantly Muslim. The number of Christian adherents is unknown. No ministry tools are available in their language.

13586

Moor (1,700,000)

The Maure people are part of the Hassaniya Arab people cluster. They can be found in Cote d'Ivoire, France, Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, and the Western Sahara. They speak a language called Hassaniyya. Some alternate names for this people group include: Bidan, Bidan Maure, Black Moor, Haratine, Hassaniya, or White Moor.

The Maure people are predominantly Muslim. The Qadiri and the Tajani are influential in clan and religious life. The Jesus Film has been produced in their language, and gospel recordings exist. No Bible translation is available.

The Maure people have a very strict caste system that is based upon the ancestry of the father. While slavery is technically illegal according to the constitution, some non-identified forms still exist in practice among these nomadic peoples. Because of the history of violence, there are highly evolved forms of politically correct behavior when different clans meet in the desert. Simple hand gestures can indicate a person's willingness to listen to a comment.

The Black Maure people are the lower social classes of the group of people that speak Hassaniyya. They are descendents of the Bani Hassan people who invaded the area in the fifteenth century. The White Maure people are closely related to the Black Maure people but are thought to be superior because they are considered to be the upper two social classes made of warriors and religious leaders. The warriors protect the religious leaders and the religious leaders return the favor by teaching the children the Qur'an and social traditions. The religious leaders also serve the medical needs of the warriors.

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Regeibat (127,000)

The Regeibat people speak Hassaniya and are part of the Hassaniya Arab people cluster. They are predominantly Muslim. The Jesus Film has been reproduced in their language, but the Bible has not been translated. Gospel recordings can be found.

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Saharawi (131,000)

The Saharawi people speak Hassaniya and are part of the Hassaniya Arab people cluster. They may also be found living in the countries of Western Sahara and Morocco. Many also speak Spanish because of the years of Spanish colonization. They are one of the least reached people groups. They are predominantly Muslim. In fact, there are no known Christian adherents. The Jesus Film has been reproduced in their language, but the Bible has not been translated. Gospel recordings can be found.

The Saharawi people have lived through some very difficult times in the last thirty years. Most Saharawi people live in Western Sahara. The Saharawi people are descendents of Arabs, Berbers, and black Africans. When Spain withdrew from the area now known as Western Sahara, both Mauritania and Morocco fought for supremacy in the area. The Polisario Front, a Saharawi rebel group, fought for independence. Many of the Saharawi families fled to different

areas in attempts to escape the mounting violence. Eventually the matter was settled. (Please see history section.)

The Saharawi people have a very strict societal system much like the Moors. They have a warrior class, a religious class, and a slave class. They are primarily nomadic herders although many have had this lifestyle disrupted due to the violence. Men may marry more than one wife, but they must marry within their clan. Most men find it difficult to have more than one wife due to the poor economic conditions at this time. The Saharawi are generally very suspicious of each other and of outsiders. Revenge killing and fighting were commonly accepted practices.

13588

Sereer (2,500)

The Sereer people speak a language called Serer-sine. They are part of the Atlantic people cluster. The Sereer are very hard working people. Men cultivate peanuts and millet during the growing season, and after the harvest, they will often go to other areas to work in the cities to earn more money. When the men leave, the women will plant gardens on the fallow fields and raise food for the family. Women usually work all day performing tasks in the field, washing clothes, caring for children, and cooking. Young girls will help their mothers constantly by baby-sitting and doing what other tasks they are old enough to complete. Girls attend school just as boys do. Boys may go to school if there is enough money to send them, but the boys will also help their fathers in the fields. Men who are wealthier will have a horse and cart to take goods to market. Market day which usually occurs once a week is a very important time for socializing and trading.

At first the Sereer people resisted Muslim efforts towards evangelization; however, during the 1950's and 1960's many decided to become Muslim. Most Muslim still wear fetishes and believe in the power of amulets. Most have strong ancestral ties. Muslims will wear a picture of a marabout and words from the Qur'an. There are possibly some Christian adherents among the Sereer people that live in Mauritania. The New Testament has been translated into their language, and the Jesus Film is available. Gospel recordings are also available.

Familial ties are very important to the Sereer. A son lives with his father, and he will inherit land through his mother's family. His mother's family will arrange his marriage. Most men stay in the village although younger men may go to the cities occasionally. The largest demographic group that goes to the cities is teen-age girls.

