



The Bolon of Burkina Faso

The Bolon live in western Burkina Faso in a land of savannah, small forests, and wet season marshes. The people number approximately 17,000 and spend their lives farming and managing small herds of cattle, goats, and sheep. Daily food includes millet, corn, sesame, and ground-nuts. Tobacco is grown as a cash crop. Villagers use wood and charcoal for fuel, and live in mud houses built around a central courtyard. Extended families live close together, and the male head of the family has almost unlimited power over the other members. Each village is organized in a strict hierarchy according to sections, families, and age classes. Each clan interprets customs differently, and thus dances and other ceremonies vary greatly from one village to another. The people as a whole are known for their complex masks, which are very distinct from, and respected and feared by neighboring groups. The Bolon coexist with neighbors out of necessity, but prohibit intermarriage with the Senoufo, and will not tolerate Senoufo living in Bolon areas. The Bolon have retained their heritage and character despite years of outside contact. The majority of villagers follow the traditional religion, and there is only one known Christian. Many are Muslims. A low literacy rate may make audio-visual presentations of the Gospel more effective. Missionaries willing to live and work among the Bolon might encourage more receptivity to Christianity. At the moment, there is neither a church nor a mission specifically working among the Bolon.

Primary Religion:

Animism

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

0%

Churches:

1

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

None in their language

Population (date):

17,000 (1996)



The Bolon of Burkina Faso

Item Name

Item Note

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Profile Summary

Call Themselves Christian (%)	.05
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	0%
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	??
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	??
Believe Jesus Is A Myth (%)	??
Number Of Pastors	4
Number Of Missionaries Working	4
Number Of Churches	1
Is The Word Of God Translated?	NO
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	No Scriptures are yet available. There is also a low literacy rate and resistance to Christianity.
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Other forms are available in Jula and Mooré, but not in Bolon.
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Yes, for evangelization, church planting and translation.

Population All Countries

Group Description

World Population For This People	17000
World Population (Date)	1996
Comment (World Population)	Population is between 16,000 and 18,700 (1985 census figure adjusted to 1996). The urban population is negligible.

Countries Where People Group Lives

Group Description

Country Name	Burkina Faso
Country Name	Burkina Faso

Geography & Environment

Group Description

Location	The Bolon are located in western Burkina Faso, primarily in the north-eastern part of Kéné Dougou province on the Malian border.
Country	Burkina Faso
Ecosystem Type	Savannahs
Geological Type	Plains
Elevation	300-400 m
Longitude	12N
Latitude	6W
Climate	Hot and dry, with a long rainy season from May through September. Cooler December and January.
Comments (Geography & Environment)	The land has some forested and marshy areas, along with some low hills.

Language & Linguistics

Group Description

Alternate Language Names	The Ethnologue gives "BOKA" and "BO" as alternate language names. In sociolinguistic surveys done, SIL has not come across these names.
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive
Second Languages	99
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	JULA
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	SENOUFO, NANERIGE
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	JULA
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	SENOUFO, NANERIGE
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	People speak Jula at a simple conversational level, but not well enough to grasp the Gospel. Very few would be completely monolingual.
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	Only a few Bolon would be able to speak Senoufo, since it is a complex language that most Africans shy away from learning.

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Item Name	Item Note
Linguistically Related Languages	MARKA
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Comments (Related Languages)	Only a few Bolon would be able to speak Senoufo, since it is a complex language that most Africans shy away from learning.
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Neighboring Languages	BOBO MADARE, NORTHERN
Neighboring Languages	SALIBA
Neighboring Languages	SENOUFO, NANERIGE

Literacy

Group Description

Literacy Attitude	Somewhat resistant
Active Literacy Program	No
Comment (Literacy)	A small percentage is literate in Jula or French. People do not see literacy as necessary for daily life.

Economics

Group Description

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Average Annual Income	US\$140
Occupation	Most are subsistence farmers, boys herd flocks, and women sell at the market.
Income Sources	Animal products and field produce are sold at market.
Products / Crafts	The Bolon make masks that are very distinct culturally from those around them. The masks are very complex, respected, and feared.
Trade Partners	Partners include the Senoufo, Mossi, and Fulani.
Modernization / Utilities	None
Comment (Economy)	The figure for the average income does not reflect what is earned by bartering, which is the most common form of trading in rural Burkina Faso.

