

MAPPILA

OF INDIA

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QUICK FACTS

People Name: Mappila
People Cluster: Malayali
Language: Malayalam
Primary Religion: Islam
Population: 9,539,000

PRAYER POINTS

Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to go to India and share Christ with the Laccadive Mappilla.

Ask God to use the few Laccadive Mappilla believers to share Christ with their own people.

Pray that the women of these families will be open to the Gospel so that the words of Christ could penetrate deep into Mappillan families.

Take authority over the spiritual principalities and powers that are keeping the Laccadive Mappilla bound.

Ask the Lord to raise up prayer teams for these people.

HISTORY

The Laccadive Mappilla live in the Lakshadweep Islands off the southwestern coast of India. Malayalam is the state language of Kerala, and its script has been significantly influenced by Arabic. The term mappilla is a combination of two words: maha, which means "great" and pilla, which is an endearing term that means "child."

The people of the islands migrated from the Kerala coast around the seventh century. They came as Hindus but later converted to Islam. They are thought to be the earliest Muslim community in India. The Laccadive Mappilla attribute their conversion to the work of an Arab missionary. The Muslim communities resulted from the unions of Arab sailors and merchants with native women. The islanders have been in contact with the mainland Mappilla through trade and sporadic migrations. The Laccadive Mappilla are unique in that they have maintained a matrilineal society (line of descent is traced through the women) in spite of their Islamic beliefs.



LIFE

The Lakshadweep Islands are covered with coconut trees, which provide the basis of the Laccadive Mappilla's economy. The coconut supplies coir (the husky fiber, which can be used to make ropes or mats) and copra (coconut meat). These products provide the main industries on the islands. Vinegar is also derivative of coconut sap and is sold on the mainland. Breadfruit (an evergreen timber tree with edible fruits) runs a distant second to coconut in economic importance. Other foods that are raised include papayas, plantains (banana-like fruits), yams, sweet potatoes, maize, and beans.

Each island has various mosques and one or two schools for religious education. Within the last ten years, the government has made efforts to establish high schools and primary schools for girls.



Since 1956, the Laccadive Islands have become a Union Territory with the headquarters of administration at Calicut on the mainland. The local administration of each island is carried out by an Amin, who is appointed by the Administrator of the Laccadive Islands. He is usually selected from the Island Council of Elders, which consists of the heads of lineages.

FAMILY

The common matrilineal unit in the islands is called Taravad, in which individuals trace their descent by a common "ancestress" in the female line. For example, the right to share in property passes through female members. This system began centuries ago when the men were needed to manage negotiations in trade. Their periodic absence from the island facilitated the adoption of matrilineal blood lines. Maintenance of individually owned property was only possible if the women who stayed behind could officially speak for the family on the man's behalf.

Monogamy (one husband, one wife) prevails among the Laccadive Mappilla in spite of the fact that Islam allows a man to have as many as four wives. Cross cousin marriages are preferred, and marriages usually take place shortly after puberty. The man has true authority over his wife only if he stays with her until after all of her male relatives have died. He is then able to manage her property. A man has little authority over his children. Divorce is easy and common; 51% of their marriages end in divorce.



BELIEFS

The Laccadive Mappilla belong to the Shafite School of the Sunni branch of Islam. Their religion has the typical characteristics of Islamic beliefs and practices, in addition to certain local features that have developed according to their particular way of life. Every child has to read the Koran completely in Arabic at least once, but the meaning is not explained to them. Priesthood is inherited through the females.



WAYS TO HELP

The Lakshadweep Islands are a tourist destination for many. Tourism companies could be helpful in bringing revenue to the islands and could open doors to share Jesus.

Much of the Mappila people's income depends on the products of coconuts. Those willing to market and sell those goods to a wider buying market could provide greater economic security to the people and an inroad for the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Would you be willing to be among the FIRST to engage these people with the hope of the Gospel? Would you be willing to lead a team? Contact us today to find out more - we need people to visit the Mappila of India and find other great ways to bring new teams to live among them for the sake of the Kingdom.

CONTACT

FRONTIERS

(800) 462-8436
www.frontiers.org