

The Gavar of Cameroon



When the sun peeks between the hills of Cameroon’s “Far North,” Gavar speakers leave the huts that provide shelter for sleeping and storage for their few material goods. They spend most of their day outside, and in the cooler rainy season, field work is always waiting. Using familiar hand tools, they must harvest the vegetables and staples that will feed their families throughout the rest of the year.

A field plowed early in the season behind a donkey or a cow yields a little cotton the family can market for essential cash. Soon enough, temperatures of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit will shrivel whatever vegetation is left in this sub-Saharan Sahel Desert.

Over several centuries, the Gavar people have continually resisted waves of invasion pressing them to convert to another major religion. Into the backdrop of African traditional religion, Christians from other parts of Cameroon brought the Gospel to this area in the 1970s. Concurrently, government schools and health clinics are opened. Many Gavar speakers have become Christians, but churches use the majority language, also spoken by their aggressive neighbors who don’t share their religion.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28:19):

1.8%

Churches:

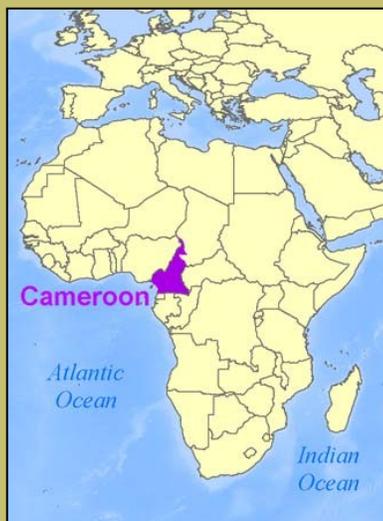
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Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):

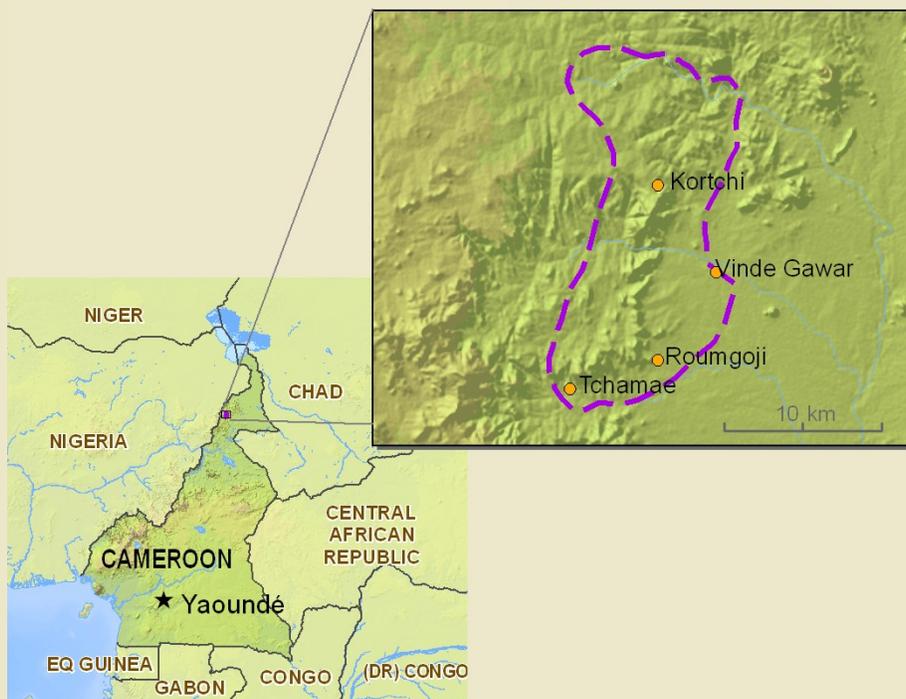
None

Population (date):

7,000 (2001)



GAVAR HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Call Themselves Christian	1.8 %
Is The Word of God Translated?	Translate and record Jonah or Ruth in progress. This mother tongue translation of Scripture will demonstrate that God specifically loves the Gavar people and highly values their language and culture. It could also create hunger among them for more of God's Word.
Hindrances to Scripture Distribution	Remoteness of this language community consists of villages or neighborhoods spread out over a plain.
Other Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available	Audio Gospel Recordings. Audio recording of the gospel of Luke is in progress (2014).

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Group Description

Geography and Environment

Location Far North Province. South of Mokolo, which is a major town near Nigeria and due west of Cameroon's Far North Province capitol, Maroua.

Climate

Hot and dry

Comment

The Gavar live in a region that consists of several neighborhoods spread out over a wide area/plain. Roads are basically foot paths through open fields or crops.

Language/Linguistics

Comment

Almost all Gavar speakers use some Fulfulde at markets. They have limited comprehension of Buwal

Attitude Towards Mother Tongue

Somewhat receptive

Comment

Residents from both Gadala (Buwal's main village) and Kortchi (Gavar's main village) state that their residents understand the other's speech. Speakers of each language use their own Mother Tongue to be understood by the other.

Literacy

Adult Literacy

10%

Literacy Attitude

Somewhat receptive

Economics

Subsistence Type

Agriculture

Comment

Subsistence farmers

Trade Partners

Primarily with Buwal speakers.

Community Development

Shelter

Mud brick house; thatched roof

Society & Culture

Neighbor Relations

Relations are especially good with the neighboring Buwal language community. Buwal and Gavar speech varieties are next to each other, and their proximity fosters regular contact at several markets in the area. The two groups intermarry. Research of 1992 indicated no negative attitudes of speakers of either Buwal or Gavar towards speakers of neighboring language groups, and observation also confirmed during our 2000 field research. There is however, a greater hesitation on the part of Buwal speakers, base in Gadala, about learning Gavar.

Authority/Rule

One chief over each village

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Cultural Change Pace

Slow

Attitude to Outsiders

Somewhat receptive

Attitude to Change

Somewhat receptive

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Status of Christianity

Church Growth

Number of Missionaries Working

0

Comment

Total number of Christian groups: 700 Christian organizations present: Roman Catholic, Union of Evangelical Churches of Cameroon, Union of Baptist Churches of Cameroon.

Number of Communities

Greater than 5

Comment

The groups include Gavar Houssere and Gavar Fulbe. Bilingualism in Fulfulde language is sufficient for use at markets where speakers of other languages come, but it is inadequate for in-depth communication. The low level of competence in French corresponds to the low level of education; French is the language of education in Cameroon's Far North Province.

Religion / Response

Religious Practices and Ceremonies

Buwal and Gavar speakers share common traditions and culture.

Scripture

Translation Status

Possible

Comment

Some might do an oral interpretation from the Fulfulde Bible

Mission/Churches

Organization

Roman Catholic Church

Organization

Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameround