

THE FULBE OR FULANI OF MALI AND THEIR CULTURE

by Ahmadou Hampate Bâ

The Fulbe or Fulani are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa South of the Sahara, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean.

White among the Blacks, black among the Whites, with their light-coloured eyes and bronze complexion like the Yemeni, they are the product of a cross-breeding which has not yet been clearly determined. One thing is certain: the Fulani are white half breeds with a clear predominance of Semitic or Hamitic blood and perhaps both simultaneously.

They call themselves "Fulbe" which in the singular is "Pullo". This name is derived from the verbal root "fullude", to cover with dust, unless, as Maurice Delafosse suggests, it comes from the name "Ful", a name that appears in the Bible.

However that may be, the Fulani people who number nearly six million are scattered over the African savannah from East to West, a distance of about six thousand kilometres.

Here are a few of the names which have been given to them:

The French call them "Peuls" or "Peulhs",

The Germans: "Ful",

The Hausa and the English: "Fulani",

The Arabs: "Fulata", "Fellata",

for the Jolof and the Serere they are the "Tukolor" or "Toucouleur".

As regards nicknames, the Fulani have been dubbed, among other names; "ndyobi", which means frail, or "kelenke", which means tightly belted. The Mali Bambara call them "Fulakenin": little Fulani chaps, whipper-snappers.

In their turn the Fulani have a thousand nicknames for those who give them such derisive names. Thus if a Bambara calls out to a Fulani "Fulakenin", the Fulani retorts: "What did you say "tan demoru"?, which means son of a chimpanzee. Although sometimes ill-natured these little pleasantries do not lead to anything. It is the so-called "sanankunya law". It allows the various ethnic groups in West Africa to guy each other off-hand, without any kind of consideration. The ethnologists have called this custom "kinship joking".

It constitutes a law which lets the peoples, families or two individuals to amuse themselves at the expense of others and tell each other some hard truths without it being considered an insult and still less a manifestation of contempt which might entail serious incidents.

Thus wishing to know the origin of the Fulani, the Bambara of Mali tell the following story. I give the version of my friend Sado Diarra, Chief of the village of Yeremadio, near Bamako.

"The Fulani", Sado Diarra said, "are a surprising mixture. A white river in a country of black water; a black river in a country of white water, a puzzling population which capricious whirlwinds have brought from the rising sun and spread nearly everywhere from East to West. In a black country they are like ants that destroy the ripe fruit, settle down without permission, strike camp without waving good-bye, a race of voluble fly-aways, unceasingly about to come or go, according to the state of the water-holes or grazing lands..."

In their answer back to the Bambara, the Fulani define their friends thus: (the thread of the story comes from Kourka of Wourouguiya in Macina).

"What is a Bambara?"

"A man hastily hacked by God off the trunk of a tree of little value. A few blows of the axe and behold this Bambara fellow coming out of the workshop with a head as flat as a harvest basket upside-down, a nose like a slice of bread and butter that has been trampled on. Condemned to carry a hoe on his shoulder and a bundle of wood on his head, the Bambara is a man whose life will be spent between his fetid chicken roost and the stinking termites' nest. A thick moustache and a hard beard, the rough hair of the Bambara is always yellow from smoke or tobacco. His pockets full of rags, his satchel stuffed with fetishes, the mind of the pure-blooded Bambara is in his jowl rather than in his

brain. Son of Nia and Niele, eaters of the rotten grains of Nere —“Ini segne nteri”: “All hail, my friend!”

Let the Bambara and Fulani shoot their arrows at each other and ask the Europeans who are interested what they think of the Fulani.

The Origins

The twenty-five or thirty Europeans who are specialists or amateurs, as regards the Fulani, are far from being in agreement.

Some writers, struck perhaps by the physical beauty of the Fulani wanted to make them come from Polynesia and supported their thesis on analogies of language. This theory is held by some authors to be pure fancy and indeed absurd. Of those who dispute the South Sea origin of the Fulani some give them a Berber origin, going back to the Semites, but in this chain several links are missing... “Take it easy,” still others cry out, who, being very daring, are all the more convinced and decided to convince others, “the Fulani? You are far from the truth! They are pure and perfect Lybians, the direct issue of the Roman legionnaires.” To all these assumptions must be added the version according to which the Fulani are Berber—Ethiopians. And finally, to cap the lot, I must quote the theory put out by some muslim scholars who the better to court the Fulani make them first cousins of Mohammed.

But against this version which cannot be imputed to European specialists there is the tale of the Fulani Burure (Fulani of the bush, a pastoral people), not to be confused with the Fulani Bororo, Fulani of the Ba clan. Their genealogy goes back much further than Ogba, the Arab ancestor who is supposed to have engendered the Fulani. Can one be older than one’s first ancestor? In my opinion this last theory is an effect of the faith of believers who in their excessive zeal permit themselves many things. They let themselves go, gently or violently, to anything which can refurbish their moslem status. Nevertheless, I do not exclude the possibility that a handful of Fulani, lost in the multitude, may be descended from the Arabs. There is at present in Black Africa quite a large colony of European half-breeds, born of black women. A few Lybian-Syrian half-breeds have been swallowed up by them. Still they also are considered to be European half-breeds. And by Europeans I mean all the races which people Europe and not only French and Germans. What is true

of this half-breed situation is probably true also of the Fulani half-breeds in the past. An Arab descent and even a Roman descent in the lineage of the Fulani is therefore admissible.

In fact we have a number of theories to throw light on our search for the origin of the Fulani. Without desiring to deprive these assumptions of any likelihood I must confess that they do not give me entire satisfaction. I consider them to be traps between which we must proceed with great prudence so as not to be caught.

Until such time as well tested linguistic methods are applied and the Fulani specialists themselves collaborate with the European specialists and until anthropology supported by archeology comes to the assistance of the research workers and helps to undo the complicated knot which has been woven around the origin of the Fulani, let us find out what those most interested in the matter themselves think of this enigma.

I would be greatly embarrassed if you were to ask me to describe the countries of the Fulani and give their latitude and longitude. Why? Because a genesis should properly begin:

"In the beginning there was this and there was that... "and the story tells where it took place. And the place becomes the habitat, the creature's lair.

Alas! This cannot be said of the creation of the Fulani. For them the formula would be quite different. It might run as follows:

"There were Whites, there were Blacks. And the Whites saw that the Black women were beautiful.

"And the Whites said that the Black women were good."

Thus were the Fulani procreated! And the Fulani appeared between the two races like an unforeseen dawn between the right and the morning of a day that has no date.

They were scattered like will-o'-the-wisps in every corner of the African savannah, the playthings of a thousand more or less determined historical circumstances so that to-day "they are present everywhere but domiciled nowhere".

There is no doubt at all: the Fulani have forgotten, perhaps they never knew whence they came and who they were.

Happily for them, though they may be ignorant of the source of their race and their land of origin, they do know "who they have become".

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And this idea perforce takes the place for them of genealogy and fatherland and is above all a reason to fight for life and achieve a status.

