

The Safaliba of Ghana



The Safaliba people reportedly came from an area in today's Cote d'Ivoire and settled in an area of about sixty square kilometers around what is now Mandari near Bole in the Northern Province of Ghana. Later on the Gonjas arrived in the area and the Safaliba surrendered to this more numerous and powerful people group. Due to this peaceful submission the Safaliba were allowed to retain their chieftaincy alongside the Gonjas' and the Gonjas do not ask any taxes from the Safaliba and cohabitation is friendly. The Safaliba also have continued to settle their own cases for their own people.

The Safaliba's main subsistence is farming, mainly of yams, cassava, millet, corn, and groundnuts. They are also involved in shea butter extraction. Their houses are rectangular with flat mud roofs and intricate designs imprinted on the walls. Several houses are joined together and create a fortress-like impression. Access to the roof is gained by means of a beam with cut out steps.

The influences of traditional religion and Islam are present, but the Christian churches are on the rise. There is a great openness to Christianity among the Safaliba, and the churches are growing in all age groups. The Roman Catholic Church has the main Christian influence in the area, but there are also a few protestant churches. The churches are still very young, there are no church buildings in the four Safaliba villages. The openness to Bible translation is great as well. Language surveyors have encountered ready cooperation. The authorities are welcoming and cooperative.

Primary Religion:

Tribal Religion

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

10%

Churches:

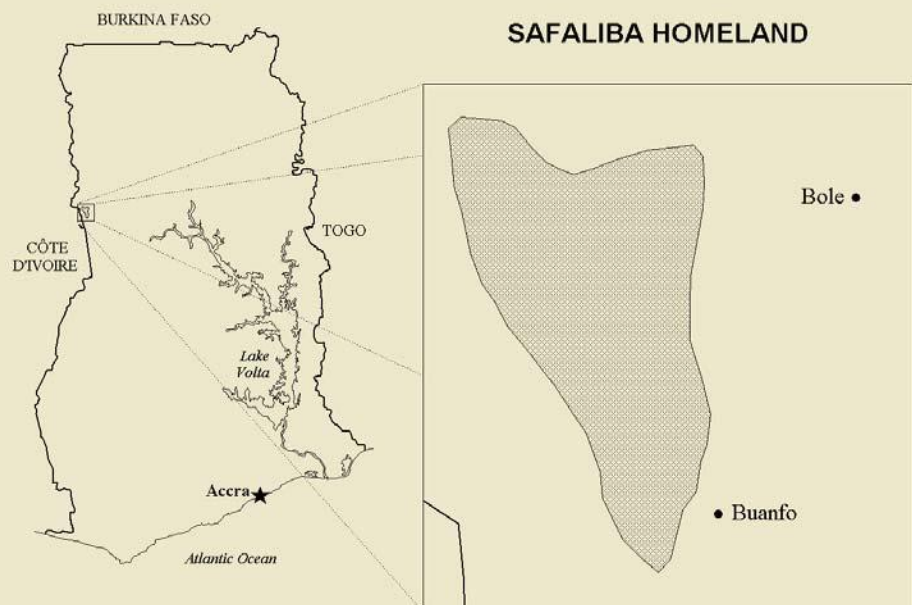
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Portions

Population (date):

3,500 (1996)



