

## The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso



Elderly Tiéfo Woman, © Abbie Hantgan

The Tiéfo live in southwestern Burkina Faso in the northern Comoe and southern Houet Provinces. The Tiéfo homeland is comprised of about 20 small villages located south of the town of Bobo Dioulasso, and east of Tiéfora. Long ago, the Tiéfo were known as hunters, but they were conquered by the Jula in the late 19th century. Now, the mother tongue of most Tiéfo is the trade language Jula.

A major national highway runs through the northern part of the homeland. The Banfora Escarpment runs just south and east of the highway, and is about 150 m high. The escarpment serves to isolate some of the Tiéfo region, notably the village of Dramandougou, which has probably been an important factor in allowing that village to retain its mother tongue of Tiéfo.

The population of ethnic Tiéfo is 12,000, living in 20 villages. However, the only village Tiéfo where is still spoken is Dramandougou, roughly 1,000 speak the Tiéfo language. Also, a handful of the elders in Niarafó (aka Gnanfongo), still know some of the Tiéfo language.

Many Tiéfo have syncretized their traditional religion with Islam. The people who still speak Tiéfo have mainly clung to their traditional religion. Some of the young are open to change, but there are few missionaries working amongst the Tiéfo. Ethnic Tiéfo need to hear the gospel in their own heart language so that they can know the hope of love of God and be freed from the fear associated with their traditional animistic religion.

Unlike the country's northern regions, the Tiéfo have a fairly long rainy season which aids in agriculture, their primary source of income. Still, the Tiéfo are typical of rural Burkinabe groups in their poor and modest lifestyle.

**Primary Religion:**

Ethnic Religion & Islam

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

Unknown

**Churches:**

6

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

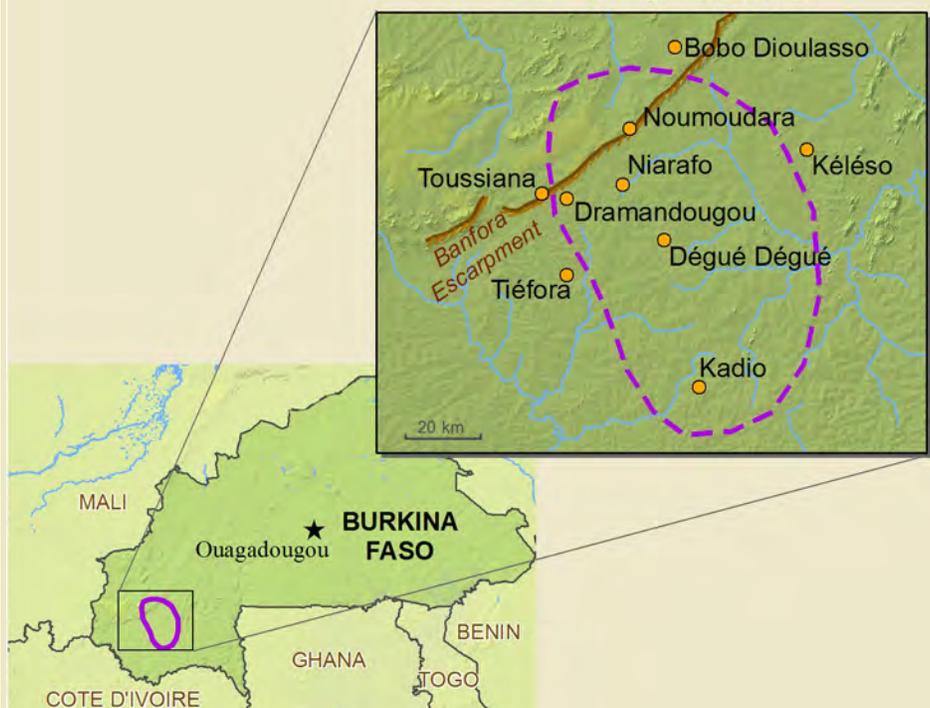
None in Tiéfo, but avail. in Jula

**Population (date):**

12,000 (1995)



### TIÉFO HOMELAND



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### Have They Heard The Gospel?