"Fula baa yere don", which means the Fulani knows himself—according to a popular Bambara saying.

At times oppressed and dispersed in a form of diaspora or forcibly settled in some place of concentration, at times themselves the oppressors destroying everything in their way; at certain times humble converts and at others fanatic and fiery moslem proselytizers, the Fulani are proud with a pride that borders on arrogance.

Capable of sacrificing their souls out of friendship and devotion, they do not suffer long the disdain of others. The least show of contempt may rouse their ire and lead to the immediate and unerring use of their lance, a weapon quick and sure.

Capable of completely effacing themselves if well treated and honoured, they will impose themselves with the violence of a hurricane or with extreme subtlety if an attempt is made to push them brutally aside.

They know no political frontier since living a wandering life they are to be found everywhere.

Nature alone has been able to restrict their wanderings.

They take care not to enter the Sahara where their animals would suffer from hunger and thirst, just as they refuse to go down into the tropical forests where the same animals would be bitten by the tse-tse fly and drowned in the great rains of the South.

Before part of them settled down to a sedentary life and founded a political and military power some, 1, 400 years B. C. the Fulani had patriarchs with priestly functions who took the place of administration.

Their religion was the cult of the cow. In Mali the Fulani people or "Pulaaku" is composed of 4 large tribes: Diallo, Bâ, Sidibe and Sangare. Each of these tribes has given rise to sub-tribes.

The Diallo tribe produced: Dial, Ka, Kane, Soufountera.

The Ba tribe has produced: Ball, Bakh, Balde, Nuba, M'Bake, Diaguite, Diagayete, Boli.

The Sidibe tribe has produced: So.

The Sangare tribe has produced: Bary.

The Fulani community life is most interesting. It shows how this people, consisting at the beginning of four tribes has multiplied and created castes and classes in the image of the African traditions.

They have succeeded in founding large empires solidly organised in their economic and political structures.

By settling down they lost the purity of their colour but enriched themselves by their contact with new traditions.

Thus in Macina ¹, which we know thoroughly, they were able on the basis of existing local ideas to establish the laws of land tenure.

In a word, they reshaped their traditions and those of the peoples they administered and used them as a support for the elements of the jurisprudence of their theocratic empire which is based on Islam.

There were Fulani kingdoms almost everywhere: at Fouta Toro, Fouta Djallon, Macina, Bakhounou, in the Djilgodji, Liptako, Nigeria, Cameroon, etc.

In Mali, out of a population of four million made up of twenty-two tribes, the Fulani account for 600,000.

They are nearly one million in the Republic of Guinea.

In West Africa, in Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Niger, Dahomey, Senegal and in Mauretania, there are three million Fulani.

The Fulani have displayed the genius of their race everywhere, either by establishing social, political and religious institutions, or by adapting themselves when in the minority to the customs and traditions of their hosts or administrators.

Thanks to this flexibility in understanding events, they have been able to get along with everybody and, if no compromise was possible, to fight it out or emigrate further afield.

It is this psychological and historical fact which, added to the need to feed their cattle, justifies their presence everywhere in the African savannah, retaining everywhere the same spirit.

The greatest subject of dispute between the Fulani and their autochthonous hosts is the oldest quarrel in the world. It is that which has always opposed the farmer and the herdsman and the origin of which can be traced back to Cain and Abel in the Bible.

1. A. Hampate Bâ and J. Daget, "The Peul Empire of Macina". Paris, 1962.

And yet, in the case of the Fulani, moral obligations did not solely concern the individuals of the same clan. They extend to the whole race and even further, to all the sons of Adam and even to those animals that do not hurt man.

All the sons of Adam are as one man. The Fulani trace the origin of their law to extend their moral obligations to all mankind back to this unity of origin.

One day we asked our Guru, our Holy Teacher, Tierno Bokar, the wise Man of Bandiagara², what in his opinion the "insaaniil kaamil", the prefect man, the ideal human being, is like.

He replied with that smile which gave his face such a heavenly look and at the same time so human, so close to the poor!

"The man who can disapprove but never hates. He seeks in every man that which is common to them both with the purpose of forming on that foundation the understanding that renders human intercourse so human, so pleasant, so productive.

"He knows how to understand others and how to understand those who have not understood him.

"His eyes gleam with loyalty. His whole being is filled with probity, his right hand shines with honesty, his left sparkling with truth.

"He is faithful to his promises, faithful to his friendships, faithful to the given word".

Speech is the most marvellous and also the most dangerous of the gifts of God and therefore the wise man speaks only with care and due measure and above all with prudence.

The Ancestors of the Fulani

When one speaks of the Fulani ancestors one can only recount historical myths and legends. Among other traditions some Fulani make their ancestors come from the Yemen, from Egypt and Tour. This last place is said to be a mountain in the Near East, which hard-toiling authors have identified with Sinai.

However that may be, the Fulani have wandered for centuries, divided into three main groups, each engaged in its special form of livestock breeding and having an animal a symbol if not as a god.

2. A. Hampate Bâ and M. Cardaire, "Tierno Bokar, the Wise Man of Bandiagara", Presence Africaine, 1957.

There were and there still are to-day the "Na'inkoobe" who breed only cattle: they took a bull as their sacred animal.

The "Baalinkoobe" who rear only sheep: they had for their sacred animal the ram.

And lastly the "Be' inkoobe" who rear but goats and had for their sacred animal the he-goat.

There is a legend that the Fulani inhabited a prosperous country prolific in human births with an insignificant mortality. The animal stock doubled every year. The largest town of this country was called "Yooya". One day some persons among the Fulani were guilty of a grave transgression against the custom. And "Geno", the Eternal God of the Fulani, was angry and cursed the country on account of the sin that had been committed and which had offended him. The beautiful meadows were transformed into dry bush. The lakes became swamps. The rivers dried up. The trees withered. The mountains were laid bare. The desolation was complete. The country became the land of death. The Fulani fled to more clement climes. But since, consciously or unconsciously, because many have forgotten their history, the Fulani, and above all the women, continue to mention the name of "Yooyo"—their Paradise Lost—in their lamentations every time they are stricken by misfortune.

In doing so they place their right hand on their forehead so as to cover the eyes or they place both hands on the top of the skull and give vent to the ritual cry: "Yooyo! Yooyo mi boni!" which can be translated as "O! Yooyo, help me. I am lost!"

One of the known ancestors of the Fulani is "Bu Toorin". He is said to be descended from an important personage belonging to a branch of the Semites who instead of rejoining Palestine at the time of the return of the children of Israel under the leadership of Moussa (Moses) plunged into Black Africa. J.L. Monod puts the date of this event at 370 B. C.

