

The Burji of Kenya & Ethiopia

The Burji people originate from the western fringe of the Rift Valley of South Ethiopia. They are culturally divided into a northern and a southern group, who both live on the slope of the Amarro mountain range, and in the valley of lake Ciamo. In former times, their area has been very fertile, regularly terraced, and densely populated.

The cultural setup was very strict, regarding generation cycles, obligations in the terrace agriculture, rules, laws, and taboos. It is a striking feature of the Burji people that in their communities everything (including domestic, social, political and religious life) was strictly structured, ordered and planned.

This has now changed through various influences. Today, a large number of Burjis have settled along the road to Kenya, and many have gained important positions in these settlements. The larger number, around 20,000, live in or around Marsabet, Kenya. Due to various wars with neighboring groups, people of the original Burji area, many of them conversant in Burji only, have also scattered within Ethiopia.

The majority of those of the northern group are Muslim. Christianity was brought to the area by SIM in 1960. A strong church was established. The mission also set up a school and a clinic. A Bible school was founded later, to meet the needs of the then twenty churches.

The Burji translation project began in 1978, and by 1993, the New Testament was nearing completion. It is hoped that this will bring a fresh vitality to the church, as the Christians receive the "instruction and spiritual food" that the elders stated was needed when the translation work first began.

*Image
Unavailable*

Primary Religion:

Christian

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

Churches:

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

NT almost completed

Population (date):

60,000 (1991)



Map Unavailable

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Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Is The Word Of God Translated?	In Burji	
Translation Medium	New Testament.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	60000	
World Population (Date)	1991	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Kenya	
Country Name	Ethiopia	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	They were divided into a northern and a southern group, who both lived on the slope of the Amarro mountain range, and in the valley of Lake Ciamo. Now though, many are scattered along the road to Kenya, south of Agere Maryam, down even to Nairobi. The largest number (20,000), live in or around Marsabet.	
Country	Kenya	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	Projects to facilitate development projects in the traditional Burji area have brought about resettlement of some of the villages in the fertile valleys. However, the "mother villages" of the Burji people, in the hills, are now largely abandoned and are disintegrating.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Comment (Language)	Those living in the traditional Burji area (approx 15,000), remain conversant in Burji only, according to recent research. Those living in or around Marsabet are mostly fully bi- or trilingual.	
Alternate Language Names	Bambala, Bembala, Burjinya, Daash.	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	KOMSO	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	ENGLISH	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	OROMO, BORANA-ARSI-GUJI	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	ENGLISH	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	AMHARIC	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	KOMSO	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	OROMO, BORANA-ARSI-GUJI	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	AMHARIC	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	Use is widespread (also called "Guji"). Eastern Burji speakers may also speak Amaro. There are no Burji monolinguals in Northern Kenya.	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	In western Burji, mainly.	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	All educated Burji speakers speak English.	
Linguistically Related Languages	SIDAMO	
Linguistically Related Languages	SIDAMO	
Comments (Related Languages)	41% lexical similarity.	
Economics		Group Description
Occupation	Traditionally terrace agriculture, although many have now moved to the area between Agere-Mariam and Addis Ababa. Many of the young male migrants have become leaders in various professions.	

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Item Name	Item Note	
Modernization / Utilities	Various Burji committees have been created over recent years to initiate and support the development of the traditional Burji area. The results include the newly - constructed Arba - Minch - Burji - Soyama road, the successful reforestation of some areas, and the resettlement of some villages in fertile valleys.	
Comment (Economy)	The inhabitants of the "12 mother villages" of the traditional Burji area have now been resettled to the lowlands to the east of this area. The farmers, as a result, are now closer to the farming areas.	
Community Development		Group Description
Comment (Water)	Locally planned development projects underway (Aug, 1990.)	
Shelter Description	As the original village centers were abandoned, the traditional two-story style of house has also been abandoned. In the villages around Soyama, a survey in August 1990 found there not to be even one Burji house of the rich "ollattee" style.	
Transportation	NB: Many Burji now live in urban areas. Projects of road construction, planned and carried out by Burji citizens, were observed to be underway in August 1990.	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	Traditionally very strict cultural set up, with rigid generation cycles, obligations in the terrace agriculture, rules, laws and taboos. Everything in their communities was strictly structured, ordered and planned. This comprises all areas of life (domestic, social, political and religious.)	
Authority / Rule	Traditionally very structured.	
Youth		Group Description
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Traditionally obliged to participate in terrace agriculture.	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Reached Status	Reached	
Bible Schools	1	
Christian Clinics/Hospitals	1	
Comment (Church Growth)	The Christians have divided into 2 main groups: Those who attend the Word Of Life Church (mainly those traditionally from the southern group), and those who attend "Mekane Yesus", a church offering various aid projects and opportunities to the younger generation.	
Religion & Response		Status of Christianity
Comment (Religion)	The majority of those from the northern group of the traditional Burji area are Muslim.	
Recommended Approaches	Currently, evangelism is being activated in the framework of development projects.	
Items For Prayer	That the Burji translation will play a role in giving fresh vitality to the Church.	
History Of Christianity In Group		Status of Christianity
Year Began	1960	
By Whom	SIM International	
Significant Events	South Ethiopia Synod of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus funded the translator, Ato Salle in 1978. In 1979, they agreed to fund a second translator.	
Comments (History of Christianity)	A strong Church grew as a result, especially among those Burji traditionally from the southern group of Burji. The Church was the "Word of Life" Church. The mission set up a clinic, and also a 4th grade school, which was later extended to lead up to the 6th grade. A Bible school was founded later, to care for the needs of the then 20 Churches.	
Scripture		Status of Christianity
Translation Status	In Progress	
Available Scripture	New Testament	
Comment (Scripture)	Burji NT was nearing completion when the team report was written (April, 1993.)	
Missions and Churches		Status of Christianity

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Item Name

Organization Name

Main Ministry

Year Started

Item Note

SIM International

Church Planting

1960

Christian Literature And Media Status

Literature Available

Songs, Readers and Bible background booklets have been translated by Ato Debbete Saafe, the co-translator.

Status of Christianity