

The Balemi of Ghana

The Balemi (Buem) are a subsistence farming people living in the forested mountains of Ghana's central Volta Region. In the mid 1900's the area led the Volta region in Cocoa production and tin roofing sheets replaced the traditional log/earth roofs seen only on traditional shrine houses today. Most young men leave the towns in search of work in the capital. Traditional marriage customs are dying out. Most children are born out of wedlock and siblings rarely have one set of parents. Education standards have dropped since 1960, and jobs are no longer available for those who can afford education. There is an increased interest in the Mother Tongue and community based education. The Balemi (Buem) are proud of their role as leaders of the Volta Region. During the Ashanti Wars (1865-90) their chief formed a confederacy to resist Ashanti dominance and kept trade routes open from the North to the coast. Originally guided by earth priests, the Balemi have adopted the Akan chieftaincy system and Asafo company structure. Eastern Buem is predominantly Catholic (with Ewe being the second language) and Western Buem is Presbyterian (using Twi). The majority of the Buem people are nominal or social Christians, only about 5% are committed Christians. Buem are well organized and capable of working together well to meet community needs. Unfortunately the reintroduction of the yam festival and its accompanying Taboos has created polarization in the community, as some Christians have not agreed to maintaining the taboos. This gives the Church an opportunity to help people sort through the cultural-social and cultural-religious distinctions.

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

5%

Churches:

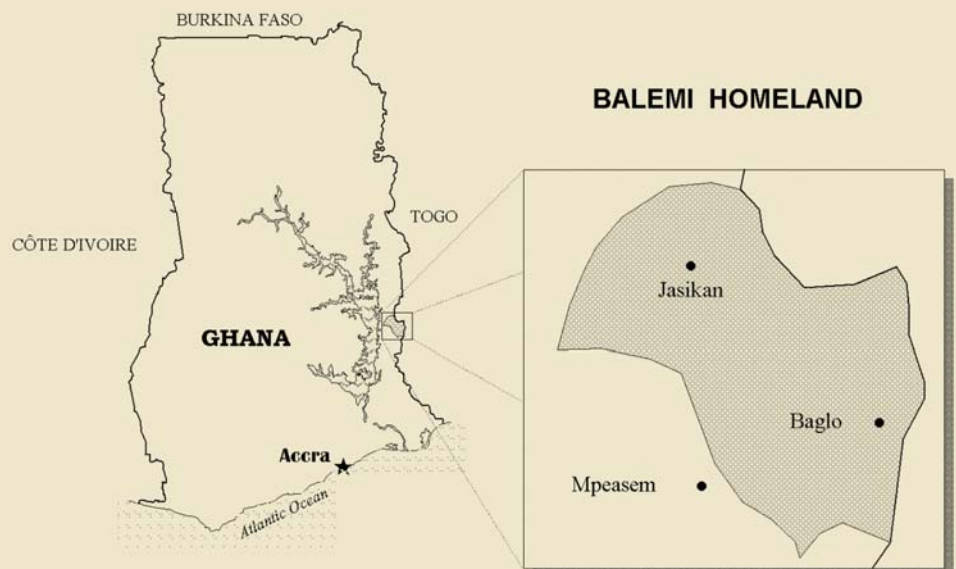
30

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Two books are finished

Population (date):

50,000 (1994)



The Balemi of Ghana

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	98	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	5%	
Comment (Jesus As God & Only Savior)	possibly less than 2500 believers	
Number Of Pastors	30	
Number Of Missionaries Working	2	
Number Of Communities	There are 17 listed Buem communities	
Number Of Churches	30	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Yes - Mark's Gospel published 1984 and Acts published 1992	
Translation Medium	Printed	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Many pastors are non-Buem speakers, who use a dominant trade language, not the Buem MT.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Tapes of Christian Songs.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Yes for Bible translation completion. People are gaining hope in the educational system as education that is culturally appropriate and good vocational training has been recently introduced. This will benefit the existing lifestyle. Although many recognize that outside languages take their children away from the community and therefore it is a barrier to reaching these goals. The use of Lelemi would assist them in these schemes and would be of benefit to the Buem community.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	50000	
World Population (Date)	1994	
World Population (Urban Percent)	5000	
Comment (World Population)	Ghana has had a 6% population growth rate (in some years the highest in the world). Among the Balemi the population increase is said to be 10%.	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Ghana	
Country Name	Ghana	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	In the Jasikan District of the Volta Region in the eastern part of Ghana. The area is located between southern Ewe speaking peoples and northern Twi speaking peoples and other Ghana-Togo Mountain Languages in the east and west.	
Country	Ghana	
Ecosystem Type	Deciduous Forest	
Geological Type	Mountain Slopes	
Elevation	200-500 m	
Longitude	.5E	
Latitude	7.4N	
Climate	hot and humid with seasonal rains.	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	Bodada is the traditional centre, Jasikan the district headquarters. There are 21 Buem localities, 18 of which are larger ones.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Comment (Language)	Most everyone uses a trade language for market. But average comprehension scores were 39% for graded testing.	
Alternate Language Names	Lefana and Buem (from Twi).	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Percent Monolingual (%)	10	
Second Languages	20	

