

The Bilin of Eritrea

*Image
Unavailable*

Primary Religion:

Islam/Christian

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

0%

Churches:

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Work in Progress

Population (date):

70,000



Map Unavailable

The Bilen of Eritrea

Item Name

Item Note

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian (%)	45%
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	0%
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	50%
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	0%
Comment (Churches)	many Catholic churches; few or no Orthodox
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Work is in progress.

Profile Summary

Population All Countries

World Population For This People	70,000
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Group Description

Countries Where People Group Lives

Country Name	Eritrea
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Group Description

Language & Linguistics

Alternate Language Names	Bilin, Bogo, Bilayn, Balen, Bileninya, etc.
Percent Monolingual (%)	35
Second Languages	60
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	TIGRINYA

Group Description

Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)

The Catholics among the Bilen are particularly apt to be bilingual in Tigrinya, while 70% of the Muslims appear to be bilingual in Tigre. The younger generation mixes their speech with Arabic. Some are bilingual in Nara or Kunama.

Comments (Related Languages)

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Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures

Engagement is arranged by family; the couple has no say whatsoever in their future married life. If for some reason the two lovers get married without prior permission from their parents, the boy is obliged to pay a certain sum of money plus an ox to the girl's father. Among Christians, there must be no blood relationship for the past several generations, while in the Muslim society, the couple must have close blood relationship! Beauty, riches, and health are also prime qualifications for the bride. The couple may be promised to each other's families while still in their mother's womb. When a woman gives birth for the first time, she goes to her parents house. If the labor pangs take more time than normal, prayers are said on her behalf. Since the Bilen are mostly Catholics, divorce is very difficult to implement. It is customary that in the event it is the man who is seeking a divorce, he has only to leave the house: the wife remains in the house will all the couple's property under her care. On the other hand, if the wife is seeking a divorce, she leaves the house without much ado. If both parties are wanting a divorce, the properties are divided equally between them. The husband would provide some form of alimony to a pregnant woman who is divorcing him until she gives birth. After a divorce, there is a grace period of three months in which time the husband may change his mind and ask for a reconciliation.

Authority / Rule

Men hold virtually all power in this society.

Social Habits/Groupings

A lot of money and time is spent on weddings and honeymoon ceremonies. A newly married couple will live with the groom's family for quite awhile, but when they have their own house, the role they play in society changes. They become full members of society, with more privileges, although the woman is never equal to the man. The husband is the only breadwinner and can do whatever he likes with the property. Everything in the house is under his control. The woman is confined to the kitchen and serves only to produce his children. If she is given some work like poultry to tend, it is because such activities may seem degrading for a man to even pay attention to. Only men can own land. Women are clearly in an inferior position.

The Bilen of Eritrea

Item Name

Celebrations

Item Note

After a wedding ceremony, the groom hold a seven-day feast from his own expenses and from money offered by friends. The friends spend this week dancing, singing, and drinking. It is a week of merry making and debauchery. Throughout the seven days that the bride is in the house of her in-laws, the groom is not supposed to touch her. After the celebration is over and the friends go home, the groom offers a gift to the bride, a way of coaxing her to lie in bed with him. Once the marriage is consummated, the one-year long honeymoon starts in which period the bride is allowed to perform light household chores only. Heavy domestic work is done by the mother-in-law. When the year ends, the bride takes over the responsibilities and starts real work in the house and outside. Nothing really changes in the manner of work assigned to the groom. A poor couple would have no chance to enjoy this year off.

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)

Until the age of four, children's play is the same both for male and female. Children are made to wear small beads and seashells than jingle. Most of the time they play by building sand castles whenever the soil becomes softer after the rains. After the age of four, gender separation in games is visible. The boys get more interested in tough games, while the girls tend to prefer lighter games; this is preparation for the different roles that males and females will play as adults.

Youth Problems (Teens)

Punishment is administered by the mother to a child below the age of ten, and by the father and other relatives up to the age of 19. Delinquents are made to spend the night naked in a net, and if the teenager proves to be unrepentant, the parents consult with church elders for a possible "incarceration" of the offender in a church's boarding school. The youth are groomed throughout the early years to conform to the values and traditions of their society, and to preserve and respect their culture.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status

Evaluated

Comment (Church Growth)

Evangelical Lutheran one or more churches in Keren
Orthodox few or none
Roman Catholic many

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Comment (Religion)

There are 45 to 50% Moslems, and 45% Roman Catholic
Practicing local traditional religion, none known

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress