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## Fulbe, Fulfulde

**Fulbe** (sing. Pullo) is an ethnonym of a widely dispersed group of West Africans, also known as Fula, Fulani, Peul, Fellata, and **Fulfulde** is the language of the Fulbe, known in the western Sahel as Pular. Fulfulde/Pular is a member of the West Atlantic group of the Niger-Congo language family, along with the Senegambian languages Serer, Wolof, and others. Fulfulde/Pular has multiple dialects and incorporates loanwords from Arabic and from Hausa, Mande, and other West African languages. Linguists render Fulfulde/Pular in Latin script with additional distinctive characters, such as the *ɓ* used to indicate the implosive “b” in “Fulbe.”

### 1. POPULATION AND SOCIETY

The largest Fulbe populations are in Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad, where they are sizeable national minorities. They are smaller minorities in Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Even fewer reside in the Central African Republic, Sudan, and South

Sudan. The Arabian Peninsula is home to a small Fulbe diaspora community, formed by those who made the *hajj* and remained. Members of Fulbe communities were enslaved during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and some stood out in the Americas for their practice of Islam and literacy in Arabic.

Fulbe society is differentiated by kinship, rank, and occupation. Fulbe clans provide social connections across a dispersed community; the four most prominent are Ba (Bah), Bari (Barry), Jallo (Diallo), and So (Soh, Sow). Heads of extended lineages (*ardube*, sing. *ardo*) have local authority, and political leaders with titles associated with pre-colonial polities command considerable respect. Occupational categories include herders, artisans, and farmers. Some artisans and farmers have origins in non-Fulbe communities, having been incorporated initially as slaves a century or more ago. The term for “Muslim scholar” in Fulfulde/Pular is *modibo* (pl. *modibabe*), which is based on the Arabic word *mu’addib* (literate person) and conveys the meaning of “Muslim educator.” Muslim scholars in the middle Senegal River valley are known as *torodbe*