



photo by Mary Newcombe CC

## The Jamsay Dogon of Mali and Burkina Faso

Approximately 800,000 Dogons live in a dry remote savannah area in Mali, spilling over into Burkina Faso. About 20 different languages are spoken in different communities. Unless they learn the language spoken by a neighbor they would not understand each other even though they all identify themselves ethnically as Dogon. The Jamsay are one of these.

Dogon territory includes a rocky plateau in the West and a sandy plain in the east where the Jamsay live, separated by a 400-700 meter high sheer cliff. The Dogon built their first villages in caves in this cliff, safe from the slave raids of the Fulani nomads who roamed the area. Isolated and distrustful of outsiders, they grew into a scattering of micro-communities, eventually each with a different language.

For centuries, the Dogon have resisted Islam. But as society modernizes, they are increasingly deciding that animistic religion is no longer adequate and grudgingly accept Islam for lack of an alternative. In the few villages where Christianity has been lived out by missionaries, or locals who have become Christians elsewhere, one can indeed see the growth of the Christian faith.

Jamsay Dogon is widely known as the prestige variety due to its use as the language of radio broadcasts. But Jamsay also realize that they are relative newcomers even though they have a larger population and cover more land area than the other Dogon peoples. The flat sandy territory makes farming, communication and growth easier than the cliffs and rocky plateau of their cousins. Culturally they are quite different from those living in the mountains and the escarpment.

**Primary Religion:**

Animism / Islam

**Disciples (Matt 28:19):**

0.08%

**Churches:**

14

**Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):**

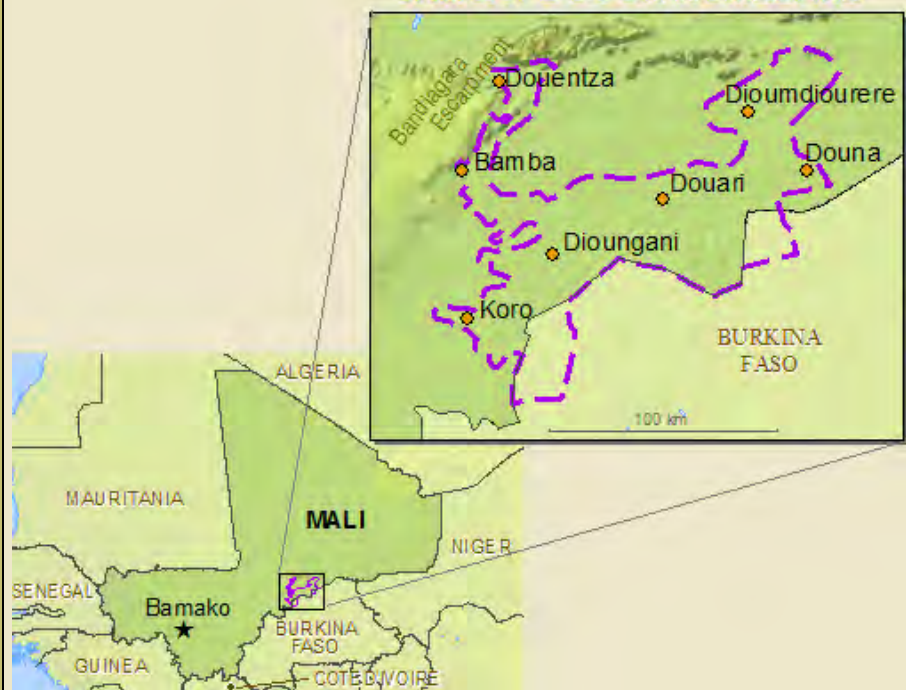
None

**Population (date):**

130,000 (2009)



**JAMSAY DOGON HOMELAND**



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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Response to the Gospel

In the last 7 years there have been efforts on the Malian side to plant new churches by locals. On the Burkina side there are the Assemblées de Dieu where Mossi as well as Jamsay people worship together.

Jamsay Christians in Mali complain that the Toro So Dogon [dts] Bible is sometimes difficult to understand. A pastor has started to preach in Jamsay [djm] on the radio. People call him and thank him for preaching in Jamsay.

Estimated number of Christian congregations

14 in Mali; the number is unknown in Burkina Faso

Estimated number that use primarily the local language in their services

2 in Mali, 2 in Burkina Faso

Bilingualism

Formal schooling for first 6 years is in French or Toro So Dogon [dts] and French. There is a small percentage of people who only speak Jamsay. 25% of population grow up in a bilingual context. 55% speak their mother tongue and have some knowledge of a second possibly third language. 15% of the population are bilingual (a full speaking competence in two languages).

Hindrances to Scripture use

In 12 out of 14 Jamsay villages or towns in Mali the Église Chrétienne Évangélique (ECE) uses Tomo So Dogon [dts] to conduct services and Jamsay [djm] only in two places. The entire Bible is available in Tomo So Dogon.

There are mixed language congregations.

The Jamsay area is very vast.

A pastor of that area estimates a total of 800,000 Jamsay people living in Mali and Burkina Faso.

Is the Word of God Translated?

No

Other Forms of Presentation

Audio recordings.

Global Recordings

Video recordings

Jesus Film

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Cross-cultural missionaries needed?

Cross-cultural missionaries who would aim to encourage and strengthen the existing church in its challenges to reach out the unreached with a holistic and sustainable ministry.

Primary language for wider communication

Many different languages, no one language is primary.