The Fulani, who call themselves Fulbe, number nearly 20 million spread across 19 African countries in an area stretching from the shores of Senegal, south to Cameroon, and as far east as Sudan and Ethiopia.

The Fulani range covers an area larger than continental United States and Western Europe combined. Acculturation, assimilation and adaptation are always taking place among Fulani, and these forces significantly affect changes in the Fulani lifestyle. Therefore, any generalization about Fulani culture is tentative.

Niger hosts three main Fulani clans. The Western Fulani number about 547,000 and are considered the purest of all Fulani. Their customs have changed little in hundreds of years, and they have retained a code of high moral behavior. The Sokoto Fulani, who number 751,000, are a semi.nomadic group. Some live in temporary settlements, while others have become influential people living in towns and cities. The Wadabe Fulani is the smallest group, numbering 150,000. They are strictly nomadic herders who consider farming a rejection of their heritage.

The Fulani were the first group of people in West Africa to convert to Islam through jihads, or holy wars. Through this means, they took over much of West Africa and established themselves not only as a religious group but also as a political and economic force.
ASSESSMENT
It is said that to be a Fulani is to be a Muslim. However, the Wodabe have resisted Islam and kept much of their pre-Islamic way of life and beliefs. Most Fulani practice a version of folk Islam, integrating animistic practices into their Muslim religious duties. Most Fulani will frequent local shamans for healing, and many of the witch doctors and medicine men double as Muslim religious leaders.

Currently, some Fulani are returning to their historical jihadist roots and are linking with terrorist groups in an effort to stamp out Christianity. This makes it increasingly difficult to provide them with a genuine introduction to Jesus, the Savior.

APPEAL
As in Jesus’ days on earth, “The kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it” (Matthew 11:12). Fewer than 200 known Fulani believers live in Niger. They face persecution, but they continue to hold firmly to their faith. National church organizations are sending messengers to assist these believers in their efforts to proclaim the gospel to their people.

What about you? Will you commit to advancing the gospel to the Fulani? They are among the largest unreached people groups in the world and have resisted the overtures of gospel messengers for centuries. Is God speaking to you about making a difference by participating in penetrating the Islamic deception blinding the Fulani?

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