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journal or publication title	国立民族学博物館研究報告
volume	1
number	1
page range	159-168
year	1976-03-15
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15021/00004664">http://doi.org/10.15021/00004664</a>

## Performers of Fulbe Oral Arts in Diamaré Prefecture

Paul Kazuhisa EGUCHI\*

Like everywhere else in Africa, the Diamaré prefecture is a treasure-house of oral arts or oral literature. I have been doing research in this field in Maroua since 1969. From 1969 to 1972 I concentrated on the collection of Fulbe non-professional literature such as *taali* 'folktales', *ammditanamji* 'riddles', *balndi* 'proverbs' etc. From 1974 to 1975 when I joined the research project directed by Professor Shun'ya Hino of the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, I settled in Maroua and tried to collect texts and recorded tapes of professional entertainers.

I had a chance to made an intensive study of a wellknown entertainer called *Abba Ulakdi* or *Kaygamma Laanyel*. The result is to be published in a monograph.

During my stay in this small town of approximately 50,000 inhabitants, I collected information on the professional entertainers consisting of gossip about them, evaluations of their skills, etc. from the townspeople. I believe this type of information may be valuable in the future research.

Knowing that I could not find the names of all professional entertainers, I limited myself to those who have made themselves wellknown to the Maroua people through radio broadcasting and frequent visit to that town.

Some professional performers were traditionally supported by local chiefs such as *laamdo*, *lawan* etc. Now supporters vary from rich merchants, and government officials who can afford to call them to their own homes to the masses who come to the market on market days.

I will not attempt here to classify the genres of oral literature nor give a detailed explanation of all the entertainments. For convenience I shall divide them into two parts: performances accompanying musical instruments and complete oral performances.

### I. PERFORMANCES ACCOMPANYING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

These performances are named after the instruments used, as follows:

<i>algayta</i>	oboe
<i>baylaaji</i>	a kind of tamtam used when men and women dance in

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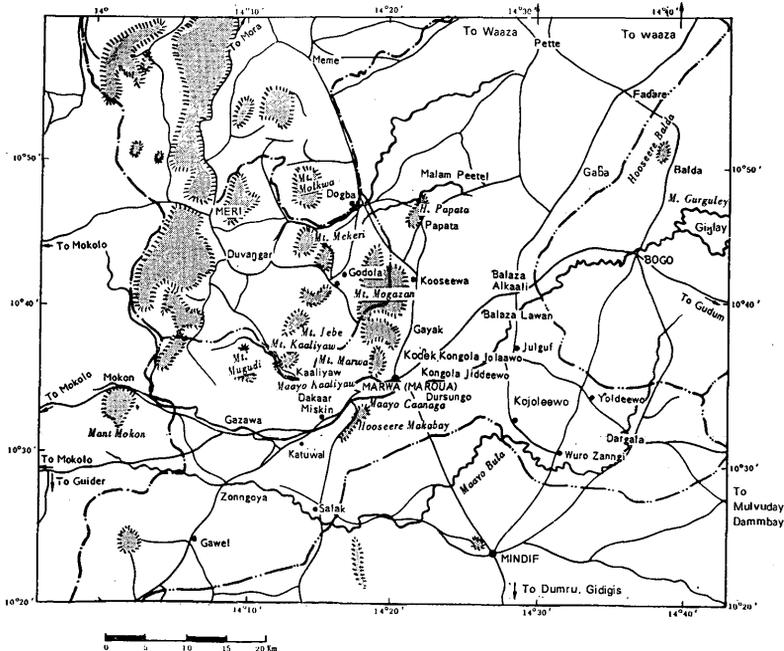
	the traditional manner
<i>ciidal</i>	a kind of flute
<i>dummbu</i>	a large calabash
<i>garayya</i>	two-stringed lute
<i>jawjawru</i>	drum shaped like an hour glass
<i>moolooru</i>	small guitar
<i>renngerannge</i>	?
<i>wommbere</i>	instrument made of <i>yommbal</i> 'cornstalk'.