<http://www.wagateway.org/SeerSine.htm>

13589

Soninke (138,000)

The Soninke people live in southwestern Mauritania. The Soninke people live along the banks of the Senegal River. They speak a Mande language called Soninke. Some alternate names for the Soninke include: Sarakole, Serahuli, Azer, and Toubakai.

The Soninke people are predominantly Muslim. They were first converted by the Almoravids in the eleventh century. Those Soninke that aren't Muslim usually follow traditional indigenous religious practices. All community life centers around the family and the village. The Soninke people are very concerned about appeasing the spirits. They believe that each soul comes to the

child when the child is named on the eighth day and leave the body each night as the child sleeps. People are concerned that witches might seize the soul of the child. They also believe that the soul will wander around the earth after death until it reunites with the body. They will ask the gessere, the village priest, to help them make the spirits happy. They watch anxiously for the fox and hyena who predict when the New Year should begin. Portions of the Bible have been translated, and the Jesus Film is available. Gospel recordings can also be found.

The Soninke have a very strict social structure. Men of the clergy receive training in Arabic. Most of the other men are traders or farmers. Many men today actually leave the village for months and sometimes even years at a time in order to work as migrant laborers in neighboring areas.

Polygamy is acceptable among the Muslims, but it is not as widely practiced today because of economic reasons. The prospective groom must pay a bride price that usually consists of clothing that the bride can use for her trousseau and also a payment to the family of the bride. Men have the supreme authority in the household, and elders are looked to for wisdom and advice.

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Spaniard (200)

The Spaniards that live in Mauritania are probably largely expatriates. They speak Spanish and are predominantly Roman Catholic.

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Tasumsa, Hadj (111,000)

The Hadj Tasumsa speak Hassaniya and are part of the Hassaniya Arab people cluster. They are predominantly Muslim. The Jesus Film has been reproduced in their language, but the Bible has not been translated. Gospel recordings can be found.

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Trarza, Brakna (270,000)

The Trarza people speak Hassaniya and are part of the Hassaniya Arab people cluster. They are predominantly Muslim. The Jesus Film can be found, but the Bible is unavailable. Gospel recordings exist.

13590

Tamasheq, Kidal (65,000)

The Tamasheq Tuareg speak a language called Tamasheq. Some alternate names for this people group include: Antessar, Kel Tamasheq, Kidal Tuareg, Udalan, Bella, or Kidal. The Tamasheq are predominantly Sunni Muslims. They practice a form of folk Islam that relies heavily on the belief in magic and the spirit world. They are Islamic mainly in name only. Some won't even celebrate the major Islamic holidays. Bible portions have been translated, and the Jesus Film is available. Gospel recordings can also be found.

The Tamasheq Tuareg world has changed mightily over the last thirty years. Until the early 1970's most Tamasheq Tuareg followed the nomadic lifestyle of their ancestors. Familial

connections were everything in this traveler's world where one wrong misstep in the harsh climate of the Sahara could mean instant death. A huge drought in the early 1970's, however, ended the nomadic lifestyle for many Tuareg. As animals began to die because of the lack of water and food, many of the Tuareg were forced to move to urban areas to merely be able to survive. Drawn by the conveniences of the modern cities as well as the stability of a wage-paying job, many Tuareg chose to remain in the cities long after the end of the drought. The Tamasheq Tuareg that continue their nomadic lifestyle live in tents and move from place to place in search of good grazing for their animals. Most eat some goat meat, but mainly depend on different types of cereals, dates, and milk for the mainstays of their diet.

Women have a slightly higher standing in Tuareg society. Women are not veiled, but rather they put a piece of cloth in front of their mouths. Because there is a distinct class system among the Tuareg which includes those who serve others, some women have the time to write poetry or songs. They perform these during a ceremony called the ahal.

Men wear a veil and are expected to be faithful to one wife. They respect women who can recite poetry.

<http://www.sim.org/pg.asp?pgID=34&fun=1>

<http://www.gosahara.org/ke1.html>

http://www.gowestafrica.org/mega/megaprofile.php?ppl_id=51

42189

Tukolor (222,820)

The Tukolor are a dominant ethnic group living on the border of Mauritania and Senegal. The most popular phrase of the Tukolor is: "To be Tukolor is to be Muslim." The Tukolor speak a language called Pulaar. Some alternate names for the Tukolor are: Futankooobe, Pulaar, Takarir, Haal Pulaaren, Tooroobe, and Toucouleur.

