

The Cerma of Burkina Faso

The Ciramba (also called Gouin or Cerma) are rather small numerically but big on ethnic pride. They live in southwest Burkina Faso, with about 3,000 spilling into northern Côte d'Ivoire. The main highway linking Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso runs the length of their traditional territory, which results in a large percentage of Ciramba - about 30% - residing in urban areas.

The Ciramba area has a long rainy season, a blessing since most are subsistence farmers. To earn money, farmers sell surplus crops and some women sell baskets, pottery, or shea nuts. The Ciramba work very well together, and will often farm the fields collectively. A balafon (similar to a xylophone) player often accompanies these groups as they work, sending messages through his music to spur them on!

Many Ciramba know Jula, the local trade language, quite well, but they still cling tightly to Cerma, their mother tongue. They are receptive to literacy efforts in both Jula and Cerma. In the pilot phase of a new program, the government has two bilingual schools, where initial instruction and materials are in Cerma. The percentage of children enrolled in primary schools is one of the highest in Burkina Faso.

Family structure is unique in that the maternal uncle holds the most authority in the home. Marriages are often polygamous, and two to three generations of a family live together in a compound of mud-brick huts. The land chief, who performs ritual sacrifices, is a village's most powerful individual.

Most Ciramba follow the local traditional religion, which, among other things, advocates the power of sacrifices to appease the spirit world. Furthermore, there are approximately 6,000 Ciramba Muslims. Nevertheless, there is a strong, although small, self-propagating church amongst the Ciramba. Two Bible translators are working to ensure that more churches use the Cerma Scriptures that are available, and that translation and literacy work moves ahead efficiently.

Primary Religion:

Animism

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

3%

Churches:

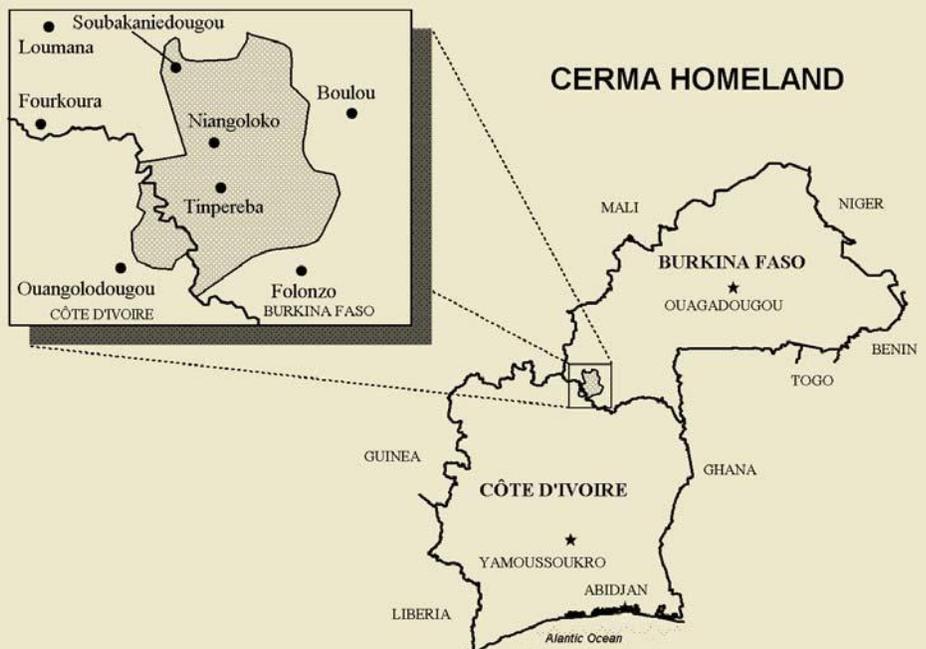
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Portions

Population (date):

61,000



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	5%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	3%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	10%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	85%	
Have Not Heard Who Jesus is (%)	50%	
Number Of Pastors	22	
Number Of Missionaries Working	2	
Number Of Communities	38	
Number Of Churches	>53	
Comment (Churches)	28 Protestants, 25+ Roman Catholic	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	The New Testament translation is in progress; portions are available.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Many churches use mostly the Jula Scriptures, as only Luke, Acts and Genesis are published in Cerma. As Ciramba Christians become literate in Cerma, many do buy these Scriptures. But hindrances do exist. Most speakers are poor and do not have enough money for such needs as medicines and education. As a result, many will not be willing to spend money to buy personal copies of Scripture. Furthermore, the literacy rate is low. Coupled with this, the concept of reading is not naturally inviting for many, as it is not a part of their traditional culture. On the religious plane, there is often at least a subtle social pressure to retain the current religion and to hinder the spread of the Christian Gospel; this would affect distribution. Finally, even for those attending Christian churches, many have become used to their Christian pastor, priest, or catechist presenting a message, and do not feel the need to read the Scriptures for themselves.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Films, radio twice each moth, and two Christian song cassettes are available in Jula.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Assistance is needed for translation (in the areas of exegesis and consulting), and some for literacy and further training. Ciramba believers are doing their own evangelism and church planting. Financial help is always appreciated, both in funding and in training for local income generation.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	61,000	
World Population (Urban Percent)	30%	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Burkina Faso	
Country Name	Cote d'Ivoire	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	The Cerma live in southwest Burkina Faso, west of the city of Banfora. Their villages extend down to northern Cote d'Ivoire.	
Country	Burkina Faso	
Ecosystem Type	Scrub Forest	
Geological Type	Plains	
Elevation	200-300 m	
Longitude	6W	
Latitude	10N	
Climate	The climate is hot and dry, with a rainy season from May through September. Somewhat cooler, but very dry in January , warming up towards February, getting hot and humid in March until the rains have set in.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Primary Language	CERMA	

