

Fulfulde Language Family Report

Annette Harrison

Cartographer: Colin Davis

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1. Introduction

Fulfulde is a language of the Niger-Congo family, in the West Atlantic branch. In Senegal and Guinea the language is called Pulaar and Pular, respectively. Seventeen African countries from Senegal to Sudan are home to Fulfulde speakers. They are designated by names such as Haalpulaar'en, Fula, Fulbe, Peul, Fulani, and Fellata. This is not the first attempt to map the location of Fulfulde speakers in West Africa. In 1952 De Lavergne de Tressan gathered information from various informants in what was then called the French Sudan. The CNRS (Centre National de Recherche Scientifique) mapped the Fulfulde language continuum and added the names of major dialect areas, information not included by De Lavergne de Tressan. In addition, research organizations in several West African countries have published atlases which include linguistic mapping of Fulfulde dialects within those countries. This latest effort at mapping the Fulfulde dialect continuum draws on these maps, library research, maps and database information from the *Ethnologue*, and data from field linguists working in most countries where Fulfulde is spoken. A bibliography follows.

In addition to the wide geographic area, the great challenge to mapping this continuum consists more in the social dimensions and dynamism of the language. Roger Labatut writes, « ...ce n'est pas à la 'géographie linguistique' qu'on devra avoir recours mais à une 'sociographie linguistique'.(Labatut 1973:165) [we are not dealing with « linguistic geography, » but with « linguistic sociography »]. Fagerberg (1979) grouped the sixteen Fulfulde dialects spoken in Senegal into three major « dialect blocks, » which correspond to three distinct « cultures » and lifestyles. This idea of grouping the dialects by « linguistic sociology » and cultural-linguistic affinity seems a good one for a map like this. Instead of splitting the continuum into as many subdialects as can possibly be identified, we have attempted to group subdialects according to areas of clear communication and shared socioethnic identity. « Clear communication » relates to the linguistic concept of intelligibility which is based on the genetic relationship between speech varieties. The more closely related the speech variety, the lower the barrier to clear communication. This in turn allows for the use of one written standard shared between those closely related speech varieties. By « linguistic sociology » and « cultural- linguistic affinity » we mean that factors such as traditional homeland, cultural heritage, lineage, occupation, and religion strengthen bonds of self-identity, giving special cohesion to a particular group of speakers so that variation in speech becomes relatively unimportant to them. The ideal map of the Fulfulde continuum would be multidimensional, depicting more layers of « linguistic sociology » and « cultural- linguistic affinity » as well as the traditional map of « linguistic geography, » allowing for the reality that in most locations parallel dialects of Fulfulde are spoken.

Several Fulfulde dialect areas on the continuum have names, locations, and general definitions that are more or less generally agreed upon by linguists, anthropologists, and others. These are the Pulaar of Senegal, Pular of Guinea, Fulfulde of Maasina, Fulfulde of Nigeria, and the Fulfulde of the Adamawa highlands in Cameroon. Historically these were areas of Fulani political dominance at some point; today they are part of modern West African nations where there are large Fulani populations. These are also the areas where the Fulani and their language are well documented resulting in a significant body of literature both about the Fulani, their language and providing educational materials for literacy programs. It is worthy to note that these materials are accessible to people living outside of Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and Cameroon. In countries such as Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger, the Fulani and their language have also been well documented, but in comparison the quantity of information and the body of literature available is not nearly as significant as in the first group. Documentation from countries such as Chad, the Central African Republic, and Sudan appears more sparse and difficult to locate. For the areas which are best documented, we hope we have done our homework well so that the Fulfulde dialect areas are represented according to and in agreement with the many scholars in these countries. For the remaining areas, particularly in Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Chad, and the Central African Republic, most of the information comes from people currently working in those countries.

Whenever possible we have followed the guideline of the "autonym" (what the speaker of the language calls his or her language), when labeling dialect areas. The difficulty is that when asked, most speakers simply say they speak "Fulfulde," whether a religious leader in a Senegalese urban locale or a

nomadic herder in eastern Niger. We cannot label every division as "Fulfulde," so we have attempted to find some additional modifier used by Fulfulde speakers which often produces an autonym which is a derivative of historico-political identity or geographic location. For example, the name of the Fulfulde dialect spoken in the region where the towns of Dori, Burkina Faso, Tera, and Niger are found is derived from the historical name for that region, the Liptako, to make "Liptakoore." The Fulfulde spoken in northern Niger and parts of Chad, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic is identified by a name derived from the sociocultural class and heritage of its speakers, the Wodaabe, to make "Wodaande."