One thing is certain: some Jews at a very early date penetrated into the present country of Mali. This is remembered in Macina and particularly at Dia and in the Ouagadou. In Mauritania there is still a tribe which continues to call itself Beni-Israel. It can be presumed, therefore, until such time as the legend is confirmed or invalidated by scientific evidence, that at least a fraction of the Fulani and Moors could have had a strain of Jewish blood or Judeo-Syrian blood. Bu Toorin engendered six male children:

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| 1. Helleere | 3. Sorfoy | 5. Agna |
| 2. Mangay | 4. Eli Bana | 6. Tooli-Maga |

All the red Fulani of Senegal, that is, of the country called Toro in memory of Tour whence the Fulani came, all those of the Waalo valley and those of Dyeerithe upper bushlands—all are descended from Bu Toorin by one of his six sons. One does not speak of the daughters of Bu Toorin. It is curious that there is no mention either in the Bible of Adam's daughters.

Here is a specimen of genealogy. It was related to me by Molam Gawlo of N'Diayenne in Futa, Senegal. He declaims it at festivals or merely to give pleasure. It is something learnt by heart and which is handed down from father to son with priestly gravity.

"Bu Toorin, the man of Toro whose remote ancestors came from the Rising sun, married. He married in the country of hospitable Blacks and among themselves the Blacks were not enemies of strangers.

"God wished and was willing, Bu Toorin engendered Helleere, his first born. He dedicated him to Ham, the divinity or the ancestor of his race.

"Helleere grew up. Helleere took unto himself a wife. Helleere engendered a male child and he called his son Maani.

"Maani's loins were more fruitful than those of his father, but less prolific than those of his grand-father Bu Toorin.

"Maani married. Maani engendered two sons: Andabi (also pronounced Annadi) and Dyakeere.

"Andabi, son of Maani, son of Helleere, son of Bu Toorin, like his father, engendered two male children.

"He caused them to be nursed at the breast of a woman who was not their natural mother.

"He called the elder Delo and the younger Deede.

"Deede was to repeat the sterility of his great grand-father, Helleere.

"Delo grew up. He married many wives, but he had only one male child. He called him Hamme.

"Hamme, the son of Delo, engendered a boy. Unhappily this boy was marked by fate.

"He was born at a time when a cow was giving birth to a calf of ill omen, when a turtle-dove, harbinger of bad news, perched

on a dead branch was cooing a sad song, the song of the animal whose tail has been docked.

"The son of Hamme was baptised Gilewel, a diminutive name, a name of contempt.

"Gilewel grew up. Gilewel took to himself a wife from where the males of his family usually took their wives.

"Gilewel engendered a daughter. He gave her the name of Fatumata.

"Fatumata, daughter of Gilewel, did not find a partner among the males of her race, because she bore a foreign name. She was obliged to marry a foreigner. She left her family to follow that of her husband. She bore sons and daughters. But her children were not permitted to sacrifice to "Geno". They could not become herdsmen. They became fishermen. They formed a new race, that of the Subalbe. They adopted the language of the Fulani and lived together in Futa-Senegal."

This shows how genealogy and history become blended together and preserved orally in the memory, like rods of parchment in cases of precious metal.

The case of Fatumata Gilewel shows, moreover, how Fula-speaking branches come into being and graft themselves into one of the four main branches of the Fulani stock.

The Old Traditions

The Fulani have preserved the memory, above all in the legends current in Macina, of a people of giants whom they discovered in the valleys strewn about the savannah South of the Sahara.

In the district of Bandiagara, chief-town of the country of the Dogons, not far from Monti where the Niger and the Bani meet, the name of the last known giant of the country has been preserved.

He was called Arambiya Soma. The race to which he belonged was called Donno.

To give some idea of the strength of the Donno, one is still shown to-day the enormous stones which they placed in the ground to mark their way.

One is also told that on the death of his mother which occurred at Bambara Marwde, Arambiya Soma gave vent to a cry which was heard at Gilewel, Labou and Houré Weendu, within a radius of 40 or 45 km.

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The stones fixed in the ground by the Donno were called Tel-luwol.

The Fulani also remember another race. It was a race of dwarfs and they were called the Tellem. They lived on top of the cliffs. The Tellem were the real natives of the country.

The Donno and the Tellem did not live on good terms together. The former massacred the latter.

The Donno were physically strong and cruel, but the Tellem were sorcerers, evil magicians.

They never failed to play tricks upon their enemies. If one is the less strong, says a proverb inherited from the Tellem, in order to survive, one must hide beneath a shield of patience bristling with wiles.

The Fulani tribes from Bakhunu, Baghana, Mara and Ouagadou or Aoukar occupied the valley of the Niger and that of the Bani

The flood area of the region of Lake Debo and the Diaka supplied the Fulani with all the pasture lands they needed. They came to terms with the inhabitants who had lived there from oldest times.

The villages of Gourao and Dia soon became two great holy places, two cosmopolitan metropolises.

Gourao is the residence of the goddess "Gaa", mother of all the gods of water of Mali, but Dia was of the esoteric school, a Mali Tsfat or "Krubenkew", a goddess descended from heaven who is venerated in the form of a statuette marked under a white veil, a statuette that is presented to the people once a year, on the tenth day of the lunar month, which is the day of the new year.

At Dia also there is the sacred lake with the marvellous fish; the sculptured gates with twenty-two carvings and above all the stone laid in the cemetery and surrounded by twelve tombs wherein lie the remains of twelve sages.

The total disappearance below the ground of this stone could, it is believed, be the signal of the end of the world.

The gods of Niger gave a friendly welcome to "Tyaanaba", the Fulani divinity, god of the cattle.

It was this god, half man, half serpent, who guided the Fulani to the green banks of the Niger. He distributed them there at the will of the Eternal "Geno" and historic circumstances.

"Gaa", the goddess mother of the gods of water, the divinity of the fisher folk and farmers of the valley of the Niger; "Amma", god of the cliffs, tutelary divinity of the Donno and the Tellem, before becoming the supreme god of the Dogon, and "Tyaanaba" came to terms. And from that time the loop of the Niger became a melting-pot in which men representing the Bantu Blacks from South of the Equator, the Sudanese Blacks and the Guinea Blacks became united as one people.

This people adored a triad composed of three gods:

"Ma"—symbolised by a large river fish,

"Sa"—symbolised by a serpent,

"Wa"—symbolised by a bird.

Always ready to adapt themselves to their environment but without ceasing to be themselves, the unassimilable Fulani, ever assimilating, super-imposed themselves on this society without, however, merging themselves completely therein.

As a result of the esoteric practices of their seers and initiates they were able to grasp and understand the hidden meaning of the "Taalol takkaagol", the sealed story, of which the following is a rough translation.

"When you have walked in every direction
 And you finally come to a mid-land country,
 Halfway between two opposite regions of the same continent,
 A country where a white stream flows over a black river
 To give rise to a flood of bronzed waters,
 There "Tyaanaba" will die,
 There you will found an empire
 And you will begin to understand the meaning of the lesson
 Which is hidden in your "Tyumogal Fadda-ndaw",
 The secret sacred sign."

That sign consists of two triangles which interpenetrate each other so as to form seven cells: six peripheral cells and one central.

Whence comes the "Fadda Ndaw" of the Fulani?

The old Gouro, one of the most learned specialists in Fulani esoteric science, a great expert in the language of the stars and also a clever interpreter of the markings of large and small animals, who lived at Dia until 1943, taught me in that town, shortly before his death, a profound legend with a double meaning.

Towards the end of that same year, the same legend was recounted to me by Aliv Essa at Moguere, district of Linguere in Senegal.

The following mythical tale is told with regard to the legend which is entitled: "What do the Fulani owe to the birds?"

"In the time of Suleyman bi Dawda (Solomon, son of David) our ancestor Elo Hammadi, the first born of Yaladi, our ancestor, King of Yooyo, helped two ostriches, one as white as carded cotton and the other as black as washed charcoal, to escape from the ostrich cage which King Solomon had established to please his wife, Gorgol Balgissa (aunt Balguis), Queen of Wuro Saba, the country of Saba."

It would be too long and even worse, I would be betraying the laws of my people, if I were to say publicly beforehand what is deserving of being said but can be learnt only from the words spoken by the master in the ears of his pupil.

But I am not betraying the secret if I tell you that this sign has numerous virtues. It can be interpreted in many ways.

It is a universal sign and harmonises with all the tutelary forces.

It encourages fervour. It causes God to grant the prayers whatever the religion of the person who makes use of it.

The Moslem fraternity Tidjani will find in "Fadda Ndaw" the geometric graph of the great name of God. It will hold aloft its string of prayer-beads so that "Fadda Ndaw" can be traced thereon.

Wherever the Fulani are in power you will find a Wuro-Saba, an Akka, etc. They exist in Macina, in Dijlgodji and in Liptako.

The Cattle

One cannot speak of the Fulani without mentioning their inseparable companions, the cattle. Were we to do that they would be highly offended.

The Fulani classify their animals in three main groups, with proper respect for the traditional sacred triad:

1. The domesticated animals,
2. The wild water animals,
3. The wild land animals.

For the Fulani, it need hardly be said, the superior race among all animals is the bovine race.

The cattle are distributed according to their colour: the white, the black, the yellow and the red.

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These four colours combine together to give 16 varieties. As an example, here are four:

- The white1
- The white with black patches1
- The white with red patches1
- The white with yellow patches1

The 16 markings constitute the basis of an oracle of a geometric kind. The Saltigui or Ardo interprets according to these facts by contemplating a herd at rest or grazing in a meadow.

This is one of the keys to the mysterious feeling of attachment of the Fulani for their animals.

When adopting the Moslem religion the Fulani, like nearly all Black Africans, did not abandon all their traditional beliefs and practices.

All that was not destructive of the five pillars of Islam and the six elements of the "Imam" faith, was Islamised by the local marabouts, well aware of the mentality of their people and very able propagandists of the faith of Islam.

Thus all the demi-gods of the Fulani became with the Islam Rawhaniyya and "Geno", their Eternal God, gave way to Allah Taala.

The interpreters of the aspects, acts and movements of animals are given the name "Tyorinke", plural "Tyorinkoobe" in Macina.

It can be said that a large part of the magical-religious learning of the non-Islamised Fulani is the outcome of the physical aspect and daily behaviour of their animals, large and small, cattle, sheep and goats.

They have given to these three races together the collective name: "dyawdi" which means "fortune" in the moral, material and cultural sense.

It would be interesting to analyse the name "Tyorinke". This name is composed of:

1. the root "tyo" which is an exclamation of admiration,
2. the letter "r" which is here both euphonic and a symbol of ecstasy,
3. the ending "inke" which marks the possessive in its singular form. "Oobe" is the plural ending.

Thus "Tyorinke" means he who belongs to the class of those who elicit the acclamations of others by their powers and the depth of their knowledge of things that are hidden from the common mortal.

There is a ritual correspondence between the four Fulani tribes and the four bovine coats.

The Diallo sacrifice and officiate when the white coat is the geomantic theme and the Bâ if the coat is black.

It is the turn of the Sidibe if the coat is yellow and of the Sangare if it is red.

In the same way, the four mother elements: fire, earth, water and air are apportioned among the four tribes by a magical-religious analogy.

The Fulani will treat an ox, sheep or goat in one way or another, according to its markings.

Thus the father of an only child will never cut the throat of an animal which sees, walks and urinates at night nor will he let any member of his family do so.

This magico-literal metaphor needs explanation.

An animal which sees, walks and urinates at night is any male animal which has a black circle round the eyes, its four feet and at the tip of its male member.

When a hybrid animal is born in a camp, it is a patent sign for the inhabitants, particularly if they are nomads, of an imminent calamity which must be warded off.

Such birth can only be the sign of the anger of "Geno" and because someone has committed a sacrilege, for instance copulated with an animal or committed incest.

When "Geno" has thus given signs of his anger a ceremony must be held during which the fateful animal is burnt at the stake.

The ashes are collected and the site of the pyre is dug to a depth of three "tabande", i.e., the length between the tip of the second finger and the tip of the thumb, the two fingers spread wide apart.

Everything is then placed in an "akalawal", a kind of ark hollowed out of a trunk of one of the seven sacred woods. The trunk must be cut during the three white days of a lunation, that is, on the 13th, 14th and 15th night of a lunation.

If I should speak to you, even if only quite briefly, of the idea the Fulani have regarding a world other than that in which we live, I would say without any hesitation: they think that life does not end with our present existence.

They have an idea of another world which they call "Dyango", to-morrow, where their ancestors live.

Man's last life will be passed there. To-morrow will be better than the "to-day" "Han'nde" which we are living, just as to-day is better than "yesterday", "Keegnen", which we lived in the womb of our mothers.

The Man—The Woman

The average height of the Fulani is 1 m 70. His limbs are slender, his skin copper-coloured and sometimes fair, but it can also be dark, according to the degree of his cross-breed.

His face has little hair which is more plentiful on the body.

The women have abundant hair, very black. Their limbs are delicately joined, their eyes light and the brows arched.

Obesity is uncommon, especially before the age of forty.

The thinness of the Fulani has become such a byword that the Bambara call them "Fulu-Passanin" or "skinny Fulani".

Physical deformities such as abdominal protuberance, goitre or congenital infirmities like those of being blind from birth or hunchbacked are not frequent among the Fulani

Albinos and red-haired people were once in demand for magico-religious practices.

On the other hand, one-eyed persons are considered by the Fulani to be beings of ill omen as they are among noble Mossi. Any Fulani, especially if he is a chief, will do all he can to prevent a one-eyed man from being the first to greet or shake hands with him when he gets up in the morning.

The Fulani woman is beautiful and shapely with well-proportioned limbs. She receives great tokens of his love and veneration.

This is what a despairing suitor said about his too modest lady love:

With eyes wide open,
I caught a glimpse of her through the veil,
The veil of dawn.

