

The Gyele of Cameroon

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The Bagyele people are hunter-gatherers who live in the Bagyele forest on the southern coast of Cameroon. The forest covers some 12,000 square kilometers and there are between 10 and 40 people per square kilometer. The Bagyele are organized into clans and are becoming more sedentary as they begin to practice agriculture. Traditionally, they believe in one supreme god but they also give prominence to spirits who protect and help with the hunt. Many now earn cash by serving as traditional healers for other groups around them.

They say, "We are the masters of the forest and we were the first to open the road through the forest to the ocean for the other peoples who followed behind us". But, their knowledge of the forest is not the only trait that brings them pride. They are also known for their storytelling, dance, and expertise in hunting. Gathered around the fire at night one might hear this story of the Bagyele:

Once there were three men who went into the forest to hunt. One carried some meat to eat, one had some cassava wrapped in leaves, and one had a dog. After going some distance, they stopped to eat. The man with the cassava offered to share with the man who had some meat to add variety to his meal. The two sat and ate. The man with the dog just sat by and watched. After the men finished eating, they threw the leaves that had wrapped their meal into the forest. The dog, attracted by the lingering smell, went to lick the leaves. There the dog found a treasure and barked to warn his master of his find. Thus began a big argument - to whom did the treasure belong? The man with the meat insisted it was his - it was the smell of the meat that attracted the dog to the treasure. The man with the cassava insisted it should be his - it was his leaf that the dog licked when he found the treasure. Of course, the owner of the dog thought it should be his; after all, it was his dog that found it. There the story ended - no result was told.

Primary Religion:

Tribal Religion

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

Churches:

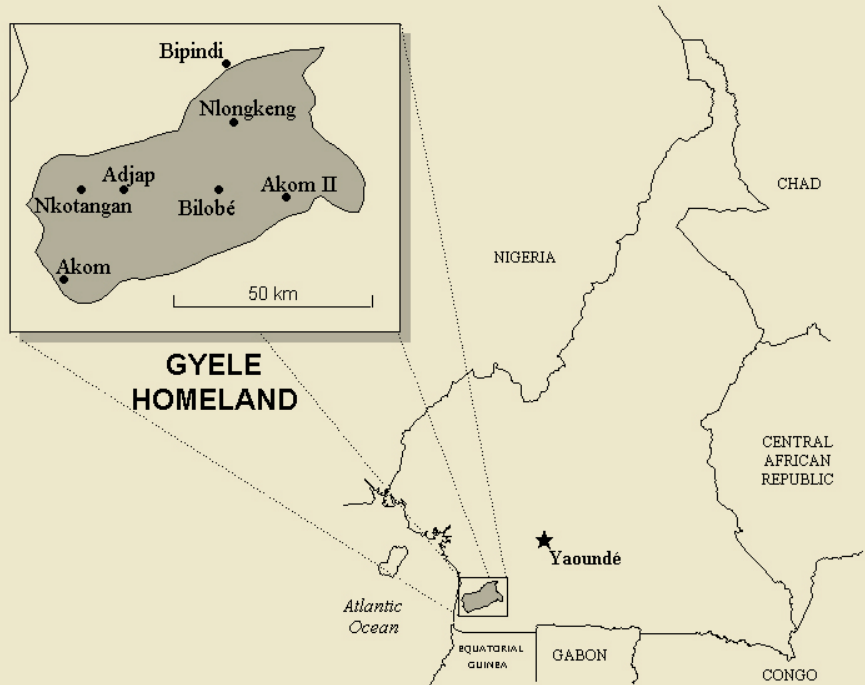
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Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Only portions available

Population (date):