The players of *baylaaji* can be found only in *Biseele*, Dumru.  
 A *ciidal* player called *Njidda Burji* is originally of Mandara origin.  
 The *Duudaandu* quartier is famous for musicians such as *algayta*, *ciidal*, and *wommbere* players.

MAROUA AND PART OF DIAMARE PREFECTURE

The place names shown on the map are very popular among the people of Maroua. Most of them are places where *laami* 'chiefs' live. This map was based on those produced by Institut Géographique National, Paris, although the author did not follow the transcription adopted in them. The transcription was based as possible on the actual pronunciation.

- Roads or tracks which are motorable. It depends, however, on the seasonal conditions.
- - - Divisional boundary.
- - - Sub-divisional boundary.
- ~~~~~ Maayo or river formed during the rainy season.
- ⊙ Mountain.



The most popular *Dummba* player is Mal Aaji Gidigis, famous for his expressions such as,

*Yiide juunnde ba laawol, luggunde ba woyndu.*

'Love as long as a road, and as deep as a dyeing pit'

He plays the calabash and sings a *dummba* song. He is working for *Laamd'o Saadu*.

## II. COMPLETELY ORAL PERFORMANCES

### 1. *Busraa'u*

*Busraa'u* is interpreted by the Fulbe as *seynoore* 'poem to please'. In fact it derives from an Arabic root *بشّر*: *bšr* which means 'to rejoice, be delighted; II to announce (as good news), to propagate, preach'.

In the Sudan area the Arabic script was adopted a long time ago, and adapted for the writing religious poems, letters, and other literary works in their native tongues. The Eastern Fulbe have such a tradition. Especially after the *jihad* or Holy War which was started in 1804 by *Usmaanu bii Fooduye*, they made innumerable religious poems using this script, called *ajamiiya*, for disseminating Islam to the non-Fulbe and educating the less educated Fulbe public.

*Busraa'u* refers to these religious poems which originally had written texts, but are actually memorized by women who are, in most cases, called *mallum* 'teacher'. Perhaps the *busraa'u* may have been transmitted orally since some women who have no chance to go to Qur'anic school memorize these poems.

*Busraa'u* is sung on the occasion of religious meeting taking place on the fortieth night after the funeral rite called *capbande-nayiire*, on the tenth night of the first Moslem month (*Haaram*), and on the twenty-seventh of the fasting month (*Ramabaana*).

The wellknown *Busraa'u* singers are *Ubbo Daneejo* said to live near Misinglew in Maroua, and originally born in 'Bogo; *Daada Aysa* called *Aminatu Henndu* 'Aminatu with wind' living near Pongre, Maroua, and *Mal Mamma* living in Katuwal.

I looked for the chance to record their poems, but the chance did not come until I heard a singer called *Mal Ummahaani* who sells sour milk in the market of Maroua, and whose singing ability few people know. She was living in *Dursungo*, Maroua. I asked for the permission to join the session. She let me listen to her songs, but did not permit me to record them. It was on the thirteenth of October, 1974, or the twenty-seventh night of the fasting month. My field notes describe the meeting as follows:

Most of the participants are middle-aged or old women. The singer called *Ummahaani* is sitting on a mortar, according to their traditional custom. During the session she sometimes hid her face with a scarf. She often put right hand to her ear. She stretched her hand to shake hands with each of the participants. Some of them gave some money to the singer. As the '*Id al-fitr*' was approaching, the singer sometimes put her hand into a henna calabash. When they were exited they stood up and danced, holding each other's hands, waving their bodies to the right and to the left.

While the woman teacher or *mallum* was singing, the participants threw some words of encouragement, appreciation and gratitude, as *Use Mbuula am* 'Thank you, my *Mbuula*', *Use mallum* 'Thank you, teacher', etc.

The repertory covered many kinds of verses. She would sing all that she knew until the dawn. Today's *Busraa'u* poems include various topics in the Islam religion, e.g. pilgrimage to Makkah, morals of the Moslems, need for repentance, etc. These poems contained many Western Fulfulde words as *faa*, *fuka*, *beege* etc. A lady started singing a song accompanied by *zanttuuru* 'a long calabash musical instrument' saying that it was a *busraa'u* song. *Ummahaani* the *busraa'u* singer immediately interrupted it.