I scarce could believe my eyes
That this was really her.
But she it was,
No other but herself,
She who loves me well,
She who is loved by me as much and more.
I knew her by her slender waist,
Slender as the female wasp's;
I knew her by her hips firm and rounded as a half-moon,
Swinging as she went,
Lending her whole slender body
A swaying motion.
I knew her delicate mouth
Adorned with white teeth,
And closed by two lips without thickness,
Two thin lips,
Painted blue like the limpid sky;
Two lips which open and shut with
captivating grace.
Just as the complicity of the light
From the yellow of the rising sun,
Rising from the eastern verge,
Was about to feast my eyes
On her faultless figure,
As an infant inebriated by Milk from breasts,
that have been swelling all night long,
She more than chaste,
There is no other term,
Said, "Good-bye",
Eluded me caressingly,
More gracious than ever.
"Lovers are betrayed by sunlight"
She said, "Forgive me, I love you".
She left me in the plain
And her absence burnt that plain with sorrow.
My heart and bowels caught fire
And started to burn.
And I languished watching the silhouette
Of my beloved becoming blurred in the plain,
The huge plain that down descends
And swallows her up.

She went like an illusion
 And left me panting in the ashes,
 Dying of genuine love,
 Dying of cruel despair.
 I cannot say anything unkind
 Because I respect her
 And womanhood.
 My wife, my aunt and sister are women.
 I hope my beloved will soon return
 At twilight, when the great sky
 Is set with stars like precious stones,
 To sprinkle my ashes with the fine raindrops
 Of her tears and saliva,
 And their power shall raise me from the dead.

Fulani women are great coquettes. They have many means of treating their skin and do their hair in many different and elaborate ways. They redden their nails with henna, "puddi" and enhance the colour of their eyebrows with antimony, "fina". They are never tired of washing themselves and use perfume before going to bed.

Certain Fulani women wear a twisted gold ring through their nose and pierce tiny holes in the external edge of the ear which they adorn with miniature rings also made of twisted gold or silver.

Certain women tattoo themselves prettily on their forehead, temples, cheekbones and likewise on the lower lip.

While the excision of women is optional, the circumcision of men is compulsory. It is performed on the seventh day after birth when the child ceases to be anonymous and is given a first name.

Fulani converted to Islam postpone circumcision until the seventh year and sometimes later, in keeping with a Moslem observance.

One of the worst ways of slighting a Fulani or a Bambara is to call him "uncircumcised". Circumcision is always performed by the local blacksmith. It is preceded by a ritual feast and vigil that lasts all night, and is followed by a grand procession of the newly circumcised once they are healed.

The Family

The notion of the family is a broad one indeed among the Fulani. It points to a group of persons with a bond of kinship, or who

have sucked the same milk, and who also have in common a herd of cattle called "na'i" (livestock) or "jawle" (wealth), cattle being preeminently the token of riches.

The initial but incomplete family unit consists of the father and mother. Their secret intercourse begets a son who is the complementary element without which there can be no tripod on which to build the race. This tripod betokens both time and the three animals which make up the livestock: goats, sheep and oxen.

Round this nucleus of three, which comprises the first family unit and forms at the same time a social and religious pivot, revolve seven other kinsmen who describe a circle about the kernel of three. This is the circle of brotherhood the members of which are as follows:

- a) twins,
- b) brothers begotten by the same parents,
- c) brothers begotten by the same father,
- d) children of twins,
- e) children of two brothers having the same father and mother,
- f) children of two brothers having the same father,
- g) children of twin brothers and sisters.

The "hoggo" or cattle fold becomes part of the family in a wider sense. The number one, the inviolable unity, betokens the secret of "Geno" or Everlasting God from whose luminous and inaccessible abode divine providence is bestowed on the "diawle", or riches, the supreme exemplar of which are livestock.

For the Fulani, this fortune of "one in three" engenders all well-being in this world. "Geno", who is hidden from human eyes, opens the flood-gates of heaven to make the earth fruitful and causes grass to grow in the meadows and brings food to the "diawle".

The preceding remarks serve to show that the Fulani society is based on a magico-religious system, the first unit of which comprises, as we have seen, the father, the mother and the son. This organization supposes the existence of clearcut principles and means of education which have no place in the present article.

The Fulani assign to human life an active span of 66 years from which age onwards the shepherd withdraws from active life: unofficially, retirement begins at 63, i.e., at the end of his ninth septenary.

Initiation

I feel bound to impart my knowledge of initiation among the Fulani so far as it goes without over-stepping the limits permissible. I shall try to set ajar for your benefit the door of a sanctuary, which seldom opens, in an edifice without bricks or mortar but hermetically closed to most people. I owe my knowledge to Ardo Dembo Sow of Ndiela in the Jolof district of Senegal. When I asked him to initiate me, he said in a loud voice: "7—14 and 21—28—35 and 42." Very good and I was initiated.

In every country in the world, initiation is a secret ceremony enacted in a chosen spot where the member elect is gradually initiated into certain mysteries which are the attributes of a social or spiritual association more or less religious in character.

To speak about Fulani initiation is thus to assume that this people had a culture of their own before the coming of Islam—their favourite persuasion to-day.

Initiation into shepherd lore is divided into three grades:

- that of the goat—or junior grade
- that of the ram—or medium grade
- that of the bull—or senior grade

Every grade has eleven degrees, the whole forming 33 steps the secret of which is sealed in 33 phonemes which go to make up the skeleton of the Fulani language.

The word is the mother of prayer and of magic. Specific traces of a perfected and magical cow-worship, of both African and Oriental origin, are to be found in legends like that of Kumen³.

The central figure in which is "Ndurbele", a hermaphrodite bovine, entrusted to the care of two Liliputian imps: Kumen and his wife Foroforon'ndu. Another bovine, "Inaputia", the off-spring of a bull and a mare, is also the centre of a didactic story.

Wherever Islam, that great spiritual force ever to be reckoned with, has not wrecked tradition and overthrown ancestral beliefs, the "lare" (plural, "lareji") remains an object of fervent worship among the Fulani.

Where did the Fulani unearth the name "lare" so widespread among their people in Jolof and Casamance? The word would be

3. A. Hampate Bâ and G. Dieterlen, *Kumen*, Paris, 1961.

in no way surprising did it not stand for demi-gods detailed to watch over the fold, the harvest, the watering place, etc. Is this mere coincidence or does it point to a relationship between the Fulani or their forefathers and the people of Etruria? It is a fact that, in the Etruscan language, the word "lare" means a "chief" and, by analogy, the "guardian deity of some place of instruction". Just as "lares" were ill-defined gods among the Romans, so they have remained with the Fulani.

The Almighty Creator bears the name of "Geno" or the Everlasting. He is invoked under certain circumstances by the exclamation "Dudari", i.e., one who has nothing to fear from the consequences of his acts. His help is elicited mostly to dispel the ill effects of lightning. "Lareji" among the Fulani are not ancestral souls or heroes worshipped by the tribe like gods: they are rather receptacles for the power of occult forces which, once domesticated, can be made use of by appropriate words and gestures.

