

# Fula people *Make a donation to Wikipedia and give the gift of knowledge!*

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The **Fula** or **Fulbe** or **Fulani** (the latter being an Anglicisation of the word in their language, *Fulbe*<sup>[2]</sup>) are an ethnic group of people spread over many countries, predominantly in West Africa, but found also in Central Africa and Sudanese North Africa. The countries in Africa where they are present include Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, the Central African Republic, Ghana, Liberia, and as far as Sudan in the east. Fulas are not a majority in every country they live, but in Guinea they represent a plurality of the population (largest single group).

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**Fula, Fulani**



Fula women in the East Province of Cameroon.

### Total population

10 to 13 million (2005)<sup>[1]</sup>

### Regions with significant populations

Guinea, Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Chad, Mauritania, Sudan and Ivory Coast.

### Languages

Fula language

### Religion

Islam

### Related ethnic groups

Wolof and Serer

## One person, many names

There are also many names (and spellings of the names) used in other languages to refer to the *Fulbe*. **Fulani** in English is borrowed from the Hausa term. **Fula**, from Manding languages is also used in English, and sometimes spelled **Fulah** or **Foulah**. Fula and Fulani are commonly used in English, including within Africa. The French borrowed the Wolof term *Pël*, which is variously spelled: **Peul**, **Peulh**, and even **Peuhl**. More recently the Fulfulde / Pulaar term *Fulbe*, which is a plural noun (singular, *Pullo*) has been adapted to English as **Fulbe**, which some people use. In Portuguese it's Fula or Futafula.

## Related groups

A closely related group is the Tukolor (Toucouleur) in the central Senegal River valley. These people are often referred to together with *Fulbe* of the region as *Haalpulaar'en* (Pulaar-speakers).

Fula society in some parts of West Africa features the "caste" divisions typical of the region. In Mali, for instance, those who are not ethnically Fula have been referred to as *yimbe pulaaku* (people of the Fula culture).

The Wodaaɓe, also known as the Bororo, are a subgroup of the Fula people.

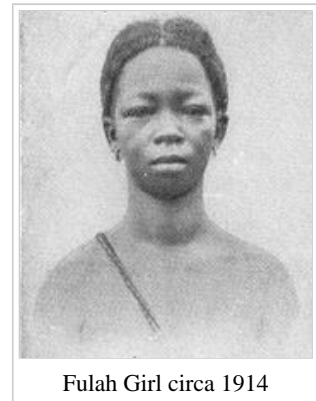
## Traditional livelihood

The Fulani are traditionally a nomadic, pastoralist, trading people, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry hinterlands of their domain, keeping somewhat separate from the local agricultural populations.

## History

### Origins and spread

While some have speculated over the origin of Fulani people, current linguistic and genetic evidence seems to suggest an indigenous West African origin among the Peul.<sup>[3]</sup> The vast majority of genetic lineages associated with them reflect those most commonly seen in other west Africans. Their language is also of west African origin, most closely related to that of the Wolof and Serer ethnic groups.<sup>[1]</sup> Historical and archaeological records indicate that Peul-speakers have resided in western Africa since at least the 5th century A.D. as well. Interestingly, rock paintings in the Tassili-n-Ajjer suggests the presence of proto-Fulani cultural traits in the region by at least the fourth millennium B.C. Scholars specializing in Fulani culture believe that some of the imagery depicts rituals that are still practiced by contemporary Fulani people.<sup>[4]</sup>



Fulah Girl circa 1914

### Rise to political dominance

Beginning as early as the 17th and 18th centuries, but mainly in the 19th century, Fulas and others took control of various states in West Africa.

These included the Fulani Empire founded by Usman dan Fodio (which itself included smaller states), Fouta Djallon, Massina and others.

## Culture & Language

The language of Fulas is called Pulaar or Fulfulde depending on the region, or variants thereof. It is also the language of the Tukulor. All Senegalese who speak the language natively are known as the *Halpulaar* or *Haalpulaar'en*, which stands for "speakers of Pulaar" ("hal" is the root of the Pulaar verb *haalugol*, meaning "to speak"). In some areas, e.g. in northern Cameroon, Fulfulde is a local lingua franca.

With the exception of Guinea, Fulas are minorities in every country they live in (most countries of West Africa). So some also speak other languages, for example:

- Portuguese and Kriol in Guinea-Bissau
- French and Arabic in Mauritania
- Hausa and French in Niger
- French and English in Cameroon
- Wolof and French in Senegal
- Sango and French in Central African Republic
- Bambara and French in Mali
- English, Hausa and Ghanaian languages in Ghana
- English and some indigenous languages in Sierra Leone, particularly Krio, that lingua franca.
- Hausa, other Nigerian languages and English in Nigeria

The traditional dress of the Fula in most places consists of long colorful flowing robes, modestly embroidered or otherwise decorated. Also characteristic Fula tradition is that of women using Henna around the mouth, resulting in a blackening around the lips. Fula ethics are strictly governed by the notion of *pulaaku*.<sup>[5]</sup>

Fula are primarily known to be pastoralists, but are also traders in some areas. Most Fula in the countryside spend long times alone on foot, moving their herds; they were the only major migrating people of West Africa, though most Fula now live in towns or villages.

