

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

The Senufo number 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 and live in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and the extreme south of Mali. They live principally off agriculture fruits and occasionally hunting. Senufo agriculture is typical of the region, which includes millet, sorghum, maize, rice, and yams. Minimal amounts of hunting and fishing also contribute to the local economy.

In addition to a belief in a creator deity, ancestors and nature spirits, a central concept in Senufo religion is a female ancestral spirit called "ancient mother" or "ancient woman," the sacred guiding spirit of each *poro* society. All adult men belong to the poro society, which maintains the continuity of religious and historical traditions, especially through the cult of the ancestors.

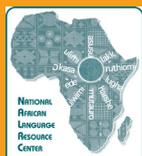
Senufo produce a rich variety of sculptures, mainly associated with the poro society. Sculptors and metal smiths groups responsible for making the cult objects. Endogamous group among them live on their own in a separate part of the village. The attitude shown towards them by other Senufo is a mixture of fear and respect, owing to their privileged relationship with natural forces that they are capable of channeling in a sculpture. Several types of mask are used depending upon the occasion. All Senufo art is made by their specialized artisans, which may diminish regional stylistic differences.

The Senufo are made up of a number of diverse subgroups who migrated into their current location and remained relatively sheltered from intrusive cultures like the Songhai and the Hausa. Although they have certainly borrowed knowledge from their neighbors, they have not had to fear constant attacks and social upheaval.

STUDYING SENUFO IN THE UNITED STATES

Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC website at

<http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>



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SENUFO



SENUFO GIRL

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WHO SPEAKS SENUFO?

The Senufo (Francophone spelling Senoufo is also commonly used) are an ethnolinguistic group composed of diverse subgroups of Gur-speaking people living in an area spanning from southern Mali and the extreme western corner of Burkina Faso to Katiola in Côte d'Ivoire. One group, *Nafana*, is found in north-western Ghana. The Senufo number somewhere between 1.5 and 2.7 million and speak the various Senufo languages. Korhogo, an ancient town in northern Côte d'Ivoire dating from the 13th century, is the capital of the Senufo people. The Senufo are predominantly an agricultural people cultivating millet, yams, peanut, and rice.

Daily life for the Senufo people revolves around the religious rituals that enable them to placate deities they respect and fear through means of divination practices and wearing of specially crafted brass jewelry. The Senufo employ the *Fo* bracelet, which contains one of the culture's most prominent designs, a python, in a variety of purposes to suit the spiritual and aesthetic needs of the society. The *Sandogo* is an authoritative women's social order responsible for sustaining positive relationships with the spiritual world through divination and for protecting the purity of each kinship group. The *Sandobele* are diviners within the Sandogo society who diagnose and resolve issues within the community. Although the Sandogo is usually considered a women's society, men who are called to the profession and inherit through the matrilineal line are permitted to become diviners.

The Senufo or Senufic language comprises of 15 languages spoken by the Senufo in the north of Ivory Coast, the south of Mali and the southwest of Burkina Faso. Senufo languages are generally considered a branch of the Gur sub-family of Niger-Congo languages. The Senufo number somewhere between 1.5 and 2.7 million and speak the various Senufo languages

Students interested in African Art, African history, anthropology, archaeology, international relations, government work and non-governmental organization work will find Senufo a valuable language to study.



Diluted kaolin clay is applied to a Senufo girl before she performs a traditional dance in Diourouzon, Ivory Coast



Senufo people playing ncegele



Senufo Mask



Senufo Ritual Dance



A balafon festival of the Senufo people