As well as other Fulbe families, in the compound in which *busraa'u* took place, there were several cows lying by them, perhaps listening to the holy songs. It gave a genuine Fulbe atmosphere.

There were a few informants who said that as well as *busraa'u* there were singers of *daayya* which were sung at night by only men. The singers used to live in *Dow Maayo*, Maroua.

## 2. *Daacol*

*Daacol* 'herdsmen's song' is sung by cattle keepers during their pasturage, or when they stay with big patrons in return for housing, food, clothing, etc. They sing about places to graze cattle, where lions are, rivers, hills, and their patrons.

Until recently *daacol* was not wellknown by the city dwellers, but thanks to the development of mass communication, it is broadcast by the Radio Garoua. Thus, two of these *daacoobe* 'those who sing the *daacol* songs' are relatively famous among the Marouans. They are *Buuba Gerdele* from Ginlay and *Sa'iidu Borno* from Bogo.

Besides these two, there are less known *daacoobe* by the Marouans, but wellknown among the herdsmen, for they meet each other when they graze cattle in the bush. These *daacoobe* are *Delege*, *Bappa Banki Buuba*, and *Buuba Ilam Jemma*.

These songs contain many proper names and cattle breeders' slang. It is very difficult to understand the complete meaning. The place names cover Cameroun, Chad, and Central Africa.

The singers obtain money, clothes, cows, and so forth as their reward. Notwithstanding the reward, they never stop using abusive expressions (*kuudi*). They try to be free from anyone. Once it happened that *Buuba Gerdele* obtained ten cows for his performance from a rich man, whom he then criticized. When the rich man asked him to give him back the cows, he refused. Now it is a famous story among the Marouans.

*Buuba Gerdele's* speciality is the simple *daacol*, but he entertains people also with *Busraa'u Degol* 'praise songs for De Gaule', *Balacci*, or *Ngewtaaji Jalniidi* 'stories which make people laugh' learned from his friends such as *Alhaji Wommetaako*, *Abba Ulakdi* etc.

### 3. *Gime pulfule*

*Gime pulfule* have written texts in *ajamiya* script as mentioned above. Unlike *busraa'u*, *gime pulfule* are performed by both sexes. Sometimes the singer himself composes a poem. Sometimes he is just a transcriber. Sometimes he just learns it by heart, as is the case of most of blind singers.

*Gime pulfule* may in short be described as religious poems, or poems with a religious sense. Most of them start with *bismillaahi* 'in the name of Allah'. The difference between the Marouan poems and those by singers outside Maroua, such as *Buuba Jariida* from *Figil*, *Moodi Iyaawa* from *Tibati*, *Bello dow Keerol* from *Meiganga*, lies in their popularity. The Maroua poems have never been broadcast on the air.

The most famous singer is *Mal Buuba Mulvuday* living in *Fattude Sarfanjeere*, Maroua. He used to sing in the Big Mosque in Maroua, but the mosque authorities did not like it, for people paid more attention to this singer than to the preacher. His famous song is *Kammu* 'Sky'.

Following the advice of Mr. Eldridge Mohammadou of ONAREST (Office National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique/National Office for Scientific and Technical Research) I visited *Buuba Jagalay* in *Miskin* and recorded a few songs including *Babatti* 'Grasshoppers', *Rewbe Fulbe* 'Fulbe women' etc.

### 4. *Ngewtaaji jaliniidi*

There are innumerable story-tellers. In many cases they are called *wammbaabe* 'those who entertain', but some *wammbaabe* do not like this expression, saying *wammb-* has the sense of 'to entertain people for reward'. A remarkable story teller called *Abba Ulakdi*, with whom I worked intensively for three months, says *wammbaabe* means 'those who are entertained' and if we used *Fulfulde* correctly, *wammbaabe* is the correct word for 'those who entertain'. In general, however,

*wammbaabe* pl., and *bammbaado* sg. are in common use.