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Health Care)	There is one doctor for every 100,000 people. Two dispensaries serve the entire population.
Diet (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Diet)	People mainly eat a millet or sorghum paste with a vegetable sauce. The diet also consists of yams, rice, millet, sesame, and very occasionally beef, mutton, goat, or poultry.
Water (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Water)	Most villages have wells. However, not many wells have safe drinking water, since in some places the water table is unusually high.
Shelter Description	Houses are built of mud and are grouped around a central courtyard. Huts for families are grouped closely together.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Energy)	People use wood and charcoal. Some kerosene for lamps.
Clothing	Traditional clothing for both men and women. Some western style, second-hand pants, shirts, and blouses are also worn.
Transportation	People travel by foot, bicycle, and moped. Public transportation is almost non-existent.
Infant Mortality Rate	18%
Life Expectancy	52 years
Leading Cause Of Death	Untreated illnesses

Society & Culture

Group Description

The Bolon of Burkina Faso

Item Name	Item Note
Family Structures	Extended families live together, and the head of the family has almost unlimited power over the other members.
Neighbor Relations	There is not much friendly interaction. They will not tolerate having Senoufo in Bolon areas.
Authority / Rule	There is a lack of centralized structure, but each village is organized in a strict hierarchy according to sections, families, and age classes.
Social Habits/Groupings	They coexist with surrounding groups out of necessity, but socialize within their own villages.
Cultural Change Pace	Slow
Identification With National Culture	Integrated
Self Image	Threatened
Judicial / Punishment System	A complex hierarchical system within each village is responsible for settling disputes. Large issues are taken to the civil authorities.
Celebrations	Dances, funerals, and other spiritual ceremonies are important. Each clan has different customs and celebrations.
Recreations	Talking and dancing are the main recreations. Modern dancing among the youth is a recent change.
Art Forms	The Bolon are well known for their distinct, complex masks.
Media	There is some radio broadcasting in Jula.
Local Language Broadcasting	None
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat resistant
Attitude To Change	Very resistant
Comment (Culture)	The society is fairly closed, and change is viewed as negative.

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Cultivating with one's family and herding animals are common tasks. More are beginning to travel to Côte d'Ivoire in search of work.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Poor health care and lack of job opportunities present problems.
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	The young need more job opportunities close to home, so that they will not have to leave their villages in search of work.
Comment (Youth)	The youth are the only segment of the population open to change.

Education

Group Description

Primary Schools	3
Primary School Enrollment	300
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	3
Language Of Instruction Early Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	French
Comment (Education)	The schools accommodate some Bolon, but mostly Senoufo and Mossi students attend (only 3% of Bolon go to school, whereas the area statistics show that it has 30-40% scholarization).

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Reached Status	Evaluated
Reached Classification	World A
Comment (Church Growth)	There is one C&MA church in N'Dorola. Missionaries and pastors work in the area, but none are assigned primarily to the Bolon.

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Traditional religious practices, such as spirit worship and sacrifices, are common.
Attitude To Christianity	Very resistant
Attitude To Religious Change	Very resistant
Resistance / Receptivity	People are resistant to religious change.

The Bolon of Burkina Faso

Item Name

Religious Analogies & Bridges

Spiritual Climate And Openness

Recommended Approaches

Current Needs

Items For Prayer

Item Note

The concept of a sacrifice and bridges with the Muslim belief in one God may be used.

The Bolon are "religiously aware", but are resistant to change and Christianity.

Translating OT stories would highlight similarities to Islam. Audio-visual presentations would be most effective. Someone probably needs to live among them to know them and be trusted, and thereby break through their resistance.

The people need to be reached through evangelism, church planting, and Bible translation.

Pray for a translation team and a willingness to live among the Bolon. Pray for softened hearts to receive to the Gospel.

History Of Christianity In Group

Significant Events

SIL conducted a survey of the group in 1983, and again in 1996.

Comments (History of Christianity)

There has been no known missions or church contact with the Bolon.

Status of Christianity

Scripture

Translation Status

Definite

Available Scripture

None

Comment (Scripture)

Competency in Jula is low enough to require a separate translation in Bolon.

Status of Christianity

Missions and Churches

Organization Name

Christian and Missionary Alliance

Country Of Origin

United States

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Status of Christianity

Christian Literature And Media Status

Literature Available

All media forms are available in Jula and Mooré, but not in the mother tongue.

Audio Recordings Available

None

Films Available

None

Radio Programs Available

None

Videos Available

None

Audio Visual Available

None

Status of Christianity