The Fulfulde map is an abstract representation of where we believe the speakers of these varieties to be geographically located. We have done our best to represent boundaries as "fuzzy" without allowing the indistinctness of a perceived line of linguistic change to be unhelpful in its vagueness. We have attempted to represent the gradually changing nature of a language continuum through graduating shades of color; the precise points of change cannot be said to be exactly represented on the map. Special acknowledgement and thanks are due to Irene Tucker as coauthor and cartographer for this project.

Special thanks for their important contributions to this map go to: Jean Baumbach, Ted Bergman, Sanni Brah, Ed Brye, George Cail, Kim Cone, Scott and Mary Crickmore, Aboubakar Diallo, Umar Djaouné, Keith and Lorraine Doust, Barrie Evans, Cameron Hamm, Jennifer Harper, Byron Harrison, Doug Higby, Kendall Isaac, Keith and Debbie Kanavel, Keejo Laabol, Isaac Matchoudo, Ron Nelson, Andrew Persson, Mike Rueck, Ken Satterburg, Juerg Stalder, René Vallette, Milton Watt, as well as Steve and Ann White. An important reason for publishing this map is to solicit further information from others knowledgeable in this area. We would appreciate receiving critiques so that the map can be updated and refined as our collective knowledge increases.

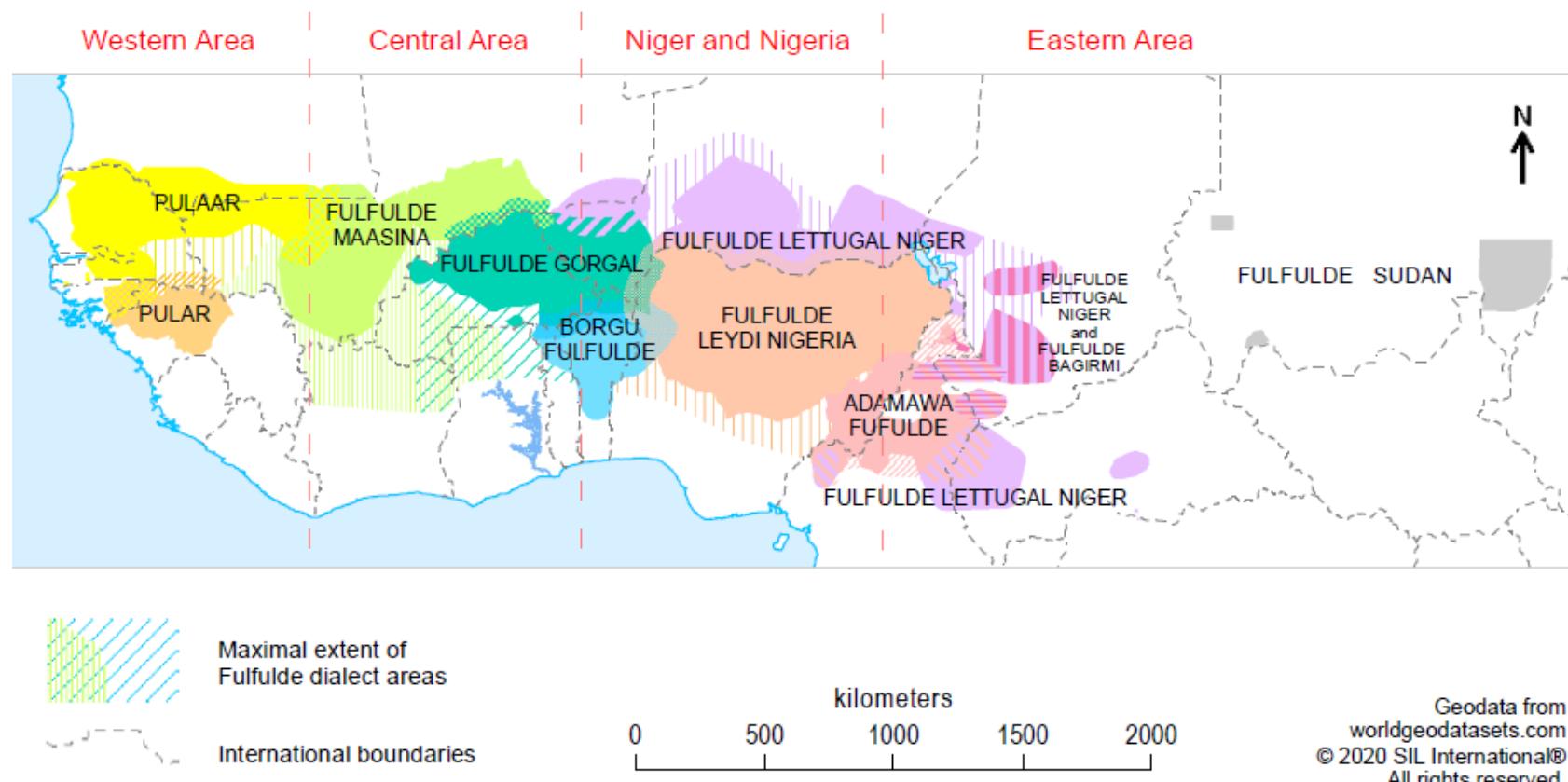
2. Maps

Map 2.1 Fulfulde language continuum

FULFULDE LANGUAGE CONTINUUM

This map shows approximate locations of Fulfulde dialects following the classification proposed by Annette Harrison in 2003.

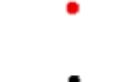
The area maps show subdialects.



Map 2.2 Western area

FULFULDE
LANGUAGE CONTINUUM

WESTERN AREA

-  Maximal extent of dialect areas
-  Subdialect boundaries
-  International boundaries
-  Capital cities
-  Towns
-  Major rivers

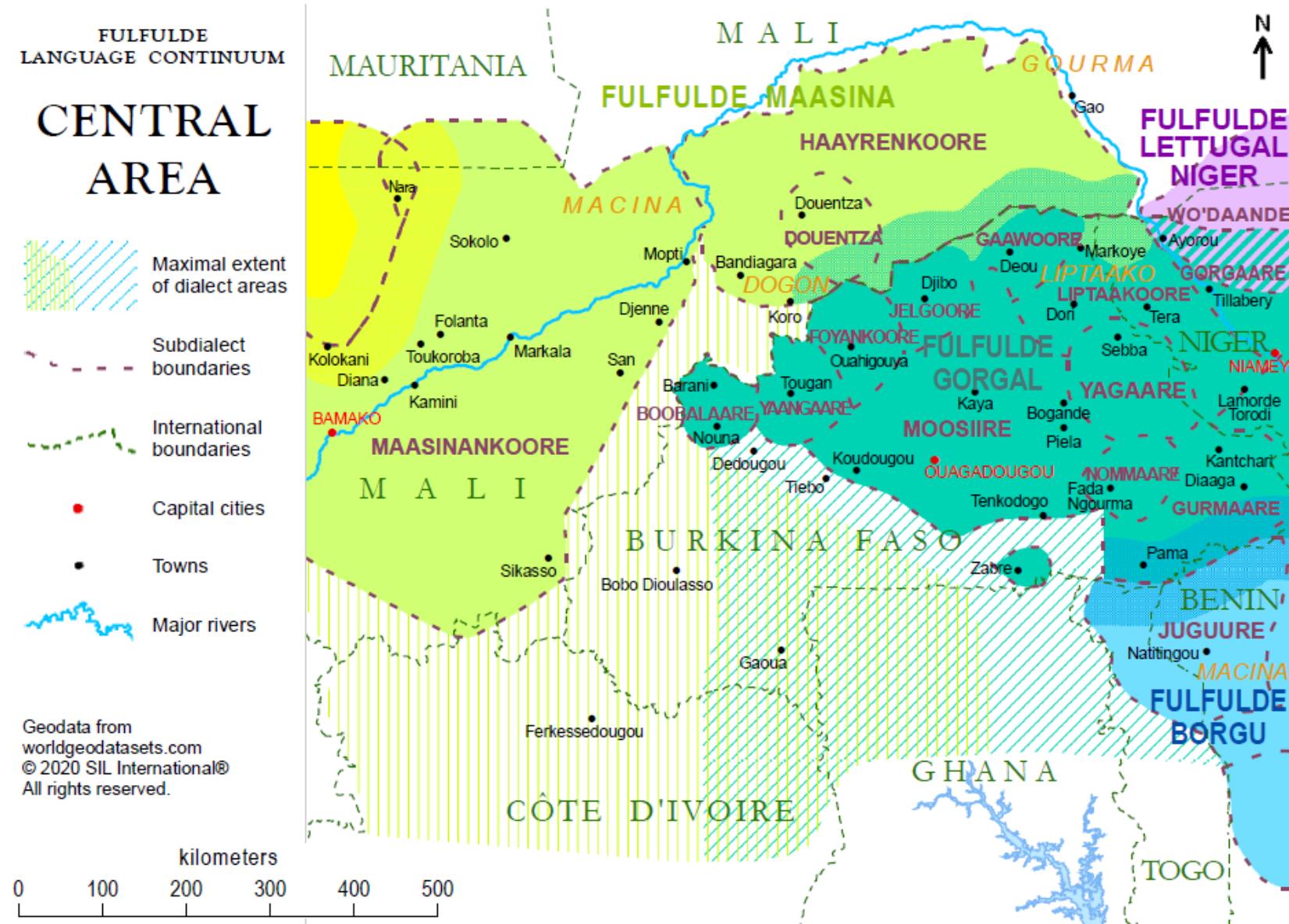
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kilometers

