



The Giriyama of Kenya

The Giriyama, also called Giriama or Agiryama are one of the nine coastal tribes known as Mijikenda. They are the largest of the Mijikenda tribes and inhabit a large portion of the Kilifi District, which is to the north of the other Mijikenda tribes.

These nine tribes share a common history with many similar traditions, dialects, and common economic pursuits. The Giriyama maintain a close relationship with the smaller Mijikenda tribes with whom they mix freely and intermarry. They also associate closely with the small group of Sanye who live scattered along the Western edge of the Giriyama in the Sabaki River area.

The Giriyama economy was traditionally a subsistence economy based on agriculture. Expansion of the economy began in the 18th century, when the Giriyama started trading some of their foodstuffs for non-subsistence goods and livestock.

The Giriyama practice many traditional customs and rituals at the family level, particularly related to the events of births, marriages, death, planting and harvesting. Some of these events are marked by dancing and feasting.

Although Islam and Christianity have won some followers among the Giriyama, the majority of the people continue to practice their traditional religion. Their religion is an integral part of their worldview and traditional customs are dominated by their regard for the spirit world.

Primary Religion:

Tribal Religion

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

25 - 30%

Churches:

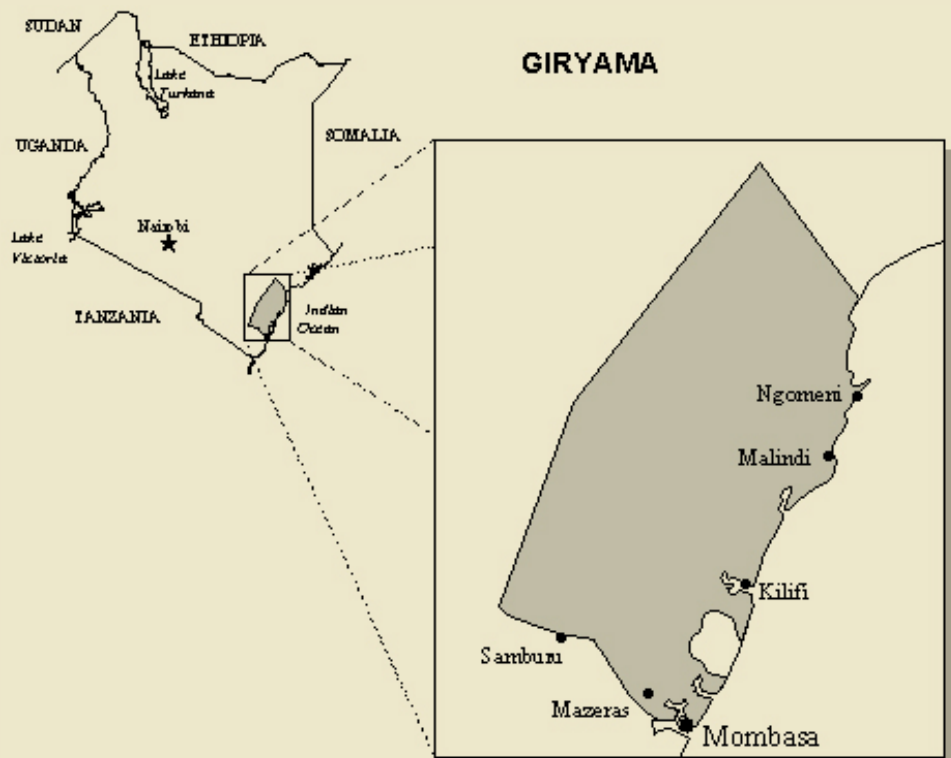
430

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Bible

Population (date):

