



## The Soninke of West Africa

The Soninke are a people spread across at least seven countries in West Africa. They are primarily agriculturalists growing millet, rice, corn, peanuts and vegetables. They live in mud brick houses with flat roofs grouped together in enclosed compounds.

Historically, the Soninke are traders and travelers. With the increasing difficulty of farming resulting from the desertification of the land and since French colonialization, the Soninke have turned increasingly to travel and work outside of the area. Consequently, they have maintained an above average standard of living and are known to be relatively rich. In spite of being so well traveled, the Soninke have held fast to their traditional ways.

Economically, the Soninke are having to find new sources of income with the increasing difficulties in farming. Health care is a great need. Spiritually, the Soninke are known to be 100% Muslim, although traditional beliefs are usually held alongside those of Islam. There are only 2 or 3 believers reported in Mali.

**Primary Religion:**

Muslim

**Disciples (Matt 28.19):**

0%

**Churches:**

**Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):**

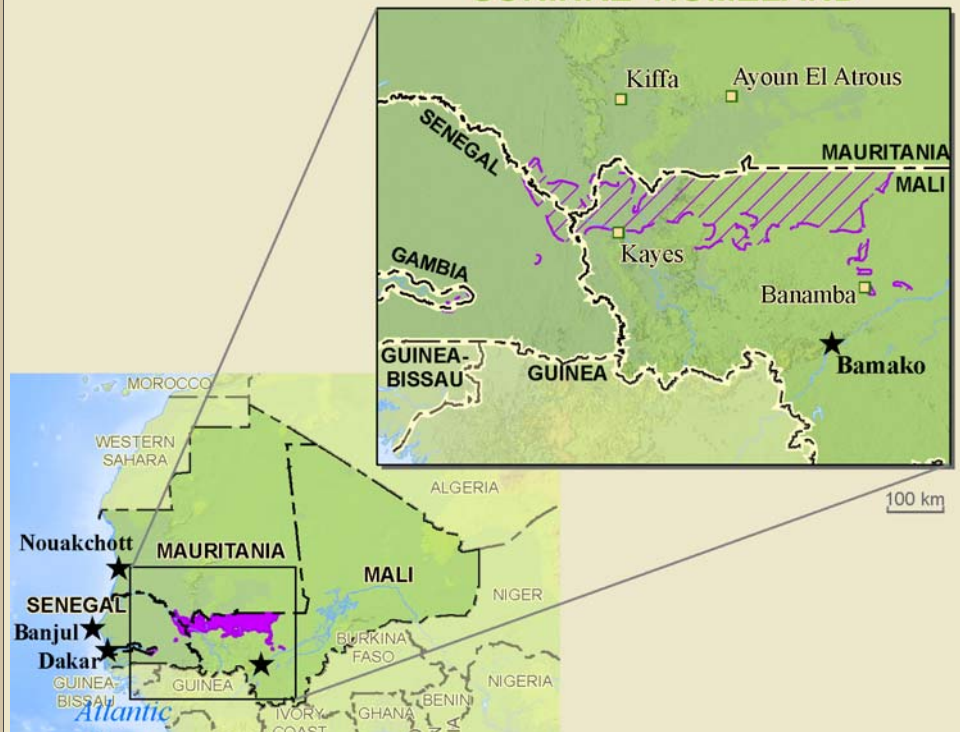
In progress

**Population (date):**

972,000 (1988)