0	100	200	300	400	500
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Map 2.3 Central area



FULFULDE LANGUAGE CONTINUUM NIGER and NIGERIA

- Maximal extent of dialect areas
- Subdialect boundaries
- International boundaries
- Capital cities
- Towns
- Major rivers

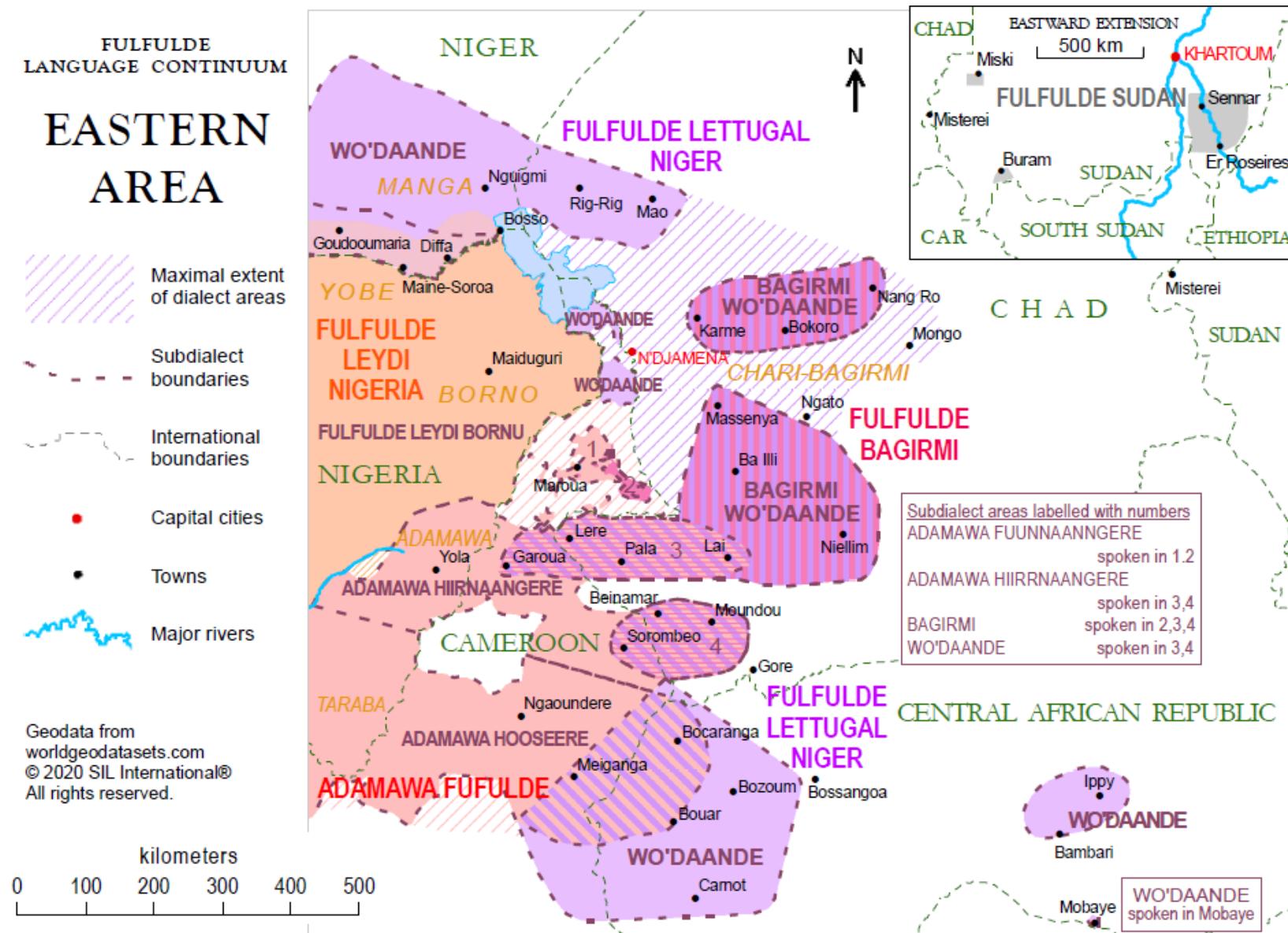
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0 100 200 300 400 500 kilometers

Map 2.4 Niger and Nigeria



Map 2.5 Eastern area



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