PASTORALISTS UNDER PRESSURE?

Fulbe Societies Confronting Change in West Africa

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CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO-CULTURAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AMONG THE FULBE OF THE SUDAN REPUBLIC

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Introduction

Until recently many specialists in Fulɓe studies were not aware of the existence of Fulɓe in the Sudan. Yet, the Sudan provides a unique example of the diversity which characterises the Fulɓe in all aspects of their life. Settlement of all possible types of Fulɓe in this country is attributed mainly to its geographical situation as a crossing land to the holy Muslim places in Arabia and the grazing-lands up to the Ethiopian borders, as well as being the focal spot, where the Awaited Mahdi was expected to appear. Thus, a large number of diverse Fulɓe groups (both nomadic and sedentary) came to establish themselves in a new socio-cultural environment, dominated by Arabic language and culture.

Diversity among the Sudanese Fulɓe groups relates to their history of migration, original homes of departure, physical features, modes of livelihood, patterns of language use and degree of integration in the Sudanese Arab communities.

Our paper will elaborate on the diversity in the above aspects and show how it challenges any attempt of treating these different Fulɓe groups as one people. Conclusions will be made on the process of ‘defulanization’ or, more precisely, Arabization which the Sudanese Fulɓe have been undergoing in the new socio-cultural context. Therefore, our methodology in treating this topic will combine historical, descriptive and analytical approaches.
The main Fulɓe divisions in the Sudan

The Fulɓe in the Sudan are included in the loose generic term Fallata — used, with some negative over-tones, in reference to all people originating from West Africa between Waddai (Chad) and the Atlantic Ocean (Fulɓe, Hausa, Kanuri, Maba, etc.). So, for reasons of preciseness this term will not be used except in quotations; instead, the term Fulɓe will be employed.

For our purpose, the best — and maybe most coherent — criterion for categorizing the Sudanese Fulɓe is the one based on the chronological order of their migration, which is found to correspond fairly well with a number of other variables. Accordingly, four main divisions of Fulɓe in the Sudan can be distinguished and categorized as early (or old), intermediate, late and recent Fulɓe.

The early Fulɓe

These are the earliest to appear in historical records. They include two Fulɓe groups distinguished by motives of migration and modes of livelihood: the pastoral Fulɓe of Southern Darfur, on the one hand, and the ‘knowledgeable’ Fulɓe of Northern Darfur and the Blue Nile, on the other hand.

The pastoral Fulɓe of Southern Darfur

They belong mainly to the Iso, Keeso, Juba (or Jabba or Jobbo) and Ngara Fulɓe clans. Locally they divide into two sub-groups: the Ika and the Iba. The two sub-groups are similar in all aspects of life except one; the former have been completely Arabicized (i.e. speaking only Arabic), whereas the latter still retain the use of Fulfulde, which they speak side by side with Arabic.

The most exhaustive and recent study on the pastoral Fulɓe of Southern Darfur is the one undertaken by Braukämper (1993: 24), who finds them to have reached Darfur via Borno, Bagirmi and Waddai in the 17th century. It seems that they were the last group to reach the farthest end among the members of the great Fulɓe migration mentioned in Kano Chronicle, which started from
Maasina in the 14th century.\textsuperscript{1} Hints for my assumption can be found in Muhammed Bello b. Fodio’s (1963: 29) definition of Bilad al-Takrur (another term including Fulɓe), being the country between Darfur and Bilad Fuuta (Senegal). He adds that Darfur was populated by ‘Arabized non-Arabs (‘ajam) and non-Arabized Arabs’, which makes us think of Braukämper’s thesis on the genesis of ‘Baggarization’ (Baggara culture; from Sud. Ar. bagar ‘cattle’) as a synthesis between the cattle Fulɓe culture and that of the camel Arabs one.\textsuperscript{2} H.G. Balfour-Paul (1955: 78) lists the Fallata in the ‘partly immigrant but largely autochtonous stock’ of Darfur.

The early installation of the pastoral Fulɓe in Southern Darfur is also testified by their early possession of a dar (land), their complete loss of their ancestral language (Fulfulde) (the Ika subgroup, exclusively)\textsuperscript{3} and their full absorption in the general Baggara Arab culture, to the extent that many of their intellectuals erroneously believe that the Fulɓe are originally Arabs, some of whom adopted Fulfulde as a foreign language. However, clan names of the S. Darfur Fulɓe (e.g. Keesooji, Ngara’en, Maare’en, Baa’en (Iba’?), etc.) are also encountered among the Fulɓe of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. In fact, such a fanciful idea is triggered off by the social stigma associated with the term Fallata in the Sudan.