### SONINKE HOMELAND



# The Soninke of West Africa

Item Name	Item Note	
<b>Have They Heard The Gospel?</b>		<b>Profile Summary</b>
Call Themselves Christian (%)	0%	
Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	0%	
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	100%	
Number Of Missionaries Working	14	
Number Of Communities	Unknown	
Is The Word Of God Translated?	No	
Any Hinderance To Scripture Distribution?	Not if they were available.	
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	An audio cassette of the Gospel of Luke is being prepared.	
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	It may be good to try to reach the many immigrant workers who live in France. Bible translation and use of the Bible with inquirers is needed. Community development would be appreciated.	
<b>Population All Countries</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
World Population For This People	972,000	
World Population (Date)	1988	
World Population (Urban Percent)	10	
<b>Countries Where People Group Lives</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Country Name	Niger	
Country Name	Mali	
Country Name	Mauritania	
Country Name	Gambia	
Country Name	Guinea	
Country Name	Senegal	
Country Name	Burkina Faso	
Country Name	Burkina Faso	
Country Name	Cote d' Ivoire	
<b>Geography &amp; Environment</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Location	The Soninke are found in the Kayes, Nioro and Nara regions of Mali, in the Department of Bakel along the Senegal and Faleme rivers in Senegal, and in the Kaedi and Guidimaxa regions of southern Mauritania.	
Country	Senegal	
Ecosystem Type	Savannahs	
Geological Type	Riverine	
Elevation	Below 90 meters	
Climate	Rainy season starts in June and ends in August; otherwise, it is hot and dry. Average minimum is 27 degrees Celsius; maximum is 38 degrees Celsius.	
<b>Language &amp; Linguistics</b>		<b>Group Description</b>
Comment (Language)	Should not use same literature as Bozo or Jahanka.	
Alternate Language Names	Marka, Sarakole, Sarawule, Serahuli	
Percent Monolingual (%)	0%	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	TAY	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	WOLOF	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	THO	
Other Mother Tongues Of This Group	FRENCH	
Comment (On Other Mother Tongues)	In Senegal only.	

## The Soninke of West Africa

Item Name	Item Note	
Linguistically Related Languages	JAHANKA	
Linguistically Related Languages	BOSO, HAINYAXO	
Linguistically Related Languages	JAHANKA	
Comments (Related Languages)	In Mali (which Bozo?)	
Neighboring Languages	MALINKE	
Neighboring Languages	THO	
Literacy		Group Description
Adult Literacy Percentage	10	
Active Literacy Program	No	
Comment (Literacy)	40% of men but only 5% of women are literate. Being one of the six national Senegalese languages, Soninke receives official support and promotion by the Government. It seems, however, that Soninke is still regarded as a minority language, and they are unable to adequately fill the place given to their language at the national level.	
Economics		Group Description
Occupation	As many as half the male population work as migrants in France and other places. They may live there for many years, sending money back to the village to help their family. Those who remain are agriculturalists growing millet, rive, maize, peanuts, pulses and some vegetables. Some are fishermen, and some are merchants.	
Income Sources	Vegetables, fish, merchandise	
Products / Crafts	Traditionally fabric, but that is less common now. Dying of fabric is still done.	
Trade Partners	Merchants trade with the general population (in Senegal). Migrant workers trade in France.	
Modernization / Utilities	Modern agricultural methods have been introduced since 1974, using irrigated perimeters and cooperatives. This has allowed two crops per year, and the expansion of rice cultivation.	
Comment (Economy)	Reforestation	
Community Development		Group Description
Comment (Health Care)	Larger villages have a dispensary, towns have a clinic, nationally trained nurses and some doctors, some are locally funded, others by the government.	
Comment (Diet)	Millet, rice, maize, peanuts, fish, vegetables, pules. Food seasonally lacks in vitamins.	
Comment (Water)	River water is filtered in towns; otherwise, well water is used for drinking and river water for other purposes.	
Shelter Description	Mud brick, round or square houses with flat mud roofs. Several huts are enclosed in a walled compound, including a separate kitchen and bath house.	
Comment (Energy)	Firewood, charcoal, bottled gas, some electricity in larger towns.	
Clothing	Men: Islamic dress, a long sleeved loose cloak (boubou), and baggy trousers (chaya). Women: wrap-around skirt with loose over-shirt (boubou), head covered with a scarf. Children: second-hand Western clothing. Some wear traditional clothing.	
Society & Culture		Group Description
Family Structures	Patriarchal. Clans form around male line. A man can have up to four wives, and he is the head of the family. Each wife lives in a different house in the compound.	
Neighbor Relations	A great deal of socializing goes on between neighbors.	
Authority / Rule	Historically a kingdom with a royal clan. Now there is a village chief. The French system is also at work; a government-selected chief lives in the village, while regional government representatives have ten to twelve villages under their jurisdiction.	
Social Habits/Groupings	Different classes: 1 - noble class = princes, courtesans, marabouts (the religious leaders) 2 - artisan class = blacksmiths, leather workers, griots (these are musicians who carry on the oral traditions and ancestry) 3 - slave class.	
Cultural Change Pace	Slow	
Identification With National Culture	Integrated	