The Fula have a rich musical culture and play a variety of traditional instruments including drums, *hoddu* (a plucked skin-covered lute similar to a banjo) and *riti* or *riiti* (a one-string bowed instrument similar to a violin), in addition to vocal music. The well known Senegalese Fula popular musician Baaba Maal sings in Pulaar on his recordings.



Popular illustration of Fula greeting ritual ca. 1910, in French it reads: *Salutations among primitive people.*

## Notable Fulani people by country

### Nigeria

- Umaru Yar'Adua, current President of Nigeria.
- Shehu Shagari, Former Nigeria President
- Muhammadu Buhari, former Nigerian Head of State
- Atiku Abubakar, former Vice President of Nigeria
- Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, Nigerian politician and the brother of current Nigerian president Umaru Yar'Adua
- Nuhu Ribadu, respected, former Head of Nigerian Anti-corruption agency
- Prof Jibril Aminu, Former minister of Education and Petroluem and a Senator in the Nigerian Parliament
- Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigerian founding father and first prime minister

### Sierra Leone

- Amadu Wurie, early Sierra Leonean educationist and politician
- Amadu Jalloh, Sierra Leonean politician
- Alimamy Rassin, Sierra Leonean chief during colonial period
- Minkailu Bah, Sierra Leone's minister of Education, Youth and Sports
- Sulaiman Tejan-Jalloh, Sierra Leone ambassador to the United Kingdom
- Abubakarr Jalloh, Sierra Leone Minister of Mineral Resources
- Alimamy Jalloh, Sierra Leonean football star
- Mahmadu Alphajor Bah, Sierra Leonean football star
- Rashid Wurie, former Sierra Leonean international football star

### Guinea

- Buubakar dit Bocar Biro The Last Almaami of Fuuta Jallon
- Cheikh Ibrahima Sambegou(Karamoko Alpha mo Timbo]First Almamy of state of Futa Dialon
- Almamy SorySecond Almamy of Futa Dialonafter Karamoko Alpha
- Cellou Dalein Diallo, Prime Minister of Guinea from 2004-2007
- Saifoulaye Diallo, former Guinean foreign minister
- Bobo Balde, Guinean football star
- Katoucha, former haute couture model and anti-female circumcision activist
- Abdoul Salam Sow, former Guinean footballer
- Abdallah Bah, Guinean football star
- Diallo Telli (or Boubacar Telli Diallo), Former Diplomat, First Sec. Gen. of the OAU
- Ibrahima Diallo, Guinean football star
- Alpha Yaya Diallo, Guinean musician
- Alpha Yaya Diallo, Former Chef of Labé, arrested by french colonialist
- Almamy Schuman Bah, Guinean football star
- Ibrahima Barry, Co-creator of the Fulfulde Script
- Amadou Diallo, young Guinean resident in the Bronx killed by police in 1999

### Mali

- Adame Ba Konaré, Malian historian and spouse of Alpha Oumar Konaré
- Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Malian author
- Amadou Toumani Touré, Malian President

### Senegal

- Baaba Maal, Senegalese singer
- Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Senegalese writer
- Ibrahim Ba, French-Senegalese former football player
- Mamadou Niang Senegales football player
- Issa Bâ Senegalese football player
- Maba Diakhou Ba Almamy of Rip
- Malick Sy marabout
- Moussa Ba Senegalese professional kickboxer
- Ahmadou Bamba Ba, Marabout, Spiritual Leader

- Akon also known as Alioune Badara Thiam is a Senegalese-American Hip-Hop Artist

## Burkina Faso

- Thomas Sankara, Former President of Burkina Faso
- Youssouf Sambo Bâ, Burkinabe politician
- Bénéwendé Stanislas Sankara, Burkinabe politician

## Cameroon

- Ahmadou Ahidjo, first President of Cameroon
- Issa Hayatou, current President African Football Confederation (CAF)

## Notes

- ↑ Ndukwe 16 (1996) gives a figure of 10 million; Gordon, "Adamawa Fulfulde", says 13 million speakers of all forms of Fulfulde.
- ↑ The letter "ɓ" is an implosive b sound. In the orthography for languages of Guinea (pre-1985), it was written **bh**, so one would have written *Fulbhe* instead of *Fulɓe*. Some people still use this spelling convention.
- ↑ mtDNA of Fulani Nomads and Their Genetic Relationships to Neighboring Sedentary Populations
- ↑ The Fulani/Fulbe People | Thematic Essay | Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- ↑ Pulaaku Ethics

## References

- Almanach de Bruxelles (now a paying site)
- Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.) (2005): "Adamawa Fulfulde". *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 15th ed. Dallas: SIL International. Accessed 25 June 2006.
- Ndukwe, Pat I., Ph.D. (1996). *Fulani*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

## Further reading

- Prof. Mark D. DeLancey's Fulbe studies bibliography, Accessed 25 March 2008.

## External links

- WorldStatesmen - Nigerian Traditional states

## See also

- Wodaabe
- Hausa people
- Mandé people
- Wolof people
- Songhai people

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