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Item Name

Item Note

Comment (Language)	The Niangoloko, Banfora and Soubaka are mutually understandable. The Ciramba have a definite awareness of their own language, culture and identity.
Comment (Language)	Cerma is the name for the language, and Ciramba is the name of the people.
Alternate Language Names	GOUIN, Ciramba, Gwe, Gwen, Kirma
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive
Percent Monolingual (%)	5
Second Languages	95
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	JULA
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	Almost all speak Jula, which is the trade language in this area. Some speak Turka or Karaboro Western, in the north of the Cerma area, Karaboro Eastern is spoken in the east of the Cerma area, and Senoufo, Senar is spoken in the west of the Cerma area.. Those who have been educated speak French, which is the official language in Burkina Faso. It is the medium of practically all formal education and all the transactions of government administration. The extent of knowledge and use of French is largely dependent on the number of years spent on formal education. They accept other languages, but are proud of their own.
Linguistically Related Languages	TURKA
Comments (Related Languages)	This is spoken to the north of the Cerma area.
Neighboring Languages	TURKA

Literacy

Group Description

Adult Literacy Percentage	17% in Jula
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat receptive
Publications In Vernacular	16
Comment (Literacy)	Literacy is in French or Jula, and occasionally in Cerma. The Government, churches, and other NGO's run programs in French and Jula. Courses are taught in Cerma. Publications include primers and twelve post-literacy books.

Economics

Group Description

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Average Annual Income	US\$140
Occupation	Most are subsistence farmers. Some women do pottery and men hunt, trade, and build houses.
Income Sources	Income arises from selling crops and other goods, trading in town. Young men work on plantations in Cote d'Ivoire.
Products / Crafts	Women produce pottery and baskets. There are small businesses of carpentry, tailoring and mechanics.
Trade Partners	They trade with the Turka and Karaboro, and with a variety of groups in Banfora.
Modernization / Utilities	There are very few. Some city dwellers may have electricity and even televisions. Some can afford oxen to plow their fields.
Comment (Economy)	There are many village cooperatives in which young people gather to do fieldwork. People work very well together. 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, nor does it reflect the value of assets, such as livestock.

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Health Care)	There are some dispensaries, but they are too expensive for most villagers. There are also some maternity centers and pharmacies. The town of Banfora has a small hospital. Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in Burkina has a larger hospital.
Diet (Quality)	Fair
Comment (Diet)	People eat much maize, millet, peanuts, leaves, and seasonal fruit, including mangoes. There is not much meat or fish in the diet.
Water (Quality)	Fair

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Item Name	Item Note
Comment (Water)	The water situation has improved over the past ten years. Villages have wells with reasonably clean supplies, and most women don't have to walk far to get water.
Shelter Description	The majority live in sun baked mud brick houses with mud and thatch roofs. They are arranged in such an order that an extended family, 2 or 3 generations can live in one compound.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	None
Comment (Energy)	Wood and kerosene are the only energy sources. Kerosene is used in small quantity for lamps. The towns of Banfora and Niangokolo have electricity but relatively few would be hooked up to it.
Clothing	Women wear traditional African dress, and men wear a mixture of African cloths and Western shirts and trousers. Large quantities of second hand clothing is available in the markets. There is cloth produced in Burkina Faso and in neighboring countries and clothing can be fashioned by local tailors.
Transportation	People walk or ride bicycles and motorbikes. Improvements in public transportation have made more buses available for longer trips.
Infant Mortality Rate	16%
Life Expectancy	47
Leading Cause Of Death	malaria
Comment (Community Development)	The leading cause of death are untreated illnesses. The numbers of life expectancy and child mortality are from UNESCO statistics.