Dar Fallata, with its administrative centre in Tulus (ca. 60 km south of Nyala) is surrounded by dars of four other Baggara Arab tribes: Bani-Halba, Ta’aisha, Habbaniyya and Reizegat, with whom the Fulɓe frequently intermarry. Other important sites within Dar Fallata are Sa’dun, Rajaj and Jidad.

The pastoral Fulɓe of Southern Darfur are generally distinguished from most of the other Darfur tribes by their facial non-Negroid fine features, soft hair and relatively light complexion, which strengthens their conviction of being of Arab

\textsuperscript{1} According to the Kano Chronicle, some members of this migration settled in the northwest regions of Hausaland (former Gobir Kingdom); others reached Katsina and Kano in 1460s; from there others continued to Borno and after some decades, part of them diverted to Aadamawa, whereas others continued to Bagirmi and Waddai - and probably to Darfur. See Palmer 1967: 111.

\textsuperscript{2} The Arabs of Western Sudan and the Chad Basin, predominantly camel breeders, were forced by ecological conditions to shift to cattle rearing, which they adopted from the Fulɓe. Cf. Braukämper (1993: 23-25).

\textsuperscript{3} An informant (who would not like his name to be mentioned) supports Braukämper’s thesis (1993) that the (Ika) Fulɓe got Arabized before their arrival in Darfur; he thinks that the Iba still speak Fulfulde, because they arrived later.
descent hence, the term Fallata-Arab or Fallata-Urubba, which they use for self-ascription. Of course, exceptionally dark-skinned persons can also be found among them.

The modes of livelihood among the Fulɓe of Southern Darfur are based on three primary activities (Mohamed 1989:12-15): a) fully pastoral activities, with regular seasonal migrations, b) semi-pastoral activities, whereby the family is divided into two groups: the youth migrate with the cattle and the elderly men tend the farms, c) nagla (lit. shift); the people concerned are pre-dominantly settled and mainly farmers; they migrate with the cattle only after the end of the harvest.

Besides these socio-economic activities, people practise also gum arabic collection, horse raising and elephant hunting.(Mohamed 1989: 38-39).

The social values cherished by the S. Darfur Fulɓe (both the Ika and Iba) derive from those of the general Baggara Arabs, evolved from and resting within the general highly tribalistic context of Darfur: generosity, courage, helpfulness and readiness to defend the tribe, with women-singers (hakkaamaat) acting as ‘eyes’ for the respect of these values, by praising the one who observes them and undermining the one who transgresses them, as has been the norm among all the Baggara tribes of Darfur.

The ‘knowledgeable’ Fulɓe of Northern Darfur and the Blue Nile

They represent another important pattern of the Fulɓe settlement in the Sudan, based on what is known in literature as ‘itinerant’ or ‘wandering scholars’ (Hasan 1993: 186). This pattern of migration flourished during the 17th and early 18th centuries, when the Muslim kingdoms of Central Bilad al-Sudan (Bagirmi, Waddai, Fur and Funj) competed in persuading scholars and their followings, on their way to or back from pilgrimage, to settle in their respective kingdoms, so as to help disseminate Islamic knowledge and offer administrative advice. They were usually enticed with a number of privileges such as land, lucrative posts, exemption from taxes, marriage into the noble families, etc. Therefore, as will be seen below, the history of these Fulɓe groups was strongly linked with the ruling circles in the areas of their settlement and it rested on individual families, rather than entire clans or groups.
The early Fulɓe of Northern Darfur

Traditionally, the success of a sultan in Darfur used to be measured, inter alia, through the number and quality of scholars he could attach to the Sultanate. A good example, as noted by Lampen (1950), was Sultan Ahmed Bakr (1682-1722), who had “in view of the low state of civilization of his people, persuaded educated foreigners to settle in the country by granting them exemption of taxes and other privileges”.

The bulk of the Fulɓe of Northern Darfur settled under the above conditions claim their fore-fathers to have departed from Fuuta and Malle. The scholarly qualifications of the famous Fulɓe family leaders in this region conform well with these claimed homes of origin, where the old Islamic illumination centres of Timbuktu, Jenne and Gao used to provide a good opportunity for scholarship.