672,000



The Giryama of Kenya

Item Name	Item Note	
Have They Heard The Gospel?		Profile Summary
Call Themselves Christian (%)	25 - 30%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	25 - 30%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	.5%	
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	100%	
Number Of Churches	430	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	Yes, there was a literal translation of the Old Testament in 1901. The books of Romans through Revelation were published in 1908 and the first new Testament became available in 1924. A revised edition of the New Testament and Psalms was published in 1951 and reprinted in 1979.	
Translation Medium	New Testament	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Of the 60% literacy rate, adults comprise only 14% and children 46%.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	There is a Jesus film in Giryama.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	Yes, there is a need to make a careful study of the Giryama culture and religion as practiced today. New insights could be obtained from such a study, which would allow the Gospel to be communicated more effectively among the Giryama.	
Population All Countries		Group Description
World Population For This People	672,000	
Countries Where People Group Lives		Group Description
Country Name	Kenya	
Geography & Environment		Group Description
Location	North of Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwali District, Coast Province	
Country	Kenya	
Geological Type	Coastal	
Elevation	0-1200 feet	
Climate	Rainfall varies throughout the area from 25 inches to 40 inches per year with increasing rainfall towards the coast.	
Comments (Geography & Environment)	The Giryama live throughout the eastern half of Kilifi District with the exception of the dry northern portion.	
Language & Linguistics		Group Description
Alternate Language Names	Giriama, Agiryama, Kigiryama, Nika, Nyika, Kinyika	
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	SWAHILI	
Comments (Related Languages)	The Giryama use Swahili as a second language and most men and some women are fluent in its use.	
Neighboring Languages	DURUMA	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	60%	
Literacy Attitude	Indifferent	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Comment (Literacy)	60% literacy rate; adults comprise only 14% and children 46%.	
Economics		Group Description
Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists	
Occupation	Historically farmers and traders; The Giryama grew a variety of crops and fruits and kept livestock. Much of their economy was based on trade.	

The Giriyama of Kenya

Item Name

Item Note

Income Sources

Adapting to the tourist market, the Giriyama developed successful commercial farms and supplied coast hotels. They also moved into livestock breeding with co-operative ranching. Copra has also become a principle money earner and cashews are being raised for a locally run processing plant near Kilifi.

Products / Crafts

Wood carving and boat building

Trade Partners

The Giriyama started trading some of their foodstuffs for non-subsistence goods and livestock. This kind of trade enabled the Giriyama to acquire items which they could not produce themselves. Trading takes place between other tribes.

Community Development

Group Description

Health Care (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Health Care)

No information was available about health care facilities among the Giriyama. It is likely that facilities are provided by the government in the more densely populated areas. There were only one or two church operated dispensaries identified in this area.

Diet (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Diet)

Major crops are maize, millet, beans, sorghum, pulses, and rice. Other crops include, cassava, bananas, mangoes, and oranges. Some Giriyama also raise goats and cattle, though the later have never been very successful.

Water (Quality)

Fair

Comment (Water)

Water is supplied by community water wells.

Shelter Description

The Giriyama live in loaf-shaped, intricate houses, that are rectangular in shape. The roofs are thatched with makuti.

Comment (Energy)

No information was provided about the energy uses of the Giriyama.

Clothing

Different forms of emblems, dress and decoration signify membership of each particular secret society.

Transportation

No information on transportation was available on the Giriyama.

Comment (Community Development)

Among the ritual practitioners are the medicine men and the diviners. The medicine men are usually respectable and influential homestead heads whose duty is to diagnose and provide cures for a variety of problems.

Society & Culture

Group Description

Family Structures

The "kaya", the central residential village is divided into clans and sub-clans. The Giriyama continue to live in homesteads which are scattered throughout the area. Each head of a homestead has certain responsibilities pertaining to the social, physical, and religious welfare of his lineage.

Neighbor Relations

The Giriyama have their closest relationship with the smaller Mijikenda tribes with whom they mix freely and intermarry. The Giriyama also maintain a close association with the small group of Sanye who live scattered along the Western edge of the Giriyama in the Sabaki River area.

Authority / Rule

Historically, the clans formed the basis for social organization. Each clan had its own council of elders that acted as the central government and dealt with all social, political, and civil matters. Elders' authority was unanimously accepted. Under the elders were prophet and prophetesses who dealt with all religious and ritual matters.

Social Habits/Groupings

Abandonment of the "kaya" brought about significant changes in the traditional Giriyama society. As the people scattered from the "kaya", they settled in individual homesteads. This basically altered the corporate lifestyle of the people. Individualism has taken on a new significance.

Cultural Change Pace

Slow

Identification With National Culture

Integrated

Self Image

Prestigious

Judicial / Punishment System

Elders control over the community resources was also unquestioned. Their authority in this regard included control over land, bridewealth, and trade. Rights over the land were not imparted to the younger men until after the death of their father. The right to marry was only acquired when a young man was given bridewealth by his father.

Celebrations

The Giriyama continue to practice many traditional customs and rituals at the family level, particularly related to the events of birth, marriage, death, planting and harvesting. Some of these events are marked by dancing and feasting.