Is The Word Of God Translated?	No
Translation Medium	None
Any Hindrance To Scripture Distribution?	There are few missionaries among the Tiéfo.
Forms Of Gospel Presentation Available (Summary)	Audio recording, “Words of Life”, is available in the Tiéfo language, from Global Recordings Network. Other gospel presentations are in Jula.
What Kind Of Missionaries Are Needed?	The Tiéfo need economic and medical assistance, as well as workers to minister to their spiritual needs.

## The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso

### Group Description

#### Population

World Population For This People 12,000

World Population (Date) 1995

#### Geography & Environment

Location Southwestern Burkina Faso, northern Comoe Province and southern Houet Province.

Ecosystem Type Scrub Forest

Geological Type Mountain Slopes

Elevation 200-450 m

Longitude 4 W

Latitude 10 N

Climate Hot with a fairly long rainy season (June through September)

Comment (Geo & Eng.) A fault in the ground gives rise to a long escarpment which runs southwest to northeast, dividing the Tiéfo territory. However, bicycle and foot trails make the 150 meter cliff face accessible to villagers.

#### Language & Linguistics

Comment (Language) Tiéfo is still spoken only in the village of Dramandougou, where the people cling very strongly to their language and their traditional religion. Jula has become the dominant language for the rest of the Tiéfo population, presumably as a result of a perceived social advantage to be gained by using Jula.

Primary Language Jula [dyu]

Alternate Language Names Kiefo, Tyefo, Tyeforo

Attitude Towards Mother Tongue Somewhat resistant

Second Languages Jula, French

Other Mother Tongues Of This Group Jula, French

Linguistically Related Languages Téén [lor]; Toussian, Southern [wib]; Natorio [nti]; Lobi [lob]; Toussian Northern [tsp]; Viemo [vig]; Wara [wbf]

## **The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso**

Neighboring Languages	Jula [dyu]; Toussian, Southern [wib]; Karaboro, Eastern [xrb]
Comment (Other Mother Tongues)	Anyone who has been to school for a year or more knows a little French. Most of the young men and children know it.
Comment (Other Mother Tongues)	Jula [dyu] is the trade language of south-western Burkina Faso.

### **Literacy**

Adult Literacy Percentage	5%
Literacy Attitude	Somewhat receptive
Active Literacy Program	Yes
Comment (Literacy)	To a certain degree, some are literate in French. A handful are also beginning to become literate in Jula. A Jula literacy center opened in 1993. There is no literacy program in Tiéfo. Many Tiéfo said they would prefer to learn to read and write Tiéfo.

### **Economics**

Subsistence Type	Agriculturalists
Average Annual Income	US \$140
Occupation	Subsistence farmers, relying on traditional agriculture. Some cash crops, such as cotton and peanuts.
Income Sources	Some travel to nearby cities or to Cote d'Ivoire to find temporary jobs.
Products / Crafts	The only products made are those necessary for farming.
Trade Partners	Some villages near the main roads sell firewood and surplus crops to passing trucks.
Modernization / Utilities	There are none.
Comment (Economy)	The figure for the average income does not reflect what is earned by bartering, which is the most common form of trading in rural Burkina Faso.

### **Community Development**

Health Care (Quality)	Poor: A few dispensaries, with pharmacies only in the larger towns. Because of the distance to towns with comprehensive medical services, many Tiéfo do not seek medical treatment until they have become gravely ill.
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## The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso

Diet (Quality)	Fair: Millet, rice, corn, very few vegetables and meat, much seasonal fruit in the more accessible villages
Water (Quality)	Fair: Most villages have wells.
Shelter Description	Mud brick homes with thatched roofs.
Energy/Fuel (Quality)	None
Comment (Energy)	Kerosene lanterns, wood for cooking
Clothing	Men - western, women - African
Transportation	Men - bicycles, some mopeds and small motorbikes. Women - walking for the most part. Bush taxis and buses can serve the people who live on the main road. Otherwise, because of the escarpment, some villages are quite isolated.
Comment (Communications)	The nearest post office is in Toussiana. To make telephone calls, one needs to travel to either Toussiana or Péni. In all of these situations, either French or Jula is required.