## The Soninke of West Africa

Item Name	Item Note	
Self Image	Neutral	
Local Language Broadcasting	20 minutes to 1 hour daily	
Youth		Group Description
Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)	Boys: water gardens, help in the fields. Girls: fetch water, cook food, wash laundry, clean house, care for younger siblings.	
Youth Problems (Teens)	There are hostilities along the border between the Senegalese and Mauritians.	
Youth Greatest Needs (teens)	Because the desert is rapidly encroaching on the land, farming is becoming more and more difficult; therefore, job prospects are extremely poor. Education must be improved to provide greater opportunities. Health care also needs improvement as infant mortality is great.	
Education		Group Description
Percent Of Eligible Students Enrolled	40	
Teacher To Pupil Ratio	35	
Language Of Instruction Early Years	French	
Comment (Education)	French schools teach through 8th grade. Children need to travel outside of the Soninke region for secondary education. Koranic schools give Arabic religious education. There are twelve to fifteen schools in Senegal, all of which are unimixed. Lots of booklets are written in the Soninke's language. The school drop out rate is high.	
Church Growth		Status of Christianity
Reached Status	Reported	
Comment (Church Growth)	Four Frontiers missionaries work in literacy and community development. Four Red Sea Mission workers (using the mother tongue) are involved in church planting. Additional organizations working here: USAID, FAO, UNESCO, Apt (twin city in France) One pastor is in France, one in Bible training. No Christian Soninke are in Senegal. Two or three are in Mali.	
Religion & Response		Status of Christianity
Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Islamic festivals with heavy animistic overtones, the use of charms, spells and Arabic letters, pilgrimage to Mecca.	
Attitude To Christianity	Indifferent	
Attitude To Religious Change	Indifferent	
Resistance / Receptivity	The Seninke are not hostile or antagonistic to the gospel. They will talk about and listen to Christianity. They are not seeking anything, and see no need to change. They are happy to remain the same.	
Religious Analogies & Bridges	The Muslim Tabaski festival celebrates the near sacrifice of Ishmael by Abraham. A ram is killed by the Marabout whilst the head of the family has his hands on his head. All the family members line up behind him in a long chain touching each other so that the blessing is passed on to everyone. When they die they believe that it is the ram who carries them into paradise on its back.	
Spiritual Climate And Openness	Islam makes the people very proud and secure in their spiritual state.	
Recommended Approaches	Workers needed in France. Literacy work. Bible translation. Community development (especially agricultural). Theatrical groups are enjoyed, so Christian drama may be useful. Start with the Old Testament stories and Psalms, and then move on into the Gospels. Cassettes are popular, so gospel recordings may be a good approach.	
Current Needs	For exposure to the gospel and Christianity. For portions of scripture to be read on cassette in Soninke and French.	
Items For Prayer	Pray for new and practical ideas of how to survive in an increasingly difficult environment. Pray that the 100,000 migrant workers in France may be exposed to the gospel. Pray for the two or three Soninke believers in Mali. Pray that Bible translation would progress and be well accepted. Pray that the Soninke would be motivated towards literacy.	
History Of Christianity In Group		Status of Christianity

## The Soninke of West Africa

### Item Name

Year Began

### Item Note

1987

By Whom

Summer Institute of Linguistics

Significant Events

Assignment of couple to start translation project.

### Scripture

### Status of Christianity

Translation Status

In Progress

Available Scripture

Portions

Form Of Scripture Available

Printed and Audio

Comment (Scripture)

The translation country is Mali. The Old Testament is being worked on. A gospel recording of Luke is available.

### Missions and Churches

### Status of Christianity

Organization Name

Pioneer Bible Translators

Country Of Origin

United States

Main Ministry

Church Planting

Number Of Expatriate Workers

2

Number Of Workers Using Local Language

2

### Christian Literature And Media Status

### Status of Christianity

Audio Recordings Available

Gospel recording of Luke

Films Available

Jesus film