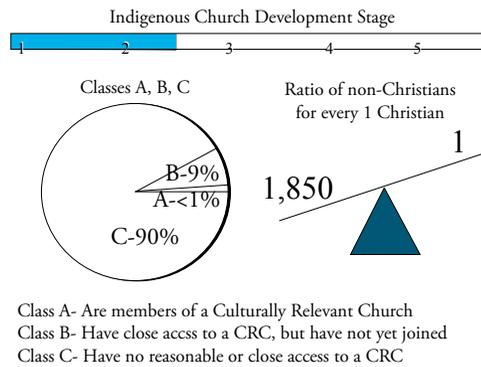




Quick Facts

Population: 2,000,000
 Mali: 750,000
 Niger: 700,000
 Nigeria: 260,000
 Burkina Faso: 150,000
Religion: Islam
Believers: 0.05%
Scriptures: None
Ministry Tools: None
Church Status: 2
Mission Status: 2
MS Subgroups: 20+



Identity: The Songhai are the descendants of the 7th century Za kingdom. They are a conglomerate of peoples which were organized into a social hierarchy of nobility, peasants, and tradesmen. Though Songhai is a Nilo-Saharan language, their culture is more reflective of the Bambara and Soninke.

Lifestyle: Most Songhai are farmers, and farming is considered to be noble labor, restricted to men. Women grow home gardens, and will produce enough to barter for such items as salt and sugar. Men who are more well-off usually take a second-wife. Each additional wife lives in her own dwelling within the family compound. Villages range from 100 to 800, consisting of one patrilineal descent group. As a result, men rarely visit other villages during the day, but women frequently circulate between them.

Customs: A week after a child is born, the naming ceremony will be held,

which brings together men and women to pray for the child's well being. The women will cup their hands while praying to catch the prayers. They will then spread the prayers over the baby. Following this, for forty days the mother remains in seclusion. Then her husband will offer a purification sacrifice at the mosque on her behalf.

Religion: The Songhai converted to Islam in the 11th century, though many elements of their pre-Islamic nature-worshipping cult still remain. As it has been for centuries, when night falls the air is still filled with the sound of talking drums energizing the spirit-possession dances so important to the Songhai. At the same time, Islamic rituals are diligently followed, especially by the social elite. In general, public display of devotion to Islam has been roughly proportionate to one's status in society.

Christian Outreach: Over eighty years of missionary work among the Songhai

are just beginning to bear fruit. About fifteen outreach centers have been established and are flourishing with new believers. Five mission agencies are committed to doing church planting among them, though the complexity and dispersion of the Songhai will require a significant increase in missionary deployment.

How to Pray:

✞ The new believers are being subjected to a constant barrage of harassment, false accusations, and attempts at social isolation. Pray for their ability to remain in their communities and make a difference with the love of Christ.

✞ Strong churches among the Songhai are beginning to develop. Pray for indigenous leaders, both male and female, to be raised up who will fill the roles of evangelists, teachers, pastors, worship leaders, counselors, and cross-cultural missionaries.

✞ The New Testament was completed in 1936, though it needs to be updated and adapted for various dialects. Pray for the ongoing work to develop this essential resource and for effective cooperation with Songhai believers whom God has called to participate in this team effort.

Every year 18,000 Songhai die without Christ.