

1. Description

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

- Beng
- Alternate names (ethnologue.com)
 - Ben, Gan, Ngain, Ngan, Ngen, Ngin, Nguin
- Classification (ethnologue.com)
 - Niger-Congo, Mande, Eastern, Southeastern, Nwa-Ben, Ben-Gban

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code)

- Nhb (ethnologue.com)
- The Ivory Coast of West Africa

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- Latitude: 8 (travelmath.com)
- Longitude: -5 (travelmath.com)

1.4 Brief history:

- “The Ngan tribe lives in the M'bahiakro district of Cote d'Ivoire. Various people groups who live nearby include the Baule to the South and West, the Akan to the East, and the Senufo to the North and Northwest. Before the Europeans colonized Africa, the Ngan maintained trade relations with these and other local ethnic groups. The Ngan speak Bena, a Southern Mande language, also spoken by groups living further west in Cote d'Ivoire. Many Ngan also are fluent in the Baule and Jula languages. Unlike many groups in West Africa, the Ngan are a peace-loving people with a history of resisting war. Even in recent times, when threatened by Islamic powers or the French administration, the Ngan have fled, seeking refuge in the forests or other havens. The Ngan abstain from fighting because they believe a person who kills another human being must engage in many lengthy rituals of atonement or else he too will be killed.” (joshuaproject.com)
- Achieved independence in 1960 from France. (Gottlieb 2004, pg73)

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

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

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

- 12, 000 (Ember and Ember 2003 pg323)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- “Although the Ngan are traditionally hunters, gatherers, and farmers, they have entered into the realm of commercial agriculture in the last several decades. This change is due in part to the influences brought by the Europeans during colonization. Though the kola nut was once the sole cash crop, the Ngan now also profit from growing coffee, rice, cotton, and cocoa. However, most Ngan grow only enough to feed themselves. The women continue to gather wild fruits, vegetables, and medicinal leaves from the forests, and the men still hunt to supplement the crops” (joshuaproject.com)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- Female : “Toward the end of adolescence –usually between 15 and 18 years- girls of traditional (non-Christian) families in the villages are generally engaged by arrangement” (Ember and Ember 2003 pg325)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- “A husband who neglects his yam fields, who overly privileges another wife, who is an alcoholic, who beats a pregnant wife, who is a known thief, who bewitches the couple’s children, or who is considered to have a “rotten character” is a legitimate candidate for his wife divorcing him, so long as at least one of her parents is agreed. For her part, a wife who neglects to cook or do laundry for her husband, does not work in his yam fields, or has an adulterous affair may in theory have divorce proceedings instituted against her by her husband, although the husband must gain the consent of his parican members who usually try to convince him to remain married.” (Ember and Ember 2003 pg331)
- “Following divorce, children typically remain with their mother; the father has the right to take any or all of them to live with him, or with his brother and sister-in-law, though the mother may visit the children whenever she wishes.” (Ember and Ember 200 pg332)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- “Sons and daughter-in-laws should never discuss anything to do with sex in front of their parents-in-law, and a man should not eat in front of his mother-in-law; if he insults his mother-in-law, he would be publicly tried and fined a sheep or chicken, plus a bar of soap to wash off the insult. If a man’s mother-in-law is also his father’s sister, this is a particularly difficult relationship for him as his mother-in-law has double authority over him. A man also feel shame toward and fear of his wife’s sister, as he knows she will criticize him if he argues with his wife. For her part, a woman must never insult her husband’s brothers, on pain of public trial. Her respect for her father-in-law usually leads to near-total avoidance” (Ember and Ember 2003 pg332)

4.24 Joking relationships?

- “...between grandchild and grandparent. These individuals normatively have joking relationship that is especially pronounced in the case of a cross-sex pair. The joking is frequently insulting and/or sexual, even for young children. In fact, babies sometimes learn their first words from their cross-sex grandparent who teaches the tot lewd insults that the baby is expected to repeat. “You black testicles, You red vagina”, and other such sexual insults are not infrequently a toddler’s first mangled words, aimed with good effect at the opposite-sex grandparent, to the general delight of all present” (Ember and Ember 2003 pg332)

