

GLOBAL PEOPLE PROFILES: Kazan Tatars of the USSR, Makassarese of Indonesia, and Wolof of Senegal

—V. David Garrison

Kazan Tatar of the USSR

Occupying the great expanse of Turkestan which stretches from the foothills of the Altai Mountains in Mongolia to the shores of the Aegean Sea in Europe are nearly a dozen major Turkic ethnolinguistic peoples. One of the largest of these are the Tatars with a total population of more than 10 million. The great majority of these live along the Volga River in the Soviet Union's Tatar Autonomous Region spanning the region east of Moscow to the western bounds of Siberia.

The capital city of the Tatar A.S.S.R. is Kazan. The mother tongue spoken by more than 86% of the Kazan Tatar people is called *kazan tatar*. The Kazan Tatar are generally well educated and have a high literacy rate. They are the most Russified of the Turkic peoples of Soviet Central Asia. Nonetheless they are largely Sunni Muslim in religion, having adopted neither the Orthodox Christianity of the Czars nor the secular atheism of the Bolsheviks. Today, there may be as many as 100,000 Christians among the Kazan Tatar people. This is roughly 1.5 percent of their total population. Still most of the Kazan Tatars of the Soviet Union have yet to hear the gospel message for the first time. Christian researchers estimate that no more than 24 percent of the Kazan Tatars have ever heard the gospel, leaving 5.1 million Kazan Tatar men, women and children with no knowledge whatsoever of the gospel of Jesus Christ. One reason for this lack of evangelization is related to the continued dearth of the gospel in the *kazan tatar* language. There is presently no Christian radio broadcasting in the *kazan tatar* language. Likewise, there is not yet a New Testament available in the *kazan tatar* language, though *Ethnologue* reports that a new translation has just gone to print.

Makassarese or Macassar of Indonesia

There are almost 3 million Makassarese people living in Indonesia on south Sulawesi, on the southwest corner of the peninsula, throughout most of Pangkep, Maros, Gowa, Bulukumba, Jeneponto, Takalar, and

Bantaeng districts. Of these 3 million people, there are only 100 known believers, less than 1/100 of one percent of the population. This leaves more than 24,000 Makassarese people who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ for every Macassar Christian.

Of the various dialects spoken, the Gowa dialect is considered most prestigious. Since Makassarese is the *lingua franca* of this region, it has been in vigorous use. Many ethnic Chinese speak Makassar as first language. The various Macassar dialects form a chain of intercomprehension, which would imply that once the gospel is well planted within this language group it has the potential to spread throughout the chain.

Their religion is predominantly Muslim. Prestige accompanies wealth in rural coastal Makassarese society and is normally to be found among old established village families. Superior education, status as a haji, and personal qualities of leadership, such as courage, eloquence and dynamism, can also bring a person into social prominence. The commitment to Islam, which encourages brighter youths to leave their village for higher study and the haj (pilgrimage to Mecca), gives some villagers an occasional glimpse of life beyond the village. Some ultimately move to urban areas in the hopes of upward social mobility. Property is inherited by both male and female children. There is differentiation between the traders on the one hand and the fishermen and coconut growers on the other. Traders are socially superior while coconut growers and fishermen occupy the lowest stratum of coastal society. In the interior Konjo highlands, shamanistic practices have continued to form the basis of community cohesiveness and are the main source of artistic and recreational activity. In the pagan areas, the elite includes shamans, who are skilled at traditional religious ritual, and who are the village authorities on *adat*: customary law and tradition. In some areas Christian clergy and Islamic officials combine traditional and orthodox ritual and thus receive the esteem formerly reserved for shamans.

A Bible was translated in 1900. New work is currently in progress. There is, however, no radio broadcasting, Christian or secular, in the Makassarese language. Taking into consideration a range of factors including Christian radio, Scripture, missionary presence, viable indigenous Christian community, etc. on a scale of 1-100, the Makassarese would be classified as only 18% evangelized.

Wolof of Senegal

There are more than two million wolof speaking people scattered across what was formerly known as French West Africa. Today, this area is divided into the seven nations of Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. In addition to these, over 57,000 Wolof have settled in France while retaining ties to their extended families in west Africa. The largest population of Wolof people live in Senegal. Here, 1,900,000 Wolofs comprise one-third of the small country's total population. Living on the edge of the great Sahara Desert, clustered around the Senegal River, these nomadic peoples practice a folk Islam and have shown little responsiveness to Christianity. It might well be said that Christianity has equally been aloof from it. Despite their great numbers, there has yet to be a full Bible or even a New Testament translated into the wolof language. Only portions of the Wolof/Senegal Bible were translated into this language in 1873. It is unlikely that these Scripture portions would even be intelligible to a Wolof today. Paucity of Scripture has had a direct bearing on a total absence of gospel radio broadcasting in the wolof language, this despite the fact that radio broadcasting of a secular nature is available in this language. The harsh climate of Senegal has further limited the amount of direct Christian witness to the Wolof. As a result, only 10,000 Christians, less than 6/10 of one percent of this people's population, are known to exist. Furthermore, it is estimated that more than 40 percent of the Wolof people have never heard the Gospel message for the first time. This means that over 750,000 Wolof men, women and children have no knowledge whatsoever of the Gospel. ■