

SUSU

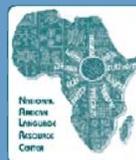
LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Susu is a Mande language in the Niger-Congo classification. It is also sometimes referred to as Soussou. Susu is a major trade language in the coastal region of Guinea and also shares many similarities with Yalunka language. The Susu are predominantly Muslim although there is a minority group of Christians and a small amount of traditional worshippers. The family is central to Susu culture. Extended families often share one residence. Due to dominant presence of Islam, polygamy is also accepted if one can afford more than one wife. The extended family is also highly valued in rural areas as there are more hands to help out with farming. As far as gender roles go, males are traditionally responsible for farming, large scale trade, and other activities that bring substantial income to the family. Women usually engage in palm oil production, soap production, peanut oil production, small-scale farming to serve the family, and small-scale trade. Women are also responsible for caring for the children, cooking food for the family, and cleaning the house.

In addition to their roles as traders, the farmers, fisherman, and miners, the Susu are also highly skilled in leather and metal making. Furthermore, *djembe drum* is an important cultural symbol. The Susu carve djembes and are known around the world for their style of drumming and their accompanying dance.

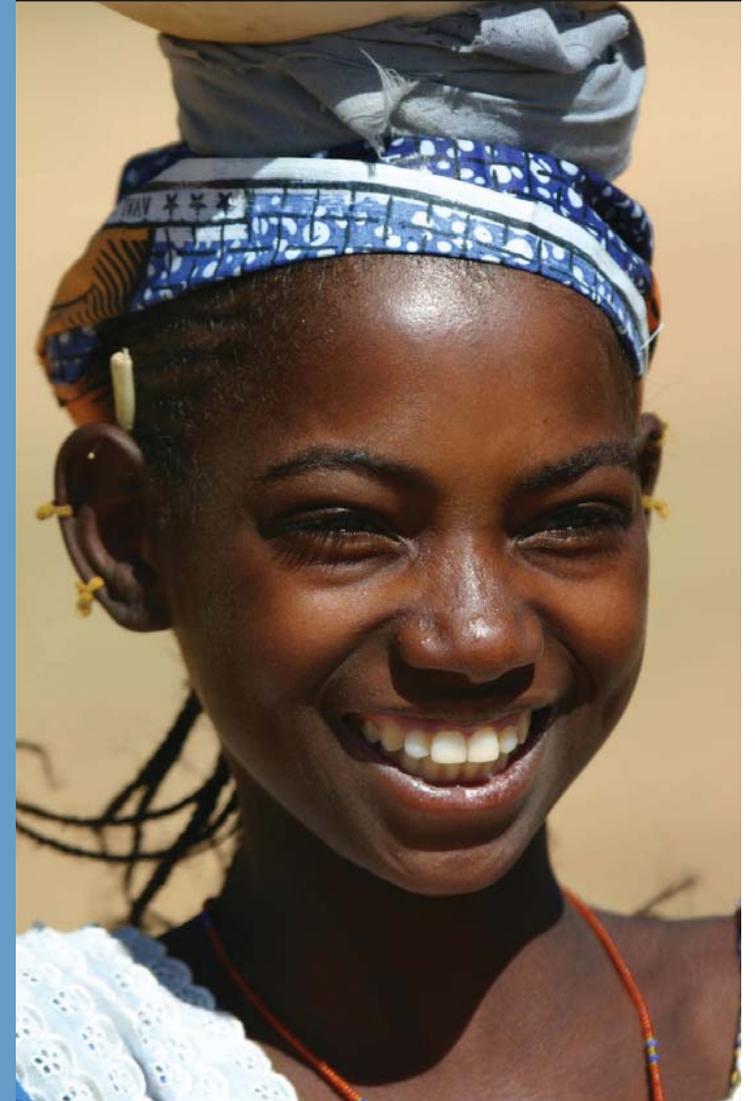
STUDYING SUSU IN THE UNITED STATES

Please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC website at <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>



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SUSU GIRL

NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE
RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)

WHO SPEAKS SUSU

The Susu are believed to be descendants of the 13th century Mali Empire. They migrated to the Fouta Djallon, a lush mountainous region in Middle Guinea. It is believed that at this time, the Susu and the Yalunka were a homogeneous ethnic group due to a high degree of similarity between the two languages. The two groups split apart when the Susu were driven out in 1725 by the Fulani in a Jihad. The Susu then migrated to the coastal regions of Guinea where they currently reside and the Yalunka relocated farther north towards present day Senegal.

The Susu people have always inhabited marshy areas near waterways. Therefore, farming has always served as the backbone of their economy. Rice and millet are the two most common Susu crops along with mangoes, pineapple, and coconut. Due to their location on the coast, the Susu have traditionally dominated trade especially in and around the Guinean capital Conakry. Furthermore, due to their proximity to water, the Susu have both fed themselves and made a living out of fishing and salt mining. The Susu traditionally organized themselves into villages ruled by chiefs and groups of elders. The villages were comprised of huts made of cement blocks or mud and roofed with either corrugated iron or thatch depending on what materials were available.

WHY STUDY SUSU

Susu is one of the main languages of Guinea. It has close to 1.1 million speakers. There are also small Susu-speaking populations in Sierra Leone and Mali. Susu is a major trade language and is one of the most commonly spoken languages in coastal regions of Guinea. In Sierra Leone, it is the most commonly heard in the Kambia, Bombali and Port Loko districts. There are many reasons to study Susu due to the language's prominence in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Diaspora. The Peace Corps volunteers, aid workers, and those interested in doing business in Guinea will find the language particularly useful. Furthermore, the students who are interested in the African history, African art, anthropology, ethno-linguistics, and African music will have an interest in Susu.

Here are some common Susu greetings:

- I kena.....Good morning
- Danbaya go?.....How is the family?
- A la tantu.....Praise God
- Tana yo mu e ma.....They are fine.
- I nunmare.....Good evening
- Tana mu na na?.....Is everything okay?
- Tana yo mu na.....Everything is okay.
- Dimee go?.....How are the children?
- Tana yo mu e ma.....They are fine
- I nuwali.....Goodbye.



susu collector and customer-in Ghana



Susu Women Collectors



Djembe drummer