The Balemi of Ghana

Item Name	Item Note
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	ENGLISH
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	ENGLISH
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	English 15 - 20% : Ewe 30 - 40% : Twi 30 - 40% Eastern Buem use no Twi and there Ewe scores ran at 39% average comprehension. Western Buem use no Ewe and there Twi scores ran at 69% average comprehension.
Linguistically Related Languages	AKPAFU-LOLOBI
Linguistically Related Languages	AKPAFU-LOLOBI
Comments (Related Languages)	Likpe/Akpafu-Lolobi/Santrokofi - these are all related languages and could probably use a CARLA project for their own translations based on Lelemi.
Neighboring Languages	AKAN

Literacy

Group Description

Adult Literacy Percentage	30
Literacy Attitude	Very receptive
Active Literacy Program	Yes
Publications In Vernacular	20
Comment (Literacy)	30% are literate in Twi or Ewe. 5% are literate in English. Literacy classes in the Buem Mother Tongue are active among adults - Lelemi is now being introduced in primary schools. For many people eyesight is a problem, they cannot see the writing.

Economics

Group Description

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Average Annual Income	200,000 cedis
Occupation	Farming, teaching, trading. Professionals have moved out to Accra men farm the staples, which primarily go into subsistence. Women farm additional crops, many of which are sold as cash crops. Women control the trading of surplus and thus control most of the money.
Income Sources	Surplus of substance farming (intercrossing system: yams and corn, followed by rice and groundnuts, followed by plantain and cassava). From the 30s to the 60s, the cocoa economy was strong and Buem would tenant out their land to Ewe immigrants for a share of the profits. The fall of the cocoa market and disease in the trees led to lower standards of living and many land disputes as tenants attempted to claim the land for general farming. In the east, Buem have sold their land which has brought economic hardship.
Products / Crafts	foodstuff (plantain, cocoyam, cassava, Palm oil, maize, rice), pottery (done by women), carpentry (stools), baskets, soap
Trade Partners	Togolese, Kotokoli, Ewe, Akans
Modernization / Utilities	One or two grinding mills
Comment (Economy)	There are regular shortages of food each year. Problems are compounded by drought or excessive rain. The general economic situation is improving since the mid-80s.

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Health Care)	Health care good in towns, poor in outlying areas. Women are aware of the health needs and have started a clinic. There are six health care posts, one private hospital and one clinic in Jasikan. Most people use traditional medicine.
Diet (Quality)	Good
Comment (Diet)	The Buem eat fufu and soup with fish daily, vegetables, fruit. Meat is rare.
Water (Quality)	Fair
Comment (Water)	There are a few boreholes. Most of the water comes from the streams and rivers, some of which dry out during the dry season, which entails far walking to fetch water.
Shelter Description	Rectangular mud houses with zinc roofing. In one compound there are about 20 people (the father, wife, children and their wives).
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	Fair
Comment (Energy)	Electricity in towns. In villages: firewood and kerosene lanterns.