Recreations

The Giriyama are extremely fond of dancing and music.

Art Forms

Art is in the form of dancing and music.

The Giriyama of Kenya

Item Name

Attitude To Outsiders

Item Note

Somewhat resistant

Attitude To Change

Somewhat resistant

Comment (Culture)

Traditional customs and beliefs have been continued on a sub-clan level and are passed down within the family. Perhaps it is this strong tie between the family and the traditional customs which allowed the Giriyama to resist modernizing changes which came to many other peoples of Kenya over this same period. Today, the Giriyama are slow to accept changes in their traditional pattern of life.

Youth

Group Description

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)

Youth of both genders contribute to the maintenance of economic and family structure. Males assist in agricultural work and females help with nurturing the family and domestic chores.

Youth Problems (Teens)

Traditional beliefs keep the Giriyama from new ideas. Christianity may appear to be a threat to their culture.

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)

Maintaining their culture, yet incorporating progress in areas like education and Christianity.

Education

Group Description

Language Of Instruction Early Years

Swahili (specific)

Language Of Textbooks Early Years

Swahili (specific)

Comment (Education)

It is assumed that adequate educational facilities are being provided by the government in most towns and trading centers. The overall educational level of the Giriyama is quite low due to their traditional reluctance to embrace new ideas and institutions.

Church Growth

Status of Christianity

Comment (Church Growth)

Although Islam and Christianity have won some followers among the Giriyama, the majority of the people continue to practice their traditional religion with its ritual practices. There are about 4% Muslims, 14% Christian and 82% traditionalist.

Religion & Response

Status of Christianity

Religious Practices & Ceremonies

Many of their rituals at important events have great spiritual significance. They hold ancestral spirits in high regard and try to keep them happy so no misfortunes come upon the living, but they do not worship the ancestral spirits. Witchcraft and sorcery are very much a part of their daily life and appropriate action must be taken to counteract bewitching or to obtain protection from evil spirits.

Attitude To Christianity

Somewhat resistant

Attitude To Religious Change

Somewhat resistant

Resistance / Receptivity

As mentioned before, the strong traditional beliefs of the Giriyama have prevented the acceptance of the Gospel. Also, the Giriyama traditional religion is so integrated with family rituals that any idea of religious change is seen as a threat to the family, the basic unity of Giriyama society.

Spiritual Climate And Openness

Somewhat resistant to changes due to the importance of traditional culture.

Recommended Approaches

Since high numbers of Giriyama practice tribal religion, those working among them should be aware and knowledgeable of the traditions so that evangelism can be more effective. It would also be beneficial for missionaries to work with local Christians so there will be unity on a national and local level.

Current Needs

1. There is a need for a more complete and detailed study of the Church among the Giriyama. A detailed study could reveal more about the Giriyama church and offer concrete suggestions for strengthening and expanding the church.
2. There is a need to make a careful study of the Giriyama culture and religion as practiced today. New insights could be obtained which would allow the Gospel to be communicated more effectively among the Giriyama.
3. Assistance is particularly needed in the area of literacy.

Items For Prayer

1. Pray that Scripture will be made available in the Giriyama language.
2. Pray for a sense of openness among the entire populace of Giriyama to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Pray that the staff will be able to accomplish their planned activities.

History Of Christianity In Group

Status of Christianity

Year Began

1850

By Whom

Anglican

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Item Name

Comments (History of Christianity)

Item Note

The first Christian martyr in East Africa was a Giryama teacher who was killed by Arabs in 1883. There was little interest in Christianity among the Giryama and only small numbers became Christians at that time. In recent years, the Giryama have begun to be more open to the Gospel and more people are turning to Christ.

Scripture

Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

New Testament

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed

Scripture Use

Unknown

Comment (Scripture)

Gospel portions were first published in Kigiriama in 1892, 1893, 1899, and 1901. Romans through Revelation was published in 1908 and the first New Testament became available in 1924. A revised edition of the New Testament and Psalms was published in Kigiryama in 1951 and reprinted in 1979. No translation has yet been done on the rest of the Old Testament, but planning is taking place.

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Literature

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Recordings

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Film/Videos

Yes

Other Forms Of Gospel Available: Radio

No

Missions and Churches

Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Anglican

Organization Name

Bible Translation and Literacy

Main Ministry

Bible Translation

Year Started

1989

Number Of Local Workers

4

Number Of Workers Using Local Language

4