



The Bambara of West Africa

In western Africa, one of the largest ethnic groups is the Bambara, who number over 3,000,000 members. Its major population center is Mali, which has 2.7 million. Senegal has the second largest population, at 55,000. Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, and Burkina Faso have much smaller numbers. Besides its use as a mother tongue, Bambara serves as a trade language for thousands of other people, allowing for communication between speakers of different languages.

Undoubtedly because of its importance, much linguistic work has been done on Bambara. Dictionaries, primers, and other written materials have been published; it is widely heard on the radio; and it is the language often chosen by the Malian government in its program to teach adult literacy. The government hopes that Bambara will thus help unify different peoples of the country. Historically, the Bambara were dominant in parts of present-day Mali through the late 17th and 18th centuries. They lost power in the mid 1800s, however. Nowadays, they are essentially subsistence farmers, although many are involved in trade.

In their religious sphere, Islam is the dominant force. An estimated 68% of the Bambara are Muslim. Some 30% of the population follow the traditional religion. In this set of beliefs, the world is full of spirits who control such things as health and harvest. Man must sacrifice to them to win their favor.

Christianity has a small foothold, at 2% of the population. As a blessing to this minority, the Bible has been translated into Bambara, with revisions in progress. The Jesus film, is also available as an evangelistic tool. Yet the Bambara need prayer. Winning the hearts of a people largely committed to Islam requires patience and God's power.

Primary Religion:

Islam

Disciples (Matt 28.19):

2

Churches:

Scripture Status (Matt 28.20):

Population (date):

3 million (1998)



Map Unavailable

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Item Name

Item Note

Have They Heard The Gospel?

Believe In Jesus As God & Only Savior (%)	2
Prophet/Good Man, But Not God's Son (%)	88
Believe In The Local Traditional Religion (%)	30

Profile Summary

Population All Countries

World Population For This People	3000000
World Population (Date)	1998
Comment (World Population)	2.7 million are in Mali, 55,000 in Senegal, 4,200 in Gambia, 300 in Burkina Faso and 5,500 in C(ote d'Ivoire.

Group Description

Countries Where People Group Lives

Country Name	Senegal
Country Name	Mali
Country Name	Gambia
Country Name	Burkina Faso
Country Name	Côte d'Ivoire

Group Description

Geography & Environment

Country	Mali
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Group Description

Language & Linguistics

Comment (Language)	There are also many local dialects. The Bambara dialects are spoken in varying degrees by 80% of the population.
Alternate Language Names	Bamana and Bamanakan
Attitude Towards Mother Tongue	Very receptive
Linguistically Related Languages	MANINKA
Linguistically Related Languages	MANINKA

Group Description

Literacy

Literacy Attitude	Very receptive
Active Literacy Program	Yes

Group Description