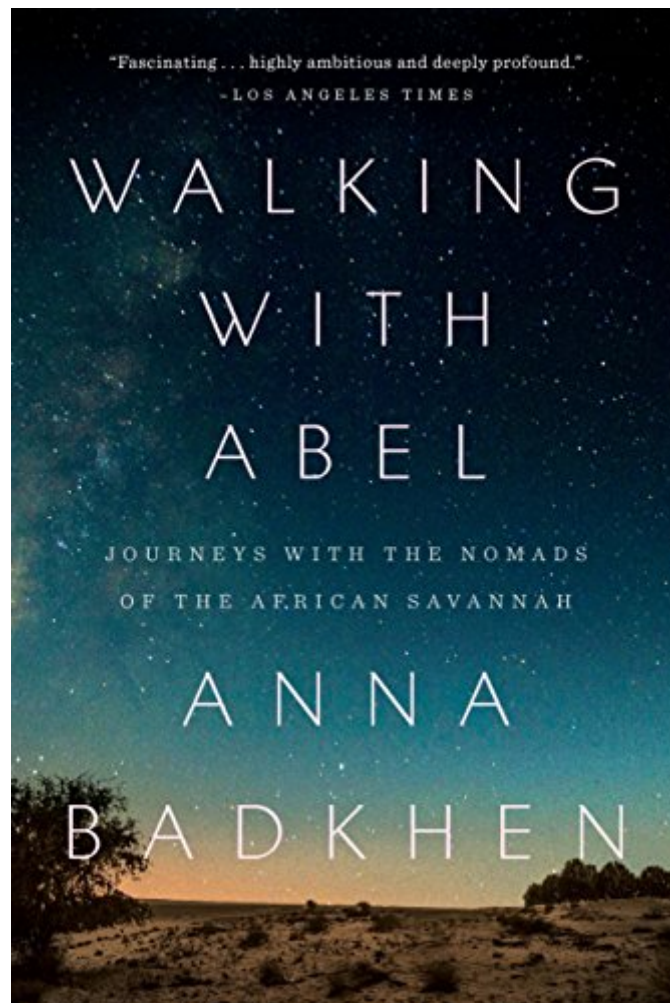




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# Walking With Abel: Journeys With The Nomads Of The African Savannah



## Synopsis

Look out for Anna Badkhen's new book, *Fisherman's Blues: A West African Community at Sea*, on sale March 2018. An intrepid journalist joins the planet's largest group of nomads on an annual migration that, like them, has endured for centuries. Anna Badkhen has forged a career chronicling life in extremis around the world, from war-torn Afghanistan to the border regions of the American Southwest. In *Walking with Abel*, she embeds herself with a family of Fulani cowboys—nomadic herders in Mali's Sahel grasslands—as they embark on their annual migration across the savanna. It's a cycle that connects the Fulani to their past even as their present is increasingly under threat—from Islamic militants, climate change, and the ever-encroaching urbanization that lures away their young. The Fulani, though, are no strangers to uncertainty—brilliantly resourceful and resilient, they've contended with famines, droughts, and wars for centuries. Dubbed "Anna Ba" by the nomads, who embrace her as one of theirs, Badkhen narrates the Fulani's journeys and her own with compassion and keen observation, transporting us from the Neolithic Sahara crisscrossed by rivers and abundant with wildlife to obelisk forests where the Fulani's Stone Age ancestors painted tributes to cattle. As they cross the Sahel, the savanna belt that stretches from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, they accompany themselves with Fulani music they download to their cell phones and tales of herders and hustlers, griots and holy men, infused with the myths the Fulani tell themselves to ground their past, make sense of their identity, and safeguard their—our—future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author of this absorbing book has managed to do something remarkable: herself become close to a large Fulani nomad family in the course of a track and to write about it so vividly and with such empathy that I felt part of it. As we go along we meet patriarch,, his current wife, the past and deceased wife, his sons and other men and women in the family. It doesn't take long to have a sense of their personalities and their lives. They are engaged in a migration with their cattle that has taken place annually for centuries. There are references to 2013 and French military aircraft overhead, cell phones, and call of the cities to the youth. All this is done subtly as we live with and admire the progress of these people. It is set in the sub Sahara region of theASahel in Mali and Niger, a flat land that tries to hard pan in the dry season, and is lush grass when the rains come. How splendid to have an insight into this way of life.

Truly one of the best book I have ever read. It takes you on a journey across Africa, but soon you realize that the way across the desert has much wider meaning. You start to be involved as if it's a thriller....

Imagine silhouettes against the fading light of the sun, walking out of a red desert as if stepping out of the beginning of time. Imagine them to be a people tramping across the earth, following the same paths as their forebears, out of the past and into tomorrow, ever wandering. Imagine what they would say, what myths they would make, what pain they would know, and what love they would share. That's what reading Anna Badkhen's *Walking with Abel* feels like. The brave and observant Ms. Badkhen spends a year with the Diakayates, a family of nomad cowboys who shepherd their cattle through Mali in West Africa. Through her eyes and lyrical prose, we learn of an ancient way of life that has remained mostly unchanged throughout the ages. These are people who understand their world to be full of meaning and spirits, omens and hardships. They understand cows the way most people understand their dogs and cats, and perhaps even more so. They persist under the

scourge of drought, the threat of war, and the encroachment of the modern world. Ms. Badkhen guides us through her firsthand experiences, living as the Fulani live, taking in what she sees and communicating through prose that reaches near poetry. Yet she retains an unflinching view of the harsh realities the Fulani face, and with grace and humility reveals a beautiful culture that like all others must contend with tragedy. This is simply a great book, one that deals with loss both personal and universal, that smiles at the sometimes-absurdities of human relationships. Most of all it celebrates life through the lens of an existence few in the West would ever wish for, revealing that joy can bloom in the hardest of lands. Pick it up and be transported. You'll see the world is a much bigger place than you've imagined.

Little new information and little sense of the internal reality of these tribes. The only character development was of the author; way too much "I" and allusions to her sadness. I was more interested in the native people, but most of the book dealt with outward observations and little about how they felt and what their life expectations were.

The author helped me join with a way of life, a philosophy of life, very alien to my own. To answer the question, "where are you from" with "I am from here" made me stop and reexamine my one view of the world and consider how different my view would be had I been born to this people. I salute Anna Badken and her journey.

Prose, poetic, GREAT!

Thank you

Beautifully written, but the story line really did lag.

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