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	10%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	10%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	45%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	68%	
Number Of Pastors	3	
Response To The Gospel	Growing church	
Number Of Communities	4	
Number Of Churches	4	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No. There have been private endeavors to translate Catholic liturgy. Portions of Scripture have been done by the Roman Catholic Church.	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	No hindrances. The area is small, and both the Gonja and the Safaliba authorities are very willing to cooperate. The Gonja chief in Mandari uttered concern, however, that the Safaliba might become unruly. After all, the Vaglas fought for independence after having been "enlightened" through Mother Tongue development.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	None	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Help required for mother tongue development, Bible translation, Christian teaching, and community development. The Safaliba are not adequately served by either the current literacy programs or the literacy materials available.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	3,500	
World Population (Date)	1996	
World Population (Urban Percent)	0%	
Comment (World Population)	Population figures were given by a Safaliba native (teacher). It seems low to the interviewer.	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Ghana	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	About sixty square kilometers, Northern Region, near Mole game reserve in the west of Ghana, immediately west of Bole. The largest town of the area is Bole, which is a Gonja town, but in which there is a Gonja community. The farthest village is twelve kilometers from Bole. The landscape is relatively flat with a few low hills. The area is bordered to the West by the Black Volta River, which forms part of the Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire border.	
Country	Ghana	
Ecosystem Type	Scrub Forest	
Geological Type	Plains	
Elevation	about 200 meters	
Longitude	9 W	
Latitude	2.5 N	
Climate	Hot with seasonal rains	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	Villages: Mandari, Gbenfu, Manfuli, Tanyiri	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Alternate Language Names	Safalba, Safazo, Safalaba	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Percent Monolingual (%)	0%	
Second Languages	5	
Second Languages	50	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	VAGLA	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	GONJA	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	GONJA	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	VAGLA	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	Comprehension testing produced an average score of 47% among 45 subjects. However the scores obtained in Manfuli were much higher than those in the other villages. This high average of Gonja comprehension in Manfuli is said to be linked with the activities in and around the shrine. People living in other Safaliba villages are reportedly not able to speak Gonja. Comprehension scores averaged 26% with Manfuli excluded.	
Linguistically Related Languages	GONJA	
Linguistically Related Languages	GONJA	
Linguistically Related Languages	DAGAARI, SOUTHERN	
Linguistically Related Languages	VAGLA	
Linguistically Related Languages	VAGLA	
Linguistically Related Languages	WALI	
Linguistically Related Languages	WALI	
Linguistically Related Languages	DAGAARI, SOUTHERN	
Comments (Related Languages)	Comprehension testing produced an average score of 47% among 45 subjects. However the scores obtained in Manfuli were much higher than those in the other villages. This high average of Gonja comprehension in Manfuli is said to be linked with the activities in and around the shrine. People living in other Safaliba villages are reportedly not able to speak Gonja. Comprehension scores averaged 26% with Manfuli excluded.	
Neighboring Languages	DAGAARI, SOUTHERN	
Neighboring Languages	WALI	
Neighboring Languages	GONJA	
Neighboring Languages	VAGLA	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	9%	
Literacy Attitude	Very receptive	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Comment (Literacy)	An active program is available in Gonja. 9% of the subjects from two villages interviewed by the survey team in October 1995 reported the ability to read in Gonja, the language of primary instruction in the area.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Occupation	Farming, weaving, carving, making pottery and baskets, spinning	
Income Sources	Proceeds from above	
Products / Crafts	Sheabutter, yams, cassava, millet, corn ground nuts, cashews, baskets, cloth, pottery, carvings, yarn	
Trade Partners	Akans, Northerners	
Modernization / Utilities	Grinding mills	
Community Development		Group Description
Health Care (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Health Care)	There is a government hospital in Bole, none in the Safaliba area	
Diet (Quality)	Poor	
Comment (Diet)	Fufu, ocrá, cassava leaves, tomatoes, onions, pepper, forest fruits, fish and meat are scarce	
Water (Quality)	Poor	

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Item Name	Item Note
Comment (Water)	The Safaliba have water problems in dry season. Two boreholes exist in Mandari; the other three villages have one each.
Shelter Description	Flat roofed rectangular mud houses with intricate relief designs on mud walls. The houses are supported on the inside with wood beams. A log with steps is used to gain access to the roof. Several houses are joined together to form a compound and create a walled-in impression. The thick mud walls provide good insulation, but there is little ventilation due to lack of windows. More than twenty persons will live in one compound.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	None
Comment (Energy)	Wood, kerosene, shea butter
Clothing	"Ghanaian standard": western second hand clothing, Ghanaian cloth.
Transportation	By foot or bicycle to Bole, from there public transport
Infant Mortality Rate	5%
Life Expectancy	50 years or older
Leading Cause Of Death	Old age, malaria
Comment (Community Development)	The proximity of the Black Volta provides an abundance of mosquitoes and other biting insects.