Darfur history records two important Fulɓe families: Ali Al-Futawi’s and Mekki’s. Ali al-Futawi migrated during Sultan Ahmed Bakr’s reign (1682-1722) and founded the Kario centre of learning (ca. 45 km south of Al-Fashir), where sons of the nobility continued to be educated under al-Futawi’s family for about two centuries (Bedin 1971: 14-16). In fact, development of the tradition of scholarship based on Koranic schools in Darfur goes back to this centre. From al-Futawi’s family and that of Mekki scribes, judges, teachers and imams (leaders in prayer) were successively recruited. The Fulɓe attained their highest social standing in Northern Darfur, when in 1787 a member of their community, Malik, son of Ali al-Futawi, was appointed to the position of vizier by Sultan Abdel Rahman al-Rasheed (1787-1801) (Bedin 1971: 17). Al-Tunisi (1965: 101) mentioned that Malik was the greatest among the Arabic-speaking viziers by the end of Abdel Rahman al-Rasheed’s reign and the beginning of his successor’s. As a result, he added, the Fulɓe “became one of the strongest and richest tribes of Darfur” (Bedin 1971: 101).

After the decline of the Fur Sultanate in 1874, the Fulɓe lost some of their religious and political status. Some of them took recourse to military activities during Turco-Egyptian rule in Darfur
(cf. Tiya Khalil Beh, Jalal al-Din Ali Beh, Abbas Beh). During the Mahdiyya many of them moved to the east (El-Obeid and Omdurman) and joined the movement (Bedin 1971: 25).

Today their centres include Kattal, Khireban, Babingi, Siref Balli, Liya and Abu-Sinet Fallata. The memory of the socio-political and religious roles formerly played by their ancestors in this region survives today in their community.

The Fulbe of Northern Darfur have completely lost the use of their ancestral language, i.e. Fulfulde. This was due to their minority status, long duration of settlement, intermarriage and thorough involvement in the active socio-political affairs of the region. Today, they speak exactly the same variety of Darfur-Waddai Arabic. Likewise, one can hardly speak of particular social values by which they may exclusively be identified. They have been totally integrated in general Darfurian society.

Unlike those of Southern Darfur, the Fulbe of Northern Darfur display a number of Negroid features — maybe as a result of intermarriage with other Darfurian tribes, mainly the Fur and Zaghawa.

Also no particular mode of livelihood can be associated with the present generations of N. Darfur Fulbe. However, as mentioned above, the tradition of scholarship is still continued by a large number of them; many are prominent in educational, intellectual and political sectors; others go for trade, while many others remain farmers.

The early Fulbe of the Blue Nile

The other ‘knowledgeable’ Fulbe settlements in the Sudan are those found on the Blue Nile in Central Sudan, between Sennar and Singa towns, with the village of Shaikh Talha (on the east bank of the Blue Nile, 15 km south of Sennar) being their historical and spiritual base. The other subordinate villages (or small towns) are al-Suki, Hamadnalla, al-Muraffa, Um-Shoka and Wad-Hashim. Informants from Shaikh Talha claim their village to have been founded during the Funj Sultanate (1504-1821) — probably in

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4 All these were regarded as competent warriors and heroes; cf. Bedin (1971: 22).
5 E.g. Malik al-Zaki, a descendant of Ali al-Futawi, has just been re-elected as member of parliament at the national level.
1730s⁶ — by Faki Muhammed Isa, a Malle clan leader. Soon after its establishment Shaikh Talha⁷ developed as a centre for Islamic learning based on sufism and linked with the other near-by sufi centres through the customary order of hierarchy, as was the fashion during the Funj era.

Apart from people of the above-mentioned villages, which were affiliated with Shaikh Talha by both spiritual bonds and blood ties, the village could also attract a number of adherents from other Arab clans (e.g. Ja’liyyin), with whom the Fulɓe hosts intermarried.

The early generations of these Fulɓe are said to have contributed considerably in managing the administrative machine of the Funj Sultanate, as teachers, scribes and judges. So, like the Fulɓe of Northern Darfur, these too received positions and lands on their merit as learned people whose roots linked with the Islamic centres of knowledge in Western Bilad al-Sudan.

The old Fulɓe of the Blue Nile got integrated into the Central Sudanese Arab culture very early on, thus, losing every aspect of their origin, including language. This was mainly due to their minority status among a majority of Arabic speakers and their intermarriage with the Arab clans. This is in addition to the important position of Shaikh Talha village within the sufi system of adherence. For until today descendants of Shaikh Muhammed Isa, the founder of the village, are regarded as inheritors of the saintliness or baraka (blessings) of their grand-father Shaikh Talha Abu-Hussein (the first saint in the family) and keepers of his tomb (qubba). Therefore, many people from the surrounding settlements still pay regular visits to Shaikh Talha, especially during festivals, for different purposes; some of them to visit the tomb, others to be initiated in the (sammaniyya) sufi order, and some others seeking baraka (blessings) from the (present) Shaikh.

Physically and culturally, the early Fulɓe of the Blue Nile do not differ at all from the other Arab clans of central Sudan. They display fine non-Negroid facial features, soft black hair, relatively light complexion, and some of their old women have even tribal marks similar to those of the Ja’liyyin Arabs (three scars on each cheek).

⁶ M. Duffield (1981: 16) speaks of the 1830s, which tradition shows to be incorrect. E.g. These traditions tell of a miraculous visit by Shaikh Usman Dan Fodio (1754-1817) to Shaikh Talha.

⁷ The village owes its fame to the person of Shaikh Talha, said to be a wali (saint), rather than to his (grand ?)father, Shaikh Muhammed Isa, the founder of the village.
As is the case of Northern Darfur, there is nothing particular in their modes of livelihood; they carry out activities similar to those of the Central Sudanese Arabs: farming, trade, employment in governmental sectors, etc. The same could be said about their social values — with generosity and helpfulness regarded as the requisites of a gentleman.

The intermediate Fulɓe: the Mahdists

It has been part of the West African Muslim belief that a Mahdi would appear in the end of time to fill the earth with justice and equity, after a period of calamities and turmoil. When Shaikh Usman Dan Fodio (1754-1817) started his reform movement, his people alleged that he was himself the Awaited Mahdi, which he categorically denied through his writings in Arabic and his poems in Fulfulde. However, he was said by his sons and daughters to have prophesied that the Mahdi would emanate in the east — precisely on the Nile — and to have directed his people to migrate there and support his cause.

According to the above prophecy, and following Dan Fodio’s directives, many migrations of a Mahdist nature from Western and Central Bilad al-Sudan took place some decades before the appearance of the Mahdi in the Sudan. Though some migrations got stuck on the way, a number of their members were able to cross to the Holy Land (Mecca) and thereafter to settle on the (Blue or White) Nile (Saidu 1980). These migrants and their descendants constituted significant assets for the Mahdist movement in the Sudan (1881-1899).

Three years after declaring himself the Awaited Mahdi, Muhammed Ahmed b. Abdullahi appointed Shaikh Hayatu b. Said, a grandson of Shaikh Usman Dan Fodio, as his 'amil (representative) for the entire Western Africa and asked him to migrate immediately with his people for assistance. Although for many unfavourable circumstances (too lengthy to narrate here) Shaikh

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8 Relates to the reform movement of Shaikh Usman Dan Fodio in present-day Northern Nigeria (1804-1808), which resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate (1804-1903).
9 For more details on this issue, see S. Biobaku & M.A. Al-Hajj (1964) and A. Abu-Manga (1992).
10 For the correspondence between Shaikh Hayatu and the Mahdi, see M.A. Al-Hajj (1964: 171); consult also the Central Records Office, Khartoum (Sudan).
Hayatu could not make the *hijra* (religious migration), he kept continuously sending emissaries, warriors and other means of support to the Mahdi — and later to his successor Khalifa Abdullahi. Moreover, Hayatu, supported by his lieutenant Jibril Goni, waged jihad wars in Northern Nigeria in the name of the Mahdi. By the time he got killed in 1898, Shaikh Hayatu was able to initiate thousands of people into Mahdism. Afterwards the Mahdist fights continued under Jibril Goni until his fort of Burmi (near Gombe in Northern Nigeria) was subjugated by the British in 1902.

Though Jibril Goni was captured and imprisoned, an equally important personality was able to escape and infiltrate into the Sudan. This was Imam Tukur, the imam (leader in prayer) of Burmi. At the time when Lethem, a British colonial officer in N. Nigeria, was visiting the Sudan in 1924, Imam Tukur was listed by the colonial intelligence office among those who were to be under thorough supervision (Lethem 1927: 41). Yet Imam Tukur was able to escape the government’s eyes and carry out militant resistance activities among the Fulɓe of the Blue Nile (Lethem 1927: 41). This is briefly in regard to the Sudanese Fulɓe whose migrations were directly connected with Mahdism.

On the other hand, we have mentioned that at the decline of the Fur Sultanate the old Fulɓe of Northern Darfur — traditionally involved in politics — joined the Mahdi. Faki Amin Abdel Hameed, a grandson of Ali al-Futawi, later on became responsible for the ammunition during Khalifa Abdullahi’s rule. His descendants are still among the prominent Darfurian figures in the Umma party, formed by the Mahdi’s son.

Together with the Northern Darfur Fulɓe, mention should also be made of the Kordofan Fulɓe, on whom we lack enough information — due to their absorption in the Bideriya Arab clan. Living around El-Obeid, where the first Mahdist battles (Gadir, Shekan and El-Obeid) were fought (1880-1881), these Fulɓe followed easily the Mahdist track, and the majority of them are still loyal to its principles.

From what has been said above on the Mahdist Fulɓe, two major groups can be distinguished: those recruited from the early Fulɓe of Northern Darfur and Kordofan, on the one hand, and those who migrated just before and during the Mahdiyya, on the other hand. The former are still living in their respective regions mentioned
before, whereas the latter are found mainly in Gezira Aba on the White Nile (the spiritual capital of the Mahdi), and in many villages along the Blue Nile between Sennar and Rosseires (Sabun, Omdurman Fallata, Seriu, Rosseires, etc.)

Though the two groups have the element of Mahdism in common, they largely differ in terms of language use and culture. We have already mentioned that members of the former group have long been absorbed in the societies of their respective areas of settlement and shifted completely to Arabic. Members of the latter group, on the contrary, still mostly retain the use of Fulfulde (and speak Arabic as a second language). Moreover, they retain a large portion of Fulbe culture in the form of customs and traditions (especially in marriage, naming ceremony and funeral).

With regard to physical features, the Mahdist Fulbe of Kordofan resemble much their neighbouring Bideriyya Arabs (with mixed Arab and Negroid features), whereas members of the later Mahdists display a variety of disparate physical features, ranging from typical (Mbororo) Fulbe to moderate Hausa-Fulani features. Likewise, one can hardly speak of particular modes of livelihood associated with them. However, the later Mahdist Fulbe are mostly farmers.

*The late Fulbe: the hijra and post-hijra Fulbe groups*

Presence and settlement of the majority of Fulbe in the Sudan relates, in one way or another, to the famous *hijra* which took place as an after-math of the fall of the Muslim Sokoto Caliphate\(^\text{11}\) at the hands of the non-Muslim British colonialists, at the beginning of the present century.

This *hijra* was preceded by a thorough intellectual debate among scholars on the correct action, from the Islamic point of view, toward ‘unbelievers’ invasion of a Muslim state; i.e. whether Muslims were to accept being ruled by ‘unbelievers’ or to flee and safeguard their religion.\(^\text{12}\) However, Attahiru I, the then Caliph, was in favour of the latter alternative. Therefore, immediately after the loss of the Sokoto battle (March 1903) he declared *hijra* and headed for the east (with Mecca in mind), and people from all over the Caliphate started to join his train. At last he stationed in Burmi (ca. 40 km north-east of Gombe in Northern Nigeria) to reorganize

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\(^{11}\) See Footnote No. 8.

\(^{12}\) For details on this debate, see Abba & Shea (1988) and Abu-Manga (1989).
his forces for a final confrontation with the British troops which kept chasing him all the way. By June 1903 this front witnessed a big gathering of Muslim intelligentsia and political leaders from various regions of West Africa, including chiefs of the Muslim chieftaincies in the far west (e.g. Segu) which had already been subjugated by the French (Biobaku & Al-Hajj 1964, Duffield 1981, Adeleye 1971). The Burmi battle (July 1903) was disastrous for the ‘jihadists’; Attahiru himself was martyred.

Leadership of the *muhajirin* (migrants) was then entrusted to Attahiru's son, Muhammed Bello Mai-Wurno. Accompanied by a large following (ca. 25,000) (Crowther 1968: 136), including scholars and office holders, Mai-Wurno continued with his father's *hijra* and reached Shaikh Talha village (mentioned earlier) in 1906. The following year they crossed to the west bank and established Maiurno village (ca. 285 km south of Khartoum). Now classified as a small town, Maiurno represents the largest centre of Fulbe (and Hausa) in the Sudan, covering an area of approximately 8 sq. km with ca. 30,000 inhabitants.