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures	The maternal uncle has the most family authority. Marriages are often polygamous, and extended families live together in one compound.
Neighbor Relations	Former land disputes have strained relationships with the Karaboro, and the Cerma do not want to cooperate with them in literacy programs. With other groups they seem to have peaceful relationships.
Authority / Rule	There is no clearly defined authority structure. Village appointed representatives have administrative responsibility; the land chiefs, responsible for sacrifices, have the most real power in the villages.
Social Habits/Groupings	The Cerma form very close relationships, and people are their first priority. They spend much time visiting others.
Cultural Change Pace	Medium
Identification With National Culture	Similar
Self Image	Prestigious
Judicial / Punishment System	Disputes are decided by the village land chief and a group of male elders. Larger issues are taken to the civil authorities.
Celebrations	Weddings and funerals are important events that include singing, dancing, and feasting.
Recreations	The most common pastime is visiting others and talking. Young men enjoy playing soccer.
Art Forms	Pottery and baskets are made for practical purposes. Some paint and do carvings. Banfora is known for its baskets.
Media	Radio and some TV is available and Jula and French. Cerma radio is also broadcast for at least one hour daily.
Local Language Broadcasting	> 1 hour daily
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat receptive
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	The young help in the fields and around the house as soon as they are able.
Youth Problems (Teens)	Many have trouble finding a job and staying in school. There are some problems with drugs and alcohol, especially in the towns.
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Education, health education and care, and more jobs are greatly needed.
Comment (Youth)	Tied in with the employment is the need for reconciliation in their minds between , on the one hand "modern" ideas and innovations and on the other hand, population growth and limited employment, which can leave a big gap between dreams and reality.

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Item Name	Item Note	
Education		Group Description
Primary Schools	24	
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	42	
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	61	
Language Of Instruction Early Years	French	
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	French	
Language Of Instruction Later Years	Cerma	
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	Cerma	
Number Of Schools > 90% Homogeneous	12	
Comment (Education)	There are two experimental bilingual schools that teach in Cerma in a pilot phase, where initial insurrection and materials are in Cerma. The town of Banfora has at least two middle schools and two high schools. The figures provided for the % of eligible students enrolled is from the 1994-1995 school year. The student teacher ratio are from 1992-1993. They are figures for the entire province, including the major towns in which the percentages are considerably higher than those in the villages. The figures also only reflect those villages in which there is a school. The data is from 1994-5 schoolyear.	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Reached Status	Adopted	
Reached Classification	Evangelized	
Total Baptized	3,660	
Bible Schools	3	
Christian Literacy Centers	1	
Comment (Church Growth)	The number of believers accounts for evangelical Protestants and also a number of Catholics that are found to be true believers. The number of all Roman Catholics are about 2,400.	
Religion & Response		Status of Christianity
Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Practices include sacrifices to appease spirits and ancestors and divination to uncover who is responsible for a person's death. Funerals and weddings are important ceremonies.	
Attitude To Christianity	Somewhat receptive	
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat receptive	
Resistance / Receptivity	Receptivity is growing, especially among the young. There is also the Eglise Protestante de Pleine Evangile from Burkina Faso, which I mention here because the System does not know it. They are doing evangelism.	
Religious Analogies & Bridges	Sacrifices are very meaningful to the people; the concept of Jesus' sacrifice may be easily grasped.	
Spiritual Climate And Openness	They are very open to religion and aware of the spiritual world. There is a total of 5 groups of Christians working among them with 2 expatriate missionaries, 24 national missionaries and 14 local workers.	
Comment (Religion)	There are still 90% animist, about 10% Muslim and 1% evangelical Christians and 4% (3% active) Roman Catholics. Most Cirambas practice the local traditional religion and it has still a strong hold on them especially in times of crisis and at the time of major events in their live like marriage, death and disaster. Young people are more open, but come often under pressure when they get older.	
Recommended Approaches	More use of cassettes and evangelism through literacy work would be effective.	
Current Needs	More literacy work and evangelization are needed.	
Items For Prayer	Pray for more vision among churches and pastors to reach their own people, and that translation and literacy would move ahead. Pray also that workers will identify the strongholds of the enemy and oppose them more effectively.	
History Of Christianity In Group		Status of Christianity
Year Began	1937	
By Whom	Christian and Missionary Alliance	

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Item Name

Significant Events

Item Note

The C&MA began work in Cerma in 1940. The Catholics arrived in 1942, and the Assembly of God began work in 1977.

Comments (History of Christianity)

The three Bible schools where all Cerma pastors have received their training are outside the Cerma speaking area. There is now one small Christian bookstore in Banfora, where materials are available in French, Jula and Cerma.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

Portions

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Scripture Use

Individuals & some churches

Comment (Scripture)

Most churches use only the Jula scriptures. The local radio station broadcasts a Christian program twice each month in Cerma. Two Christian song tapes are available in Cerma.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

No

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

Yes

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1942

Number Of Adherents

2400

Number Of National Workers

16

Organization Name

Assemblies of God

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1977

Number Of Expatriate Workers

5

Number Of Workers Using Local Language

1

Language Used By Workers

Dyula

Organization Name

Christian Mission

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Year Started

1940

Number Of National Workers

11

Number Of Workers Using Local Language

9

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Literature Available

Some portions of scripture have been translated.

Audio Recordings Available

Some praise tapes in Cerma are available; other recordings are in Jula and French.

Films Available

Some in Jula and French.

Radio Programs Available

There is a Christian broadcast in Cerma from the local station in Banfora, it amounts to about 2 hours per month.

Videos Available

None

Audio Visual Available

None