### Society & Culture

Family Structures	Authoritarian, patrilineal
Comment	Traditional Tiéfo in the village of Dramandougou are endogamous, marrying only within others in the village.
Neighbor Relations	Stable, business ties
Authority / Rule	Chief and delegates.
Comment (Government)	The Tiéfo fall under the jurisdiction of the Tiéfora prefecture, and use Jula in order to communicate.
Cultural Change Pace	Medium
Identification With National Culture	Integrated
Self Image	Neutral
Celebrations	Muslim holidays are observed, as are some animistic practices.
Recreations	Talking and going to the market are popular pastimes.
Media	None
Local Language Broadcasting	None

## The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso

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Attitude To Change

Generally, very receptive, except for people in Dramandougou.

Comment (Cultural Change)

The people of the village of Dramandougou are traditional animists who have a strong fear of change. They are not at all receptive to outsiders (they emphatically say that they do not intermarry), nor to change. Otherwise, the people as a whole wish to change, and are switching to Jula as their mother tongue.

The Tiéfo in Dramandougou make an effort to transmit their culture to their young, continuing to teach their children the traditional songs and stories. However, according to the elders, not many young people know the history of the Tiéfo people.

### Youth

Labor and tasks (6-12 year olds)

Boys - helping with the crops, taking care of the animals.  
Girls - helping with the crops, babysitting, housework.

Youth Problems (Teens)

Malnutrition and lack of money for a good, extended education.

Youth Greatest Needs (teens)

Education, medical care, a balanced diet, a good road system.

### Education

Language Of Instruction Early Yrs. French

Language Of Textbooks Early Yrs. French

Comment (Education)

The Tiéfo place a high value on attending school and learning French. However, lack of money prevents many students from gaining an education. Sons are often sent to school while daughters are kept home.

## The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso

### Status of Christianity

#### Church Growth

Reached Status	Reported
Comment (Church Growth)	The Tiéfo are very strongly tied to their traditional religion.

#### Religion and Response

Religious Practices & Ceremonies	Sacrifices to the various gods and spirits are very important. The Jula-speaking Tiéfo are at least nominally Muslim, following the Muslim calendar and religious festivals. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that under their Muslim veneer, the Jula-speaking Tiéfo have kept a considerable part of the old culture.
Attitude To Christianity	Very resistant
Attitude To Religious Change	Somewhat resistant
Resistance / Receptivity	They've resisted Islam in favor of traditional religion. We can only believe that the same resistance holds true to Christianity.
Religious Analogies & Bridges	They have their own word for God (not Allah)
Spiritual Climate And Openness	Dramandougou - closed. Other villages - more open to change.
Comment (Religion)	The people of Dramandougou are very animistic and closed to change.
Recommended Approaches	They still retain their own word for God. Christian workers may be able to find a cultural analogy to the God of the Bible.
Current Needs	More missionaries are needed.
Items For Prayer	Pray that God would send workers to the Tiéfo, and that the people would be open to new religious ideas.

#### History of Christianity in Group

By Whom	WEC International, Christian and Missionary Alliance were early workers with the Tiéfo.
Comments (History of Christianity)	WEC and CMA may have attempted evangelization, but there were few visible results among the Tiéfo speakers initially. There are now churches in the Tiéfo villages although we do not have knowledge if they are filled with Tiéfo people or people from other people groups who live or work in the Tiéfo region. We don't know how many Tiéfo are members

## **The Tiéfo of Burkina Faso**

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### **Scripture**

Translation Status	Uncertain need in the Tiéfo language, as most of ethnic Tiéfo prefer to speak Jula. The Jula New Testament is available, and the Jula Bible has been released recently in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire.
Available Scripture	None in Tiéfo. The Jula New Testament is available. The Jula Bible will be available.

### **Missions and Churches**

Organization Name	WEC International
Country Of Origin	England
Main Ministry	Evangelism
Language Used By Workers	Jula
Organization Name	Alliance Churches
Country of Origin	Burkina Faso (outgrowth from Christian and Missionary Alliance with origin in the United States)
Organization Name	Baptist
Country of Origin	United States

### **Christian Literature and Media Status**

Literature Available	Only what is available in Jula, and most Tiéfo are not aware that this material exists.
Audio Recordings Available	“Words of Life” audio recording is available in the Tiéfo language from Global Recordings Network. Recordings are also available in Jula. The Jesus Film audio drama is also available in Jula.
Films Available	Not in Tiéfo, but the Jesus Film is available in Jula.
Radio Programs Available	Radio programs are available in Jula.
Videos Available	None
Audio Visual Available	None