During the first decades of its establishment Maiurno witnessed various waves of immigrations and migrations. Some groups of people from West Africa followed the *hijra* tracks and joined Mai-Wurno. Others migrated from different places within the Sudan (Kordofan, Kassala, etc.) and came to Maiurno 'seeking shelter in the pockets of Shehu', i.e. Dan Fodio, in the person of his grandson. On the other hand, some political leaders and office-holders among the *hijra* members were dispatched to establish new settlements within the Central Sudan, south along the Blue Nile, east along the Dinder, Rahad, Atbara, Setit, Basalam and Gash rivers up to the Ethiopian borders. All these internal migrations were encouraged and, to some extent, arranged by the colonial government with the intention of laying a foundation for a new or modern economy for the Sudan, based on agriculture rather than nomadism — till then the predominant mode of livelihood for the Arab and Beja communities living in these areas (Balamoan 1981). We were able to record up to 107 villages of this kind lying along six of the above rivers (excluding the Gash), each counting between 200 and 2,000 inhabitants. This is in addition to four other small
towns with inhabitants ranging between 10,000 and 30,000 people;\textsuperscript{13} they are distributed as follows:

- along the Blue Nile from Maierno south to Rosseires (see map 3.1): 33 villages of Fulɓe alone and 22 villages of Fulɓe plus others.
- along the River Dinder: 4 villages of Fulɓe alone.
- along the River Rahad: 2 villages of Fulɓe alone and 5 of Fulɓe plus others.
- along the River Atbara-Basalam: 14 villages of Fulɓe alone and 11 of Fulɓe plus others.
- along the River Setit: 12 villages of Fulɓe alone.

This is besides a considerable number of other settlements off the rivers (and along the River Gash), on which we are yet to collect more data.

It is noteworthy that almost all the above villages are surrounded by arable lands, which the elderly people among our informants assured to have found virgin, covered with forests and populated by wild animals. Rendering of these lands habitable during the first decades of this century was a kind of adventure. The end result is the fact that the Fulɓe (and Hausa) living along the above rivers provide the central Sudan markets with their need in fruits, vegetables and fish.

Because of the religio-political sequel of colonialism in West Africa, the \textit{hijra} and post-\textit{hijra} waves of migrations brought Fulɓe from all areas of their concentration in West Africa (present-day Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, etc.), carrying along with them their respective dialects of Fulfulde, with some few others who speak Hausa and Songhay\textsuperscript{14} as mother tongue. One common linguistic factor for almost all these Fulɓe groups (except the Songhay and Hausa speakers) is their retention of their original language, i.e. Fulfulde, which they use along with Arabic — the lingua franca of the Sudan, with various degrees of fluency.

The physical features of the \textit{hijra} and post-\textit{hijra} Fulɓe encompass all possible characteristics of the Fulɓe features in

\textsuperscript{13} From field-research carried out by the author in 1983 and another (together with Dr. C. Miller) in April 1996.

\textsuperscript{14} For more information on the Songhai speakers in the Sudan, see Abu-Manga (1995).
Africa; they range from fine-featured, soft-haired and light-skinned Fulbe to negroid-featured and dark-skinned ones.

It is only among the non-urbanized groups of these Fulbe that traditional social(-moral) values (pulaaku) and some customs and traditions still survive. However, even these hijra Fulbe are nowadays not immune to acculturation through Arabization and Arabicization, especially those with strong links with urban centres.

*The recent Fulbe: the Mbororo*

This is another fully nomadic Fulbe group without a precise native home; they wander over the entire Savannah zone of Bilad al-Sudan. In other words, they do not pay attention to political boundaries, though they tend to respect the administrative regulations of the areas within which they make their seasonal migration.

It is difficult to state an exact date for the Mbororo migrations to the Sudan, but a great number of them came during the 1930s and 1940s from different parts of West Africa. The main reasons for their migration could be attributed to the new system of tax-collection established by the colonial governments there. The anthropologist Stenning (1957) notes that once the Fulbe are annoyed by the amount of taxes or by health control, they arrange an action of retaliation, in the form of organized migration, in order to deprive the district or the state of profits. However, Abu-Sin (1968) finds that it is not the amount of taxes levied which annoys them, but the process of counting the cattle, which they believe may bewitch the cattle and bring their death.

The main Mbororo clans encountered in the Sudan are the Woyla and Wodaabe. They are found in a wide zone between Lat N 8°45' and N 13°10', from the Chadian borders up to the Ethiopian Highlands. This area comprises the southern parts of Darfur and Kordofan, the southern parts of the White Nile and the Blue Nile (former) provinces, as well as the northern parts of Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile (former) provinces. In Blue Nile State they stay in the Khor Yabus area during the dry season. In their movement to the north they go as far as the western edge of the Ingassana hill. But for the last 15 years the civil war in the above area has disturbed their customary movement and obliged them to carry fire-arms for self-defence, instead of their traditional bows and arrows.
Together with these arms, they also rely strongly on the powerful charm for which they are famous, especially the charm of invisibility.

Their important market centres are Nyala, Buram, Talodi, Bung, Kurmuk, Mazmoum and Damazin. Those living in the Blue Nile area pay their taxes through the Sultan of Maiurno (Dan Fodio’s grandson), whom they regard as their spiritual leader.

In some villages like Jirewa (ca. 40 km West of Damazin) the Mbororo have become semi-settled: The men follow the herds and the women stay at home. In fact, some Mbororo sections are undergoing a rapid process of ‘de-mbororization’. This applies especially to the Dagara, who are found in villages such as Abu-Zor, Abu-Hajar, Hamda, Beida and Abu-Ushar (along the Blue Nile north of Rosseires). Inhabitants of these villages have become completely settled, some even not owning a single cow.

Due to their strong resistance to outside influences, the fully nomadic Mbororo in the Sudan still retain, to a large degree, many of the Fulbe cultural aspects, including use of the language. However, they are nowadays picking up more and more Arabic, which they need for inter-group communication.

*The diverse nature of the Fulbe groups in the Sudan*

On the basis of the above accounts and description we may now be in a position to assess and evaluate the diverse nature of the different Sudanese Fulbe groups in our areas of interest as follows:

a) History of migration: continuous waves of migration between the 17th and 20th centuries, with peaks in the 1750s, 1850s and 1910s.

b) Original homes of departure: Fuuta Tooro, Maasina, Malle (including Burkina Faso), present-day Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

c) Physical features: one can encounter Fulbe with:

- relatively light skin and black hair of the Indian type (the Mbororo);
- typical Arab features, i.e. fair complexion, fine facial features and soft black hair (Fulbe of Southern Darfur and the early Fulbe of the Blue Nile);
- fairly dark complexion with soft black hair of the Arab type (the Fulbe Malle of the Blue Nile and eastern Sudan);
- semi-Negroid African complexion with coarse hair and relatively fine facial features (the majority of the Fulɓe of Maiurnu and the related villages);
- dark skin, coarse hair and quasi-Negroid facial features (the Fulɓe of Northern Darfur).

d) Geographical distribution in the Sudan: the entire Savannah belt of western, central and eastern Sudan, from al-Jineina on the western borders up to the Red Sea (Port Sudan), and from Sennar south along the Blue Nile up to the Ethiopian borders.

e) Modes of livelihood:
- full nomadism (the Mbororo);
- pastoralism-transhumance (the Fulɓe of Southern Darfur);
- predominantly farming, with cattle ranging from one to fifty taken to graze in the morning and brought back home in the evening (Maiurno and the related villages);
- farming for marketing, combined with trade (some individual Fulɓe in the eastern Sudan);
- activities of scholarly nature, including involvement in politics and employment in governmental sectors (Northern Darfur and diverse);
- skilled and semi-skilled professions, such as lorry-driving, tailoring, machine repairing, etc. (Fulɓe of the central Sudan in general).

f) Patterns of language use:
- monolingual in Arabic (all the early Fulɓe);
- bilingual in Arabic + Fulfulde;
- bilingual in Arabic + Hausa;
- bilingual in Arabic + Songhay;
- trilingual in Fulfulde + Hausa + Arabic (mostly in Maiurno);
- predominantly monolingual in Fulfulde (with a very poor knowledge of Arabic: the Mbororo).

g) Degree of integration in the general Sudanese Arab community:
- fully integrated, including loss of the original language;
- highly integrated, with Fulfulde used as a second language;
- fairly integrated, with Arabic used as a second language;
- non-integrated, with a very poor knowledge of Arabic.

With such a multiplicity and diversity of characteristics and attributes one wonders whether our study subjects are really one people or a number of different peoples. Yet they all come under
the name ‘Fulɓe’, which may lead to a fundamental question: What is a Pullo? Or what are the basic criteria for defining a Pullo? Are they based on language, physical features or social values? At last, what is common for all the above Sudanese Fulɓe groups?

Peoples’ identities usually rest on a combination of a number of elements: inter alia physical features, language, way of life and social values.

With regard to the Fulɓe physical features, most of the theories advanced on the Fulɓe origin speak of their Caucasoid background. The various marks and grades of Negroid physical elements existing in some of them are considered as ‘innovation’. Similarly, apart from some few cases of language shift (to Barbary, Songhay, Hausa, Kanuri, etc.) they generally speak Fulfulde. Their traditional way of life is identified with two objects, constituting three patterns of socio-economic life:

a) the cow only, i.e. full nomadism (the bush Fulɓe including the Mbororo),
b) the book only, i.e. activities of scholarly, and eventually political nature, (the distinguished groups, which lived along upper Niger, described as ‘state builders’),
c) the cow plus the book; this concerns mainly the founders of the Sokoto Caliphate (the descendants of Usman Dan Fodio); these have also ‘farming’ as an additional activity.

Of course, Fulɓe are not absolutely restricted to the above activities, but at the same time it is important to note that professions such as trading, iron-working and butchering are regarded as unworthy of a true Pullo (cf. Lacroix 1965).

As for social and moral values, those of the traditional Fulɓe revolve primarily round the moral concept of pulaaaku i.e. the Fulɓe code of conduct. The most important attribute of pulaaaku is self-control for avoidance of any crack in one’s dignity; hulgo cementdum woni pulaaaku (fear of shame, that is pulaaaku) (Labatut 1973: 208). There is a plausible Fulfulde proverb which illustrates this idea: nedɗaku d’um nebbam, to rufi d’офатаако (dignity is like oil, once spilt, it cannot be recollected). Pulaaku also entails a high degree of reserve or ‘avoidance relationships’ with some members of the (extended) family; namely: husbands, wives, parents in-law
and first born. This is in addition to the absolutely observed custom of the first child having to be ceremonially delivered in the house of the mother’s parents.

From the above information we realize that the Fulbe have known a certain degree of diversity even before their migration to the Sudan — with only two basic attributes which may be described as unifying factors: social values and, to a large extent, language (if we neglect the dialectal variations).

In the new ecological and social environment in the Sudan, the already existing diversity among the different Fulbe groups became intensified in two ways: (a) decrease of the effect of the unifying factors, i.e. language and social values; and (b) increase in factors of diversity. With regard to language, we have already observed that many of the above Fulbe groups cannot communicate with one another, except in Arabic. Likewise, aspects of the traditional Fulbe social values have almost disappeared among the early and many intermediate Fulbe groups: those of the Southern Darfur, instead, speak of courage, generosity, helpfulness and readiness to defend the tribe; whereas those of the Blue Nile and Kordofan have adopted the riverain Arab social values, based on generosity.

As far as physical features are concerned, the early Fulbe of the Blue Nile and some few families living in urban centres (Khartoum and Medani) have acquired Arab features (and — in some cases — tribal marks) as a result of intermarriage or mere co-existence in the same environment. As for their way of life, farming among the central Sudan Fulbe is expanding on account of cattle rearing — which may be due to unfavourable climatological changes, socio-economic necessities and recurrent outbreaks of animal epidemics (cf. the case of ‘de-mbororization’ among the Dagara Fulbe group). Besides, members of the last few generations (without a significant level of education) have been involved in skilled and semi-skilled activities (lorry-driving, iron-working, tailoring, etc.).

In answer to the last question, i.e. what is common to all these Sudanese Fulbe groups, one can hardly find anything apart from the tribal name Fallata, which they share with all the other ethnic groups originating from West Africa.

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15 Similarly, in traditional Sudanese Arab communities, husbands are not called by their proper names, but the matter does not go beyond that.
Conclusion

We have attempted in this paper to make a general survey of the different Fulɓe groups living in Sudan Republic, with the intention to highlighting the ranges of their diversity in various aspects of their life. We have seen that this diversity has reached a point where we can hardly specify a common factor, on the basis of which one can regard them as one people, except the tribal name Fallata. However, for the social stigma associated with this term (encompassing all West Africans, some of whom are known for mean types of activities such as begging), some of the educated Fulɓe living in urban centres tend even to avoid it, preferring to claim names of Arab clans.

On the other hand, with the increase in official education, links with urban centres, the effect of mass media and involvement in active socio-political life, the process of Arabization and Arabicization among the late (and, to some extent, recent) Fulɓe groups is increasingly taking momentum. Therefore, one wonders for how long the rest of the still partially integrated Sudanese Fulɓe will persist in remaining ‘Fulɓe’.

Finally, I do not claim the present paper to be comprehensive; our study does not include the descendants of individual itinerant or wandering scholars, who have been totally absorbed in the Ja’liyyin and Shaygiyya Arabs of the northern Sudan, nor the Mallo (Malle) Fulɓe clan whose members are on the way to total absorption in the Beja tribe of the eastern Sudan. However, unlike with the latter group, research on the former looks almost impossible.