



Adopted UPG #5, The Af*ar of Ethiopia

Our adopted UPG #5, the Af*ar of Ethiopia, represents 2 million people with only 500 known believers in Jesus Christ. We are trusting God for 100,000 souls.

- Name: Af*ar
- Adoption Date: October 2021
- Population: 2 million
- Location: Ethi*opia
- Language: Af*ar
- Religious Make Up: 99% Muslim

Introduction / History

The Af*ar people of Ethiopia live on the earth's hottest and driest spot, the Danakil Desert, which is nearly 400 feet below sea level with daytime temperatures reaching up to 125°F in the sun. The Afar are herdsman and mine for salt, living a nomadic family life in huts.

The Af*ar (Danakil) claim to be descendants of Ham (Noah's son). They are located in the East African countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. They prefer to be known as the Af*ar, since the Arabic word "danakil" is an offensive term to them. They are a proud people, emphasizing a man's strength and bravery. Prestige comes from killing one's enemies.

The Af*ar consist of two subgroups: the Asaemara ("red ones"), who are the more prestigious and powerful nobles living primarily in the area of Assayita; and the Adaemara ("white ones"), who are the commoners living in the desert areas. Those who live in the desert inhabit one of the most rugged regions in the world, known as the Af*ar Plain or the Danakil Desert. One area, called the Danakil Depression, consists of a vast plain of salt pans and active volcanoes. Much of it lies 200 feet below sea level and has daily temperatures as high as 125 degrees F. The average yearly rainfall is less than seven inches.

What Are Their Lives Like?

Most of the Af*ar herd sheep, goats, cattle, and camels. A man's wealth is measured by the size of his herds.

Not all of the Af*ar are herders. Many of those who work in the Danakil Depression pry loose slabs of solid salt during the dry season, supplying ready-to-use salt in the form of crude blocks.

Some of them live in apartment buildings in the country's capitol city, Addis Ababa. They remain there year round and work in government jobs such as the Af*ar broadcasts of the Ethiopian radio station.

Meat and milk are the major components of the Af*ar diet. Milk is also an important social "offering". For instance, when a guest is given fresh warm milk to drink, the host is implying that he will provide immediate protection for the guest. If a person is killed while under the protection of an Af*ar, his death must be avenged as if he were a member of the clan.

The Af*ar live in camps surrounded by thorn barricades, which protect them from the attacks of wild animals or enemy tribesmen. Their oval-shaped huts, called ari, are made of palm mats and are easily moved.

What Are Their Beliefs?

Early in their history, the Af*ar were heavily influenced by the Islamic religion; and today, Islam is still held in great esteem. The people do not eat pork and rarely drink alcohol. Those who can afford to do so, make a pilgrimage to Mecca. In addition, many pre-Islamic beliefs and customs are also prevalent among the Af*ar. They believe that certain trees and groves have sacred powers. They also have various religious rites such as anointing their bodies with ghee (a type of butter). Spirits of the dead are believed to be very powerful, and a "feast of the dead", called Rabena, is celebrated each year. They also give annual offerings to the sea to ensure safety for their villages. Many people wear protective leather amulets that contain herbs and verses from the Koran.

- *Asterisks are included for security purposes.
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