The Tukolor are predominantly Muslims. The Bible has been translated into their language, and the Jesus Film is accessible. Gospel recordings can be found.

Children have many different responsibilities. They are part of a large extended family. The marabouts are very strict as they teach the children the traditional Muslim ways. Mothers and fathers also play an important role in the education of the children. Mothers will teach the girls household duties and the fathers will teach the boys their farming or business responsibilities.

The Tukolor have traditionally been farmers. Generally the household income is around \$150 dollars per year. Because dams are being built that take away farmland and due to the desertification of the area, many Tukolor men are migrating to cities or other countries in search of better livelihoods.

There is a very strict social strata among the Tukolor. There is an aristocratic class, a middle class composed of merchants and farmers, and a lower class of former slaves. People must understand their social class and act correctly towards people of other social strata. Marriage cannot take place across caste lines. While polygamy is acceptable, most men will not marry four wives.

13591

Wolof (11,000)

The Wolof people speak Wolof. The Wolofs are staunch Sunni Muslims. Usually, the Wolofs belong to one of three brotherhoods—the Tijani, Mouridism, or Qadiri. Some women still practice traditional beliefs and most people believe that spirits must be appeased by following the orders of the marabout and by wearing amulets.

In rural areas, the Wolof mainly raise peanuts, sorghum, and millet. The peanuts are raised to sell while the millet is used as the staple crop. Women will also have gardens in order to have other types of food for consumption. A favorite dish of the Wolof is rice and fish. Men will cut down the vegetation in an area and then plant their crop. Cutting down all the vegetation and overuse of the soil has led to poorer crop yields. More and more Wolof are headed to the cities where they hope to find employment.

There is a very definite social strata in the Wolof culture. People may belong to a freeborn class. This class has the highest social ranks but can also contain peasant farmers. People of nobility or high social rank are expected to behave very circumspectly in public both in their manner of dress and in their attitudes and actions. What might be permissible for a lowborn person would be frowned upon in one of high rank.

The second social stratum is made of people whose ancestors were once slaves. The social rank in this class depends on what type of family owned the ancestors as slaves. If the family was owned by a high ranking family of the nobility, then the descendants have a higher than those of a family whose former masters were peasants.

The third social class is a class of artisans. The artisan class will have blacksmiths, weavers, singers, and other types of specialized professionals. Blacksmiths' skills are greatly appreciated. Pottery, also a necessity in village life, is also greatly prized.

Polygamy is allowed. Marriage across social castes is not generally allowed. In rural areas, extended families live in the same compound, but each wife will have her own house for herself and her children. From *Muslim Peoples* by Richard Weekes

http://www.gowestafrica.org/peoplegroups/peopleprofile.php?ppl_id=43

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches must recognize the difficulty of evangelism in Mauritania but not be pushed away evangelism by this difficulty. Mauritania is an Islamic state. Proselytizing is strictly forbidden under Islamic law. Bibles and other printed Christian materials may not be distributed. Bibles may be owned by individuals in private homes. No church or denomination is officially recognized by the Mauritanian government although a few expatriate churches are allowed to exist.
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek ways to meet the social and humanitarian needs within the country. Humanitarian aid groups with religious affiliations are permitted to enter the country, but they are strictly forbidden to attempt to spread Christian doctrine and beliefs. Anyone who converts to Christianity may be

subject to familial and societal pressures. Still, the fruit from such ministries can be experienced and should be tried.

3. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to introduce Christian witness to the indigenous peoples of the Senegal River Valley. Among these peoples—the Tukulot, Fulbe, Soninke, Bambara, and Wolof—the Christian witness might find some response even if the people claim to be Islamic. The greater possibility of Folk Islam among these peoples calls for efforts to reach them. The nomadic peoples form another minority group that should be reached. The Tamasheq, some 65000 strong, are another group that may practice Folk Islam and should be approached with the Gospel when the way is open.
4. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to make radio messages available in the Hassaniya Arabic language. This witness can reach across closed borders and the Spirit can use this message to reach people.
5. Evangelical Christians and Churches should pray that the Holy Spirit will reach many of these people who are isolated from the Gospel by government and society by supernatural means (visions and miracles).
6. Evangelical Christians and Churches should pray earnestly for openings into Mauritania and other regions closed to proclamation.
7. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to reach people from Mauritania who are living outside the nation and share the Good News with them. When converted these believers can return to their country and share with the people.