

## 1. Description

### 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

*-Baka, Baka, Niger-Congo (1)*

*-Alternate Names: Babinga, Bebayaga, Bebayaka, Bibaya, de L'est, Pygmee, Pygmees, Pygmy-E (1)*

### 1.2 ISO code:

*-ISO 639-3: bkc*

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

*-Southeastern Cameroon 3.55/14.40*

### 1.4 Brief history:

*-There is little information on the history of the Baka, but their origins are believed to have come from central Africa. The Baka are hunter-gatherers from the central African rainforest. They mainly live in South-Eastern Cameroon, but a few also live in Congo and Gabon. Sometimes referred to as Pygmies, they are generally shorter than their Bantu neighbors, but are experts in forest life. They are renowned throughout Africa for their hunting, musical and dancing skills. (2)*

### 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

*-The Baka people have had little contact with missionaries. This shows with the major language of the Baka people being their ethnic religions. 70% of the Baka population still practice their ethnic religions and only 30% are Christian. (3)*

### 1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

*-They live in a tropical rainforest environment. The climate is wet and tropical, and the flora and fauna include multiple diverse species of plant and animal life. (4)*

### 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

*-The total population size of the Baka is estimated to be around 50,000. The Baka live in nomadic bands of 20 to 35 people. They have permanent villages but for most of the year they roam the forests. (3)*

## 2. Economy

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

*-Wild Yams, wild fruits, wild nuts, mushrooms, cassava, plantain, taro, okra, maize, and honey. (4,7)*

### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

*-Wild game, fish, and insects. (4)*

### 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

*-Bow and arrow, crossbows, and spears. (4)*

### 2.4 Food storage:

*-The Baka switch their collection of major food sources with the changing cycles of the forest. (5)*

### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

*-Men are responsible for hunting and trapping and women are responsible for rearing children, gathering foods, fishing, and building huts. (5,6)*

2.6 Land tenure:

*-There are no land boundaries since the Baka are nomadic. They roam the forests and constantly move.*

2.7 Ceramics:

*-None addressed*

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

*-Everything is shared between families in a band. (4) The Baka often trade with their Bantu neighbors for agricultural products. (5)*

2.9 Food taboos:

*-None addressed*

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

*-None addressed*

### **3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

*-Male: 1.54m, Female: 1.46m (7)*

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

*-Male: 49.6kg, Female: 44.4kg (7)*

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f): *10-12 years old*

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): *None addressed*

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): *6-10 (8)*

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): *3 years (8)*

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): *None addressed*

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: *None addressed*

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: *Most males are polygynous. (3)*

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: *Males will compensate in-laws by living with them and working for them. (8)*

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: *Females raise the young but fathers have a responsibility for passing on traditions. (5)*

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: *None addressed*

- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): *The Baka practice exogamous marriage. (8)*
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? *A single male is recognized to be a child's father. (8)*
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? *None addressed*
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? *None addressed*
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: *There is little documentation on violence against women but more than likely there is some.*
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): *“Marry Far” Preference on marrying people outside of ones group or band. (8)*
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? *None addressed*
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: *None addressed*
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? *Grandmother (8)*
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: *None addressed*
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: *None addressed*
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) *None addressed*
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? *Older males are the most respected but respect is given to those older still. (3)*
- 4.24 Joking relationships? *None addressed*
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: *Patrilineal (9)*
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: *Unclear about incest avoidance rules but since the Baka are exogamous they probably have rules against incest.*
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? *There are no formal marriage ceremonies, but men usually contract their marriages during the crucial hunting seasons. (5)*
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? *The Baka have five family names each. (10)*
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) *:Males usually marry outside of the community. (8)*
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? *Marriages are not arranged but they are contracted. Daughters and sisters are given based on the males ability to hunt. (5)*
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: *None addressed*

## **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: *None addressed*
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: *None addressed*
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: *Conflict of Bantu neighbors seeing the Baka as inferior and in some cases their property. (10)*
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): *The Baka share trade relations with their Bantu neighbors but they are seen as inferior to the Bantu. To marry a Bantu woman a Baka male has to pay a dowry ten times that of a Baka dowry, but if a Bantu man marries a Baka woman she and her children automatically have higher social status. (10)*
- 4.18 Cannibalism? *None addressed*

## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: *20 to 35 people in a band (3)*
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): *The Baka live in the main village for only about three months during the heavy rainy season. For the rest of the year they roam about the forest living in camps. (9)*
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): *The oldest males usually have a position as headman. (3) The Baka practice a Consensus type of government though where they vote on decisions and majority wins. (6)*
- 5.4 Post marital residence: *Not addressed*
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): *There are no defined boundaries among the Baka since they roam the forests for the major part of the year. (5)*
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): *Adult males hunt and trap while women raise children and they take care of everything else.(5,6)*
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: *Not addressed*
- 5.8 Village and house organization: *Males are head of household and village while females take care of the family. (5)*
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): *None*
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? *In the permanent villages the Baka live in structures called Mongulu which are huts and sleep on mats. When they are roaming though they live in camps in temporary dwellings for no longer than a week. (4,5)*
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: *The Baka have patrilineal lineages and live and travel in small bands that make up a larger clan. (5)*
- 5.12 Trade: *Trade is done among other Baka bands and with their Bantu neighbors for agricultural products. (5)*
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? *The Bantu are of higher social status than the Baka and within the Baka Males that have better hunting ability are of higher status. (5,10)*

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: *Much time is allocated to RCR. (9)*

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): *The Baka have Shamans and have a good knowledge of medicines from the forest. (5)*

6.2 Stimulants: *Not addressed*

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): *Not addressed*

6.4 Other rituals: *The Baka have many rituals in everyday life like the ritual done every time after a hunt.(4,5)*

6.5 Myths (Creation): *They believe in Komba as the creator and is their main god but Komba does not play a huge role in their everyday lives. (5)*

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): *Music is the most important piece of cultural material to the Baka and it is used in everyday life. (5)*

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: *Not addressed*

6.8 Missionary effect: *Not addressed*

6.9 RCR revival: *Not addressed*

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: *The Baka believe that ancestors live on as spirits in the afterlife. (9)*

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? *Not addressed*

6.12 Is there teknonymy? *Not addressed*

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): *The Baka believe in animism in their religion. They do minimally show signs of ancestor worship though. Most of their religion is based on spirits of the forest since the forest is such an important part of their lives. (5,9)*

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: *The Baka like to adorn themselves with body paint (11)*

7.2 Piercings: *Not addressed*

7.3 Haircut: *Females will have different hairstyles and braids. (11)*

7.4 Scarification: *No scarification but they do file their teeth down into points. (11)*

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): *Not addressed*

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: *The Baka have costumes designated for each spirit for rituals. (9)*

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: *Males wear loincloths and females wear straps and belts (11)*

7.8 Missionary effect: *None*

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: *Not addressed*

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system: *Not addressed*

8.2 Sororate, levirate: *Not addressed*

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):  
*Not addressed*

**9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):** *The Baka are pygmies so they are small people. Since the forest is so important to them they are resistant to change and live the same lifestyles that they have lived for centuries.*

## **Numbered references**

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