The Balemi of Ghana

Item Name	Item Note
Clothing	Ghanaian cloth, western second hand clothing
Transportation	2nd and 3rd class roads to all town centers.
Infant Mortality Rate	5%
Life Expectancy	70-75
Leading Cause Of Death	fever, jaundice, old age
Society & Culture	
Family Structures	Patrilineal - Clan structure - Family heads - when a parent dies, the children are assigned another.
Neighbor Relations	Boundary disputes are sometimes a concern with neighboring groups.
Authority / Rule	Chieftancy is well established (traditional council). The paramount chief is supported by a council of chiefs. The local chiefs by a council of elders. Each clan has its chief. Parallel system among women: queen mother, women clan chiefs, family heads.
Social Habits/Groupings	Men and women live separate lives as far as eating apart, working apart, socializing apart. The exception to this is in committed Christians' homes, procreation is the only joint feature. The Town Development Committee (local CDR) is an elected body and is responsible for organizing communal labor for local projects (construction or repair of public buildings or roads)
Cultural Change Pace	Medium
Identification With National Culture	Similar
Self Image	Prestigious
Judicial / Punishment System	Traditional chieftancy concerned with domestic affairs functions side by side with the national legal system. The traditional system is based on reconciliation and restitution.
Celebrations	The Yam festival and the festival of the local shrine have had attempts at revival since 1990, both failed.
Recreations	Funerals, football matches, church functions and dances.
Art Forms	Pottery, wood carving, functional basketry and some Kente weaving.
Media	None
Local Language Broadcasting	None
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat receptive
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive
Youth	
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Young men work on peoples farms by day (hired labor). They actively participate in communal labor if under 50 years old.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Little leadership - no guidance on handling the culture changes they are experiencing.
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Literature, education with moral guidance suitable to their cultural background.
Education	
Primary Schools	30
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	100
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	45
Language Of Instruction Early Years	English
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	English
Language Of Instruction Later Years	English
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	English
Comment (Education)	Some mix with Ewe/Twi speakers. In the outlying areas there are few Ewes/Akans. They live in separate enclaves when present. Oral Lelemi is used in first three grades. Secondary education is not adequate. There is one secondary school (in Jasikan) for the whole Lelemi area. A new secondary school is trying to be put up in Bodada. Lack of funds makes it impossible to sustain it.

The Balemi of Ghana

Item Name	Item Note	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Reached Status	Engaged	
Total Baptized	40000	
Lay Leaders	30	
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	1	
Christian Literacy Centers	1	
Comment (Church Growth)	There is a rise in interest in Pentecostal churches in the area, as people look to the church for problem solving issues in these economically depressed times.	
Religion & Response		Status of Christianity
Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Traditional funeral customs still in force.	
Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat receptive	
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat receptive	
Resistance / Receptivity	Early in the Century they responded favorably, however without much literate awareness they have become nominal or social Christians. The breakdown of the chieftaincy system due to both economic and religious factors is an interesting development.	
Religious Analogies & Bridges	Rompi (Akan) a Ram is substituted for a child, it is captured to be killed instead of announcing a chiefs death. Aburam myth (1st chief) gave\ killed himself to avoid conquer by Akans.	
Spiritual Climate And Openness	Positive now that Scripture is becoming available in the MT.	
Comment (Religion)	Though 98% claim to be Christians, 95% are animists so the Buem people seem to be both Christian and Animist ? In actual fact about 5% are committed/literate Christians. Juju or witchcraft is a major fear among Christians and non-Christians. Christianity was imposed on the Buem people in a trade language, in order to attend school children had to be baptized.	
Recommended Approaches	Through Mother Tongue, Literacy and S-I-U activities.	
Current Needs	Literature is the bottle neck to teaching.	
Items For Prayer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contextualisation of the Gospel in Buem thought - via translation process. 2. Sound teaching, opportunity for discussion. 3. Church unity and cooperation. 	
History Of Christianity In Group		Status of Christianity
Year Began	1885	
By Whom	Presbyterian	
Significant Events	<p>Father A.O. Dogli ordained in Lome (1st West African Priest 1922 - a man from Eastern Buem). 1904 Basel missionaries (using Twi) replaced the Bremen missionaries (using Ewe) in Western Buem. 1929 - Presbyterian church heals rift by allowing Twi in W. Buem. 1930 - Father Dogli rejected by Buem Elders of W. Buem in bid to use Lelemi in schools. 1970 - R.C. Church leaders burn Father Dogli's shipment of Lelemi misals at Keta. 1979 - GILLBT identifies Lelemi as Bitrans need. 1980 Bitrans project begun.</p>	
Scripture		Status of Christianity
Translation Status	In Progress	
Available Scripture	Portions	
Form Of Scripture Available	Printed and Audio	
Scripture Use	5	
Scripture Use	Majority of churches	
Comment (Scripture)	Old Testament translation is in progress due to the initiative of some members of the people group.	
Christian Literature And Media Status		Status of Christianity
Literature Available	Only short Bible Texts, New Testament is expected in 1996.	
Audio Recordings Available	Two scripture songs tapes.	

The Balemi of Ghana

Item Name	Item Note
Films Available	None
Radio Programs Available	None
Videos Available	None
Audio Visual Available	None