4,000



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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	5%	
Believe Jesus Is A Myth (%)	95%	
Number Of Missionaries Working	4	
Comment (Number Of Missionaries)	4 missionaries based on missionary ratio of 1:1,000 and population of 4,000	
Number Of Churches	15	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Gospel of Mark	
Translation Medium	Print	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Illiteracy, nomadic lifestyle	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	One catholic prayer book	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Bible translation, literacy, church planting	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	4000	
World Population (Urban Percent)	40	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Cameroon	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	South Province	
Country	Cameroon	
Ecosystem Type	Tropical Forest	
Geological Type	Coastal	
Elevation	0-100 meters	
Longitude	9.5	
Latitude	2.4	
Climate	Tropical and humid with four seasons: 2 rainy and 2 dry. Rainfall reported to be 4000 mm annually.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Alternate Language Names	Giele, Gieli, Gyeli, Bagyele, Bajeli, Bajele, Bogyeli, Bogyel, Bondjeil, Bondjiel, Bako, Bekoe, Bakola, Bakuele, Babinga.	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	BULU	
Linguistically Related Languages	NGUMBA	
Comments (Related Languages)	Kuassio	
Neighboring Languages	BULU	
Literacy		Group Description
Active Literacy Program	No	
Comment (Literacy)	A literacy program is badly needed. They have publications in the Gospel of Mark, Catholic Prayer Book, and one literacy book.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Hunter-gatherers	
Average Annual Income	Men make 52,000 CFA	
Occupation	Hunters, gatherers 6%; Hunter-collectors who practice agriculture 38%; Farmers who also practice hunting and gathering 35%; Farmers who also practice hunting 21%.	
Income Sources	Sale of game and honey. Service of traditional healers.	

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Item Name	Item Note
Products / Crafts	Wooden mortars, cork honey containers, coal sacks made from gorilla skins.
Trade Partners	Bulu, Ngumba (those with whom they have friends or family)
Modernization / Utilities	None

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)	Poor
Comment (Health Care)	Brethren Assembly has primary its health care center at Akom II. Catholics have a health center at Ngovayong.
Diet (Quality)	Fair
Shelter Description	Rectangular mud houses are replacing the leaf or palm frond houses, especially among those who are becoming more sedentary.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	None
Clothing	Fair
Transportation	Walking

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures	Patrilineal. Children belong to the clan of the father on the father's death. Sons inherit fixed properties and the girls some of the furnishings or movable goods. There is a tendency to a matrilineal society because of the power exercised by the women in the home. Bride price is virtually unknown.
Neighbor Relations	They suffer from discrimination because of their size. Their neighbours include the Ngoumba, Ewondo, Bulu, Fang, Batanga, Mvae and Bassa peoples.
Authority / Rule	Power is based on a consensus and not a dictatorship. The head of any settlement is the head of the family that lives there. Modernization has brought the apparent practice of administrative chiefs.
Social Habits/Groupings	The family is the primary grouping, then the line of that family within the clan, then the sub-clan, and lastly the clan. Social organization is polynuclear, multicentered.
Cultural Change Pace	Static
Identification With National Culture	Distinct
Celebrations	Funerals
Recreations	Dance and soccer
Art Forms	Music (accompanied by hand clapping, playing of drums of hollow wooden logs), dance, story telling.
Attitude To Outsiders	Somewhat resistant
Attitude To Change	Somewhat resistant
Comment (Culture)	They are resistant to the sedentation being imposed on them by the disappearance of the forest.

Education

Group Description

Language Of Instruction Early Years	French
Language Of Textbooks Early Years	French
Comment (Education)	Bipindi has a Catholic school. Mission Chretienne (Christian Mission) runs a preschool at Akom II. The preschool began for Bagyele only, but now it includes other peoples. The French Cooperation has a school at Bodi. About 29% of all children ages 6-15 are enrolled in primary school. No secondary school exists among them.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Christian Clinics/Hospitals	2
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Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies	The Bagyele believe in a unique god known as Nzambe, creator of all that exists. At death, the spirit of man goes to the land of the god. Various spirits called Minfoura, who have an intermediary in each camp, inhabit their religious world. These spirits govern the daily life of the Bagyele. Diviners and healers also play an important part in traditional beliefs.
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Item Name

Attitude To Christianity

Item Note

Somewhat receptive

Religious Analogies & Bridges

The Bagyele believe in a unique, Creator God.

Current Needs

Bible Translation, literacy, church planting

Items For Prayer

Catholic sisters request prayer for literacy work. The Presbyterian pastor asks for prayers that volunteers would visit for at least one month to encourage their believers. The Center for Volunteer Missionaries request prayer for someone to come who would really love the Bagyele and teach them. Pray that they will soon have their own church and their own pastors.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

52

By Whom

Roman Catholic Church

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

Portions

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Roman Catholic Church

Main Ministry

Literacy

Year Started

970

Number Of Expatriate Workers

4

Number Of National Workers

2

Christian Literature And Media Status

Status of Christianity

Literature Available

Gospel of Mark.

Audio Recordings Available

None

Films Available

None

Radio Programs Available

None