In order to protect himself against visible enemies, man has invented weapons. But how is he to fend against the unseen cosmic forces? "Geno" created all things by the word. The word is the only weapon against invisible forces. Hence "Gando", an authority in Fulani, "Silatigi" and "Mbilejo" watch jealously over the recondite meaning of words. The whole system depends on their meaning. In order to realize the force of the word we have to remember its power over our moral or intellectual moods: an insult will make us beside ourselves with rage with possible murder or suicide to follow. Similarly, a song of love, a speech of tender word will make different men of us. But if the word is to be an active force proceeding from the occult, it has to be assembled according to laws which enable it to be handled to good purpose. When we talk about "words", we really mean "sounds" of which written words are mere signs. Every sound stands for a universal force. The mother forces are few in number.

The philologist will find in the Fulani idiom a rich and extensive field in which to exercise his talents. For the initiate, however, it will be more than a means of expression—a curious and wonderful mine which leads him from one gallery to another to a centre where the sound of words is converted into prayers that may alter the course of events.

In olden times, before being allowed into the glade where the science of words was taught and the art of practising it, the young herdsman was expected to prove, before the third septenary of his life, that his pluck was not easily vanquished. For this

purpose, it was his duty, with the help of a stick, to retrieve some prey snatched away from the flock by one of three savage beasts: the hyena, the panther or the lion. Then, during the night of the thirteenth or fourteenth day after his feat, the young herdsman, carrying the skin of the prey recovered from the predatory beast, would appear before the elders of the tribe: "Silatigi", the high priest, "Gando", the wise man, his deputy, and "Mbilejo", the wizard, their witness. He would find the "Silatigi" on a seat of ox-hide, (a bull of eleven years old), the "Gando", on the skin of a ram (eleven months old) and the "Mbilejo" sitting on the ground and holding in his left hand the skin of a young kid of eleven days. The young herdsman came accompanied preferably by his maternal uncle who had offered him a heifer at birth.

The three elders would ask the following questions successively:

The "Mbilejo, smacking his kid skin, would say in a loud voice: "Fulani, whence comest thou?"

The "Gando", smacking in turn the ram-skin on which he was sitting, would enquire less loudly:

"Fulani, whither goest thou?"

Finally, the "Silagiti" would say quietly and calmly with a gentle tap on his ox-hide:

"Fulani, who art thou?"

Then the maternal uncle would answer raising his fore-finger but leaving his other fingers closed:

"The son of my sister comes from the shining East."

"The son of my sister is on his way to the grassy lands of the West:"

"The son of my sister is an Adam."

Then, the "Silagiti" would ask:

"Does he intend to return to the East? When? How? and Why?"

These three questions remained unanswered, uncle and nephew being content to make sweeping gestures to show their ignorance and inability to reply.

The "Silagiti", addressing the neophyte's uncle, would then enquire:

"What skin is thy nephew wearing?"

"He is wearing the skin of... (Then followed the name of the rescued animal.)

Whereupon the "Siligati" got up and, according to the nature of the skin brought to him by the young Fulani, would bid him be seated beside the "Mbilejo" or beside the "Gando", but always behind the "Siligati".

During the nine months that followed, the novice was initiated into the mysteries of the four elements: fire, earth, air, water, the period corresponding to the number of months he had spent in his mother's womb. During 4 periods of 60 days he was taught about the elements and, during a further period of 27 days, concerning the magic places of the moon. They taught him how to adapt thereto the substantives of speech (i.e., nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs). Finally, for three nights long, the 13th, 14th and 15th of the lunar phase, the "Silatigi" would give the novice a three fold consecration. Thereupon, the later would take a place in accordance with his merits beside one of the three officiants. He thus learned the secrets of the 11 mother forces. He was told about the 5 male and 28 female sounds the copulation of which brought language into being. Here is a brief outline of the symbolism of sound:

The first male sound is "a", an idea of creative and protecting power the mystery of which is well guarded, pent up in three circles with 111 powers to watch over it. "Geno", the centre of these circles, fills them in such manner that they pervade everything.

To express his joy on making an encounter or finding some object mislaid, the herdsman voices the male sound "a" as though it were an interjection. When he wants to repress the enemy, betokened by the beast who attacked his herd, he blends the male sound "a" with the sound called "debuti-gorkuti", i.e., the hermaphrodite "y" in order to make "ay". This sound, accompanied by a certain way of raising and lowering the arms, sows panic in the heart of the foe.

The male sound "e" pertains to rapid movement and expresses the feeling of surprise. Current use among the Fulani is to make of it a joyful exclamation, but it can also be a sign of warning.

The sound "i" in the same connection betokens a sharp point sticking into the flesh or into the mind in a favourable sense; it carries the light which beams forth in lengthy rays; it can

also symbolize long drops of refreshing rain. It is sometimes a spark of fire to guide wanderers lost in the night, sometimes a beacon to light ship-wrecked sailors to harbour.

The sound "o" embodies the idea of admiration; it is a call to wealth; the shepherd employs it to make his flock move on.

The sound "u" corresponds to a groan expressing either fortuna'e pain (childbirth), unfortunate pain (disease) or neutral pain in the form of doubt.

It would take too much time to go into every sound. Let me ihus quote one further Fulani image pertaining to female sounds (28). These are known as "folding doors" and seven male "joints" make them swing in all directions.

Four female sounds are reserved for every male sound and each group of seven sounds is imputed to one of the four clans: Diallo, + Ba, + So—Bari.

On "Lootori" or new year's eve, the four patriarchs of the four clans proceed to the public square to spend an all-night vigil, seated each on a different ox-skin composing the four colours: white, black, yellow and red. The inhabitants form a procession and walk the streets all night. Early next morning before sunrise, young people between 11 and 22 years of age walk or ride in a solemn procession down to the river to bathe. They do so singing "lootori" chants in choruses such as:

Lootori lotoyo den nawre aga
 Lootori riw bone wati bernde suga
 Lootori how wino wetata
 Lootori weti fa foyre buta
 Lootori bey men diajina bira
 Lootori baloy ndiuwri na ndiara
 Lootori eeral ana huuna wara
 Lootori olal luwe mum na mbara
 Lootori banewal ana huuna taawa
 Lootori wode men wulumaawe sewa
 Lootori lotoye-den lootori
 Lootori to diuggal kan'ge fen'ga
 Lootori diuggal tardi run'ga
 Lootori niand'de lootori hdawa diwa

- Sacred bathing: Let us go and wash in the herdsman's pool.
Sacred bathing: Who said that day would never break?
Sacred bathing: The day is bathed in light.
Sacred bathing: our goats have come back to be milked.
Sacred bathing: our young lambs run down to the watering
[place.
Sacred bathing: the great white ox lows as he draws near.
Sacred bathing: the great yellow ox has horns that kill.
Sacred bathing: the great black ox bellows loudly.
Sacred bathing: the scarlet ox is not lean.
Sacred bathing: let us bathe in the sacred waters,
Sacred bathing: where a cylinder-shaped stake of gold is placed;
Sacred bathing: pull up the silver stake and go thy way.
Sacred bathing: on the day of the Holy Bath, the ostrich flies
[away through the air.