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- “Traditionally, babies were named for spirits in nature when the baby is considered a gift from that spirit. Babies may have been named for recently deceased grandparents or loved ones, as a representation of that person, or return of that person. Currently, babies are named for the day of the week on which they are born. This creates much redundancy in names. If a child is born on the same day of the week as an older sibling of the same sex, then a suffix is added that means “little” or “big” to the children’s names. Each day name has a secret “name beneath the name” which is kept secret, even though everyone with that day name has the same secret name.” (mccck.edu)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

- “In the past, parents negotiated for about one year when arranging marriages for their children. The wedding itself lasted about six days. The purpose for this drawn-out and elaborate engagement and wedding ritual was to form an alliance between the two families.” (joshuaproject.com)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

5 Warfare/homicide

- 5.1 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- 5.2 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- 5.3 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 5.4 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- 5.5 Cannibalism?

6. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 6.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- 6.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- 6.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
- 6.4 Post marital residence:
- 6.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 6.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
- 6.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 6.8 Village and house organization:
 - “Each Ngan village is ruled by a male chief who is assisted by a female chief. Individual houses inside the villages were once large and round with thatched roofs, housing an entire extended family. Today, however, due to modernization by the national government, most traditional houses have been replaced with smaller, rectangular buildings with tin roofs. Instead of an extended family living under one roof, families live as neighbors, still retaining the Ngan family structure despite outside efforts to change it.” (joshuaproject.net)
- 6.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):
- 6.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- 6.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- 6.12 Trade:
- 6.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

7. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 7.0 Time allocation to RCR:
- 7.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):
- 7.2 Stimulants:
- 7.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
- 7.4 Other rituals:
- 7.5 Myths (Creation):
- 7.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
- 7.7 Sex differences in RCR:
- 7.8 Missionary effect:
- 7.9 RCR revival:
- 7.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
- 7.11 Taboo of naming dead people?
- 7.12 Is there teknonymy?
- 7.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)
 - “While nearly half of the Ngan practice Islam, the majority continue to follow their traditional religion, which centers on the worship of the earth and forest spirits. The people believe that the "Masters of the Earth" (spirits) serve as mediators between humans and the earth. Villagers worship and make sacrifices at shrines that are dedicated to the earth and to forest spirits. Witches and witchcraft also play a large role in Ngan society.” (joshuaproject.net)

8. Adornment

- 8.1 Body paint:
 - “The Ngan do not decorate their houses or buildings, and the people do not dress lavishly or wear ornaments. However, babies are beautifully adorned. Bright colors are painted on babies' heads and bodies and jewelry is placed on their arms, legs, and necks. The people use this practice of elaborately decorating babies as a form of medicine which they believe will ward off common childhood diseases.” (joshuaproject.net)
- 8.2 Piercings:
- 8.3 Haircut:
- 8.4 Scarification:
- 8.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):
- 8.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:
- 8.7 Sex differences in adornment:
- 8.8 Missionary effect:
- 8.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

9. Kinship systems

9.1 Sibling classification system:

9.2 Sororate, levirate:

9.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

10. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- “The Beng consider themselves pacifists insofar as it is taboo to the Earth spirits they worship to commit homicide with physical weapons. Their religion dictates that anyone who violates this taboo will die quickly unless a full year of ritual treatment is inaugurated immediately after the act.....given the taboo against murder, the Beng reaction to military aggression has typically been to retreat” (Gottlieb 2004, pg64)

Numbered references

1. Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember. Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Men and Women of the World's Cultures, Volume 1. New York: Kluwer Academic, 2003. Print
2. ethnologue.com
3. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?peo3=13337&rog3=IV>
4. <http://www.mcckc.edu/longview/socsci/psyc/westra/Child/02CrossCultural/WestAfricaCultureNotes.html>
5. <http://www.travelmath.com/country/Cote+d'Ivoire>