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures	Patrilinear
Neighbor Relations	Friendly
Authority / Rule	Under Gonja rule. Safaliba chiefs in Mandari (leader), Gbenfu, Manful, Tampe.
Social Habits/Groupings	Fire festival in May, Sonyo (in honor of a god called Sonyo) festival in April, funerals
Cultural Change Pace	Rapid
Identification With National Culture	Integrated
Self Image	Prestigious
Judicial / Punishment System	The Safaliba chiefs judge matters appertaining to their own people.
Recreations	Sitting and talking, storytelling, drumming, dancing
Art Forms	Drumming, dancing, poems, proverbs, weaving, carving, pottery, spinning, basket weaving
Local Language Broadcasting	None
Attitude To Outsiders	Very receptive
Attitude To Change	Somewhat receptive

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Farming, helping around the house
Youth Problems (Teens)	No jobs, no higher education (SSS in Bole), no vocational schools, alcoholism, teenage pregnancies
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Jobs, perspective

Education

Group Description

Primary Schools	2
Primary School Enrollment	400
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	50%
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	35
Language Of Instruction Early Years	Gonja
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	English
Language Of Instruction Later Years	English
Language Of Textbooks Later Years	English
Number Of Schools > 90% Homogeneous	2

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Item Name

Comment (Education)

Item Note

Mediums of instruction in early primary school: Gonja and Safaliba.
Enrollment in Mandari is one-hundred and thirty five students, so the estimate of four-hundred enrolled in the two schools might be a bit high. The figure came from the headmaster of the primary school in Mandari.

There is a Junior Secondary School in Mandari. Enrollment is unknown. The closest Senior Secondary School is in Bole. In October 1995 there were eleven students from the Safaliba area there, eight from Mandari, three from Gbenfu.

Church Growth

Reached Status

Selected

Lay Leaders

1

Status of Christianity

Religion & Response

Religious Practices & Ceremonies

Fire and Sonyo festivals, Muslim festivals, Christian festivals

Attitude To Christianity

Very receptive

Attitude To Religious Change

Very receptive

Resistance / Receptivity

The churches are growing in all age groups

Spiritual Climate And Openness

A well-known shrine in Manfuli is said to have the power to cure infertility. The presence of this shrine suggests that the area is a stronghold for animism. Apparently, up to the late 1970's, the Safaliba had no contact with Christianity. It seems that no church existed among them until then, and perhaps very few or no evangelists at all. Regarding the presence of Islam in the area, there are no reports. This situation has changed, however, over the last six years. Islam has taken root in Bole, the next major town, and there are two mosques in Mandari and Gbenfu. There is also a small Christian presence with three churches in the area: a Roman Catholic and an Assemblies of God church in Mandari and a Christ Appointed Church in Gbenfu. Christians are in the minority, but according to the headmaster of the primary school in Mandari the Safaliba are very open to Christianity. Churches are growing, and all age groups are involved. People were welcoming and very helpful to the GIL surveyors.

Comment (Religion)

13% of the subjects (from two villages interviewed by the survey team in October 1995) reported belief in Christianity; however, the overall percentage must be smaller. One village, that was not part of the sample, has no church at all.

Recommended Approaches

Bible translation, preaching and teaching, community development

Current Needs

Educational and professional opportunities. Community development. Preachers, teachers and evangelists.

Items For Prayer

That the current openness to Christianity might be maintained and strengthened. That a language project with Bible translation might start soon. That better roads and infrastructures might be built.

History Of Christianity In Group

Year Began

1978

By Whom

Roman Catholic Church

Significant Events

The Catholics came to preach and to found churches, but there are no church buildings up to this day.
GIL's first contact with the Safaliba dates back to 1979.

Status of Christianity

Scripture

Translation Status

Definite

Available Scripture

None

Comment (Scripture)

The Roman Catholic catechist in Mandari reports personal attempts to translate Scripture portions and parts of the liturgy (the Creed, the Rosary and the Lord's Prayer) into Safaliba; otherwise, nothing is available.

Status of Christianity

Missions and Churches

Organization Name

Assemblies of God

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Number Of Adherents

85

Status of Christianity

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Item Name	Item Note
Organization Name	Roman Catholic Church
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Year Started	1978
Number Of Adherents	150
Organization Name	Methodist
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Number Of Adherents	50
Organization Name	Presbyterian
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Main Ministry	Church Planting
Number Of Adherents	50

Christian Literature And Media Status

Literature Available	none
Audio Recordings Available	none
Films Available	none
Radio Programs Available	none
Videos Available	none
Audio Visual Available	none

Status of Christianity