

CULTURAL RESUME

THE REPUBLIC OF GAMBIA

SS 112 INTERPERSONAL CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Republic of The Gambia is the official name of The Gambia. The country was named after the Gambia River, which flows from East to West for three hundred miles, the entire length of the country. Gambia is a small country with a population of 1.2 million. It straddles the Gambia River on either side.

HISTORY

Sir Dauda Jawara was The Gambia's leader from independence in 1965 until he was ousted in 1994

1889 - Present boundaries of The Gambia set by agreement between Britain and France; five years later it becomes a British protectorate until its independence in 1965.

1982 - The Gambia and Senegal form a loose confederation called Senegambia, which collapses in 1989.

1994 - Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh takes over the country in a coup. He is elected president two years later in a vote that three major political parties were barred from taking part in. He goes on to win three more elections and defeat several coup attempts.

2013 - President Jammeh announces Gambia's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, describing it as a "neo-colonial institution". Critics say the move was prompted by wide-spread international condemnation over the government's human rights violations.

2015 - President Jammeh declares the country an Islamic republic to break from the country's "colonial legacy".

2016 - President Jammeh's 22-year-rule ends in a shock election defeat by Adama Barrow. Mr Jammeh chooses exile in Equatorial Guinea.

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LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY. Gambia is on the western coast of Africa, surrounded on three sides by Senegal. Situated on a sandy peninsula between the mouth of the Gambia River and the Atlantic Ocean, Banjul, the capital, was founded by the British as Bathurst in 1816 as a base for suppressing the slave trade. The Gambians changed its name to Banjul in 1973, eight years after independence. Gambia is the smallest country in Africa with a total area of 4,363 square miles (11,300 square kilometers), slightly less than twice the size of Delaware. Gambia has the typical West African climate: there is a hot, rainy season (June to November), and a cooler, dry season (November to May). It is a relatively flat land with its lowest point being sea level at the Atlantic Ocean with the maximum elevation being 174 Feet (53 meters) in the surrounding low hills. The Gambia River is the dominant geographical feature of the country, providing both a useful means of transportation and irrigation as well as a rich ground for fishing, boating, and sailing.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Despite its small size (10,000 sq. km) [The Gambia](#) is a diverse multi-cultural society with many [ethnic groups](#) and where most people are as a result multi-lingual. Indeed it is not uncommon to find people being able to speak 3 to 4 local [languages](#). Its size and the tempering influence of [Islam](#) in the Gambia context may indeed explain why it has a reputation for being a peaceful country as compared to that of other countries in Africa there is a minimum of inter-tribal and racial frictions.



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Though Gambians themselves talk about belonging to this or that tribe the reality is that with the arrival of the [Mandingo](#), [Wolof](#), [Fula](#) (Fulbe), and other migrants into the [river](#) valley (circa 1200-1800) a lot of inter-marriage and adoption of other cultures and practices has



Taken place between these different ethnic groups. This has had the effect of blurring what differentiates one group of society from another. Traditionally children will take on the tribal identity of their father.

CULTURE & TRADITIONS:

Different ethnic groups do have variations in the way they conduct marriage weddings, funerals, however, it is Islam which is the over-riding guide to such ceremonies. Indeed, those that introduced the religion itself back in the 1800's, just like Christianity, recognized that some cultural practices had to be tolerated as long as the principle of the one God was upheld. Furthermore Christians have different local customs regarding births, deaths and marriages. So from the above it would be difficult to try to summaries what Gambian culture and tradition

actually is. It is more of a mosaic of cultures that very often overlap and sometimes even merge or absorb other traditional practices such as the some of the Tukolor in the distant past.

Furthermore, historically small breakaway groups of a particular tribe has been known to be absorbed by another due to war or voluntarily. The biggest noticeable difference between people today is class.

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TRADITIONAL VALUES:

While urban migration, development projects, and modernization are bringing more and more Gambians into contact with Western habits and values, the traditional emphasis on the extended family, as well as indigenous forms of dress and celebration, remain integral to parts of everyday life. Over 80 percent of Gambians live in rural villages, although increasing numbers of young people come to the capital, Banjul, in search of work and education which has further led to the greater cultural and blood mixing of people.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

On 31 December 2014, a coup was attempted when a military deserter along with supporters attacked the presidential palace. The coup failed and the alleged ringleader, Lamin Sanneh, was amongst those killed by forces loyal to Jammeh.

Following the [1 December 2016 elections](#), the elections commission declared [Adama Barrow](#) the winner of the presidential election.^[3] Jammeh, who had ruled for 22 years, first announced he would step down after losing the 2016 election before declaring the results void and calling for a

new vote, sparking a [constitutional crisis](#) and leading to an [invasion](#) by an [ECOWAS](#) coalition.

[4] On 20 January 2017, Jammeh announced that he had agreed to step down and would leave the country allowing Barrow to take up office.[5]

REFERENCES

<https://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Gambia.html>