The procession winds up on the village green just as the yellow ball of the sun is looming in the eastern sky. The crowd splits up into four groups according to their surnames. Each group marches in rank towards the patriarch of its tribe. The patriarchs lavish blessings on the Faithful and sprinkle them with a blend of curative plants and water from the first rains of the previous year.

This fine and far-reaching tradition tends to die out increasingly. Urban needs have brought other imperatives and, save in bush country where the Fulani have settled more or less permanently and where there are wide-open spaces devoid of water, these rites will soon be extinct.

In Mali, the tradition has taken refuge among the Wodabe, Tolebe, Atta-Koliyabe, Issabe and Siwalbe who live in the Meneka region amidst the Tuareg, (Ansongo district of Mali) and the Bororo who camp by the sea of Azim-Azim during the dry season.

The Language

The human voice is considered by the Fulani to be a musical instrument contrived by God.

Nowhere is the genius of the Fulani so apparent as in their speech. Their language has a syntax so flexible, a vocabulary so rich, so teeming with imagery that its construction produces a mu-

sical effect that is truly prodigious when one considers that this is the tongue of an illiterate tribe, scattered over a vast expanse of territory, in the heart of the bush, and that they live there with their herds not far from wild animals.

There are three parts of speech, and here again we come upon that trial that is an obsession with the Fulani. They are: "wo-lide", "in'nde", "golle" which correspond to the word, to the name and to the action, that is, to the verb.

Initiates, who know the magic power of words, go into it thoroughly like some wonder-working mechanism in order to use it to the full.

They know when to call out, when to use a sing-song tone, when to whistle and when to snap their tongue or merely move it inside the mouth.

They delve into the secrets of the word which they say are sealed up in the following seven pronouns:

1st, he who speaks—"Mi"

2nd, he to whom one speaks—"A"

3rd, he of whom one speaks—"O"

4th, he who speaks on behalf of a group of which he is a member and who excludes those to whom he speaks—"MIN"

5th, he who speaks in the name of a group of which he is a member and who includes in it him or those to whom he speaks—"EN"

6th, those to whom one speaks—"ON"

7th, those of whom one speaks—"BE"

The Fulani language is one of the richest and most musical in Africa south of the Sahara. Its alphabet is composed of 27 letters and includes 5 vowels. Each vowel may be long or short and this state is of the utmost significance for, according as the length is radical or vocalic, it gives rise to etymological or to morphological changes, e.g.,

"Halde": to give strength.

"Haalde": to speak.

"Hilde": to call for the purpose of making the cattle move forward.

"Hiilde": to lure or lead astray.

"Holde": to be without clothes.

"Hoolde": to cut, pare or skin.

When the drawing out is purely vocalic, its value is morphological.

There is a specific rule for vowel assimilation. Fulani is very rich in diphthongs and triphthongs. Diphthongs ending in ay-ey-iy-oy-uy are apt to be future verb endings or an onomatopoeia used to heighten the effect of narrative or to set the stroke of a cadenza.

The root form displays three categories:

1. the root of nouns,
2. the root of verbs and all that derives therefrom such as qualificatives,
3. the qualifying root.

These three kinds of root can display three forms:

1. the consonant vowel(c.v.),
2. the consonant vowel consonant (c.v.c.),
3. the consonant vowel, consonant, consonant (c.v.c.c.).

The variation in the first radical vowel of the trilateral verb root, its drawing out and the doubling of the last root consonant give rise to 20 derived infinitives the meaning of which differs from the given root. A concrete instance will serve to illustrate this better:

From the verbal root "hal", the idea of force, the infinitive of which is "halde" (to give strength), we obtain, according as the first vowel is a, e, i, o, o (open o) and u (the sign of the infinitive in Fulani is "de") the following:

Halde: to strengthen

Helde: to break

Holde: to be undressed

Hilde: to hoot in order to drive animals on through water

Hulde: to be afraid

The lengthening of the same vowels produces:

Haalde: to speak

Heelde: to dry butter

Hiilde: to lure or lead astray—deceive

Hoolde: to ring (with reference to an echo)

Hoolde: cut, pare or skin

Huulde: to measure with the elbow

Finally the doubling of the radical consonant gives:

Hallude: to weave a fringe

Hollude: to clap or slap

Hellude: to pick the leaves of a plant called Kelli

Hillude: to take an interest in

Hollude: to show

Hollude: to dye yellow

Hullude: to ring a bell or any metal instrument.

There is a fixed rule for identifying a verbal root of Fulani origin. It suffices to find the infinitive of the verb and put it in the imperative. If the meaning in Fulani is not disclosed, the word is an archaic form to be determined, or else it belongs to some language such as Arabic, Serere, Soninke, Bambara, Mossi or Hausa from which Fulani has borrowed part of its vocabulary.

As for the rule governing the permutation of letters, we shall be content to quote a few instances:

"Ka" and "ha": a noun, which begins with ka in the singular, changes ka into ha. There are, of course, exceptions:

Kaaloowo, speaker, becomes

Haaloobe, speakers, in the plural.

Kooludo, a confident, becomes

Hoolube, confidants in the plural.

Similarly, the bi-labial "p" and the denti-labial "f" give:

Pullo: Fulani, becomes "Fulbe" in the plural

Puydo: fool becomes Fuybe in the plural.

There are no genders in Fulani. Words are classified in groups like: nde, udi, ndu, nga, ngal, ngel, ngi, ngu, kol, kun, koy.

Literature and Music

In its wealth and diversity, Fulani literature has certain favourite forms such as the epic, the pastoral, narrative and satirical genres.

The epic

The professional story-tellers excel at relating the heroic-adventures of Gueladio Samba Yegui, Gueladio Bayobubu, Gueladio Belal Bamma and Pulluri, the doughty knight-at-arms of Silimaka Ardo,

with a wealth of gusto and mimicry. Pullori was a horseman of great modesty who knew no fear. The sound of thunder is a mere rolling of drums to greet him on his way through the streets or the echo of his rifle firing at the Kind of Segou's men. Then there are the feats of Durowel Pinowel, Piyowel Piilowel, who defended an entire herd against famished beasts with a single reed for his weapon.

The exploits of Amadou Samburu Kolando against a Tuareg force in the plains of Toyo, not far from Timbuktu, are an untiring source of inspiration for Fulani singers who render them by modulated inflexions of the voice accompanied by the evocative notes of their "hoddu" guitars.

I regret my inability to let you see a performance by the Bambados or professional musicians acting a play about the feats of the seven horses of Budyadia. In order to protect widows and orphans and to right the wrongs of the mighty, seven Fulani men made a bargain with Death. In their white costume, they held at bay for years on end the evil-doers who infested the "Burgu Macina", i.e., that vast plain through which the Niger, the Diaka, the Bani and their countless tributaries flow in an incredible network of rivers and flood waters. Budyadia made people sing: "I will make the mighty tremble who try to prevent the poor from harvesting the wild rice that God grows for them in the grass-lands of Macina farther than the eye can reach."

Bokari Dian is nearer to us. Oumarel Sambadondo whose mortal remains received the honours of a company of French Marines whom Colonel Bonnier told to pay homage to the bravest enemy it had been his privilege to fight.

Finally one must be all ears, as the Fulani say, to appreciate the free verse which the young swains write for their beloved: humans, animals and even things. It is safe to say that this lyrical vein is out of the ordinary and tends towards the sublime.

Pastoral Verse

Bucolic songs or "mayinkoji" are most abundant among⁴ the Fulani. They are to be found everywhere with the originality typical of them. The same rhymes and the same rhythms lend great wealth and variety to the various styles. I cannot resist the tem-

4. A. Hampate Bâ, "La poésie peulh", in "Le monde noir", *Présence Africaine* ; special n° 8-9, 1956.

ption of giving you a foretaste of this literature which is sometimes on the proud and sometimes on the turgid side, sometimes baroque and enigmatic, sometimes limpid as a prayer:

"...The slothful tread of the oxen on their way back from the grazing land, where they have grown fat, snatches an admiring "You" from the Peul women as though these were warriors returning from battle. As for me, the herdsman, who has come with them, the journey makes me write a poem...

"Laugh who will but no mockery will prevent my saying that my lady love is the cow for whom my heart does not cease to beat. My fair lady who adorns herself in Bourgou with flowers of gold and silver like water lilies.

"You cannot compare me with those who lead a life of pleasure, who go from one mat to another and who take refuge at night in the arms of women who fatten on dairy food.

"My only rest when singing is the time it takes to assist the chorus. The notes I carry over are not clumsy slips. The lowing of the cows is eloquent enough to inspire me with happy thoughts to end my song."

Tales

The Fulani have several kinds: stories with a moral, stories of grumpy or kind-hearted old women, fabulous tales reminiscent of the Arabian Nights.

Allegorical stories are a repertory in themselves.

Moreover, the Fulani have their legends. We obtained some idea of them above with regard to initiation. These legends introduce us to a few demi-gods and supernatural beings in the pastoral Pantheon.

Satires

Waridiasi and Segeji, poets, are the most pithy songmakers among the Fulani. They are men of noble extraction who become vagrants on account of misfortune. Their vagabond state induces them to be troubadours who take upon themselves not only to rail at the vices of the day but also at those who refuse them a present. Nobody is exempt from their gibes, not even venerable marabouts and mighty chiefs. Everyone is afraid of their tongue which fears nothing, not even the Lord.

Music and Dancing

Fulani music has but few instruments. There is a single-string guitar or "mpolaaru", the big four—or five-string guitar or "hoddu", the flute "sereendu", the single-string, "bayol", bow which is played with the help of the mouth, the shepherd's pipe or "poopiliwal" made from a reed, the water tom-tom or "bum-butu", a big calabash filled with water on top of which a smaller gourd is tipped up. It serves to beat time with the help of two drumsticks.

The fundamental instrument of the Fulani remains the human voice and hands which are clapped together according to the rhythm desired.

Fulani nomads, the women in particular, have a lovely voice pleasing to the ear.

The Fulani have two dances: one for ritual ceremonies, the other for pleasure. Dancing can be with or without musical accompaniment, alternating or simultaneous.

The Fulani language is music in itself: the singing sets the rhythm but it is the dancer who directs the performance and sets the time. The gestures are sober but varied.

There is the slow and languorous step of the so-called "narkal" dance, the jerky wide or narrow step called "danku", the panther's bound or "ndobu", the hurricane twist or "duluuru" and that of the male soliciting the female or "kubugol". There is the flinging out of the cold or unwilling female, pittyal "ndewa". There is the despairing grimace or "nnebal baayado". There are sweet sounds of transport and the din of disaster.

While the mimicry of the noble warrior horseman's tread putting his opponent to the sword but never failing to help him to his feet afterwards is a splendid piece of skill and flexibility, the "dimadyo" or Fulani serf dance is a riot of acrobatics worthy of the modern tumbler.

Shepherd songs offer the richest and most original side of Fulani civilization.

Finally, we come to religious song influenced by Arab masters.

The Fulani culture

All those who have had any experience of the Fulani are struck by certain features peculiar to them:

- their remarkable intellectual vivacity,
- their amazingly flexible speech,
- the courage and endurance of their menfolk,
- the delicate beauty of their women,
- an unreasoning fear of being ridiculous—a state of mind which gives rise to a reserve which many people mistake for hypocrisy.

Fulani culture is purely intellectual. Material needs never played an important part in the life of the Fulani. Even now, material preoccupations have yet to penetrate it completely despite the value of the herds they possess.

The loneliness of their life in the wilds puts them in constant touch with nature, which explains their acute sense of observation. It would be wrong to seek for any other origin for their elaborate system of initiation.

It is safe to say that the material destitution of the early emigrants was made up for by a fine crop of didactic tales and poems which developed in an esoteric climate which can leave no intellectual indifferent.

In olden times and still to-day, when the tribe in its wanderings camps round a fire which warms and lights up both humans and animals, large and small, a fire which keeps wild beasts away, then the "haaloobe", "yimoobe", "askinoobe" speakers, singers and genealogists indulge in their favourite pastimes; composing poems, telling tales of adventure dramatic at times, and all with the intention to instruct.

They are never so happy as during the long winter nights when it is so nice to be near to the fire and see the animals, which led them on throughout the day through bush and thorn, come and lie quietly around them.

While the genealogists are narrating the feats of arms of their forefathers, the animals chew the cud softly, as it were, the better to take in the words on their way into the space beyond.

King Bull, the most powerful member of the herd by his build and courage, who throughout the day kept up with his guide, is even closer to him now in order to follow the narration better, one is tempted to suppose. Is he not "pulaaku", a member of the family? Is he not entitled to the verse they are writing? Of course he is! Why, there exists a guitar song in honour of him! And a Fulani poet wrote about one of his forbears:

THE FULBE OR FULANI OF MALI AND THEIR CULTURE

"My ox moving on in front has bellowed. He leaves the herd all of a sudden, raises his tail and lowers his head. He bounds forward and strikes the ground with his other limbs, advances, withdraws, looks right and left and sometimes moves with a lurch sideways.

"They flatter him with the word "dial". Then he makes holes in the ground with his hoofs.

One last word: I would say that the goats, sheep and cattle and their Fulani masters are all but brothers. Indeed, to look at things closely, it seems that the Fulani exist to look after their herds rather than the latter live to serve their masters. G. Vieillard, the great and lamented friend of the Fulani, was right in saying:

"Great humped animals tower over the whole history of the Fulani. They have led and followed them from one pastureland to another, from one watering place to another, between the land of thirst where they cannot drink and the land of flies where they cannot live. It is they again who decide the seasonal wanderings between rain and drought."

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