Some people, including *Abba Ulakdi*, prefer to use the expression *toroowo* (<*tor-* 'to pray for, ask for') 'one who asks for, or prays for' instead of *bammbaado*.

Etymologically *ngewtaaji* means any piece of discourse which breaks the solitude. *Gewdum* means 'lonely'. Thus the neutral expression for a *bammbaado* is *gewtoowo*.

*Gewtoowo* are sometimes accompanied by *leeloobe* 'those who help him with jokes etc.'

The stories are usually based on the traditional non-professional oral literature, and organized by the tellers with a partial modification.

The most famous story teller is *Maamudu Wafdu*. He is a son of *Moodi Pullo*. He wandered around the Diamaré prefecture and mastered his arts of eloquence. He has been a good friend of *Abba Ulakdi* for a few decades. Since he experienced a herdsman's life, he knows a huge amount of vocabulary absorbed from the herdsmen. The same thing can be said of *Abba Ulakdi*. We had better distinguish *Maamudu Wafdu* and *Abba Ulakdi* from storytellers such as *Baaba Zanndu*, *Teyla Mulvuday*, and *Laanyel Pamaro*, as the latter three are basically cultivators.

*Baaba Zanndu* is wellknown recently for his stories called *kistaaji* after they were broadcast by *Sawtu Linjiila* broadcasting station in Ngaoundéré. As the name *Sawtu Linjiila* 'Voice of the Gospels' suggests, this is a missionary organization. *Baaba Zanndu* hails from Kodék, where there is a missionary station. He started his career as a *maaba* entertainer. Soon foreign missionaries employed him as a Fulfulde teacher. He helped them for about twenty years. He says he tried very hard to explain Fulfulde to them in easy words, clearly. I think his Fulfulde is the most intelligible to anyone, including foreigners and non-Fulbe who use Fulfulde as a regional language of the North. Besides his clear pronunciation, he is popular for his rich collection of stories. His stories were collected during his wanderings in Cameroun and Nigeria. He is known as *Mbodeeri sulmo rongino* 'red man who washes his face and squats with the knees up, a nickname given him by his neighbours.

*Teyla Mulvuday* was born in Maroua to a Guisiga family, says he. His other name is *Omaru Teyla*. As his name *Teyla* 'tailor' implies, his profession is sewing large traditional clothes called *dawrawol*. He learned sewing *Yoola* in Nigeria for three years. He spent fifteen years in Mulvuday and eighteen years in Maroua. In Mulvuday he worked for the chief of Mindif.

The youngest story-teller is *Laanyel Pamaro* 'small *Laanyel* which corresponds to *Laanyel Mamnga* 'big *Laanyel*' one of *Abba Ulakdi*'s nicknames. Now the people of Maroua think that *laanyel* (<*laanya* 'to drive, manipulate') means 'eloquent entertainer', for an entertainer manipulates words. But *Abba Ulakdi* explained the origin of this word. When he was learning the Fulfulde expressions, he himself spend a large amount money on entertainment sessions and manipulated the sessions with his requests.

*Laanyel Pamaro* is said to have learned from the following people: the late *Baa Gonnje Julguf*, *Iisa* in Budugum, and *Buuba Saabaana* in Pitwa Miskin, who stole *Abba Ulakdi*'s stories. Despite his age (about thirty), his voice was broadcast seven years ago from Garoua. He is wellknown among young and old alike.

An entertainer living in Mogom is famous among young people. He is called *Yamnde Mal-Yommbé Taaniraawo Njigaari Taaniraawo Settewu*.

These entertainers leave their interesting expressions to the people when they finish their life. Through these expressions they are remembered for a long time even after death. For example, there was an entertainer called *Alhaji Wonnataako* or *Wonnataako bii Layla*, who left a famous expression:

*Marwa wi'i: "Taa mara ngara, sey mbaawa ngara!"*

'People of Maroua say: "Don't come with wealth. Come only with skill!"'

Besides these *yewtoobe*, people say that there are entertainers called *maaba*. According to Taylor's Dictionary, *maaba* signifies 'vocalist as distinct from a *bammbaado*'. I however do not know the distinction between *maaba* and *bammbaado*, since the word *bammbaado* is employed for both vocalists and instrumentalists. This is probably related to the Hawsa word *ma'aba* 'beggar who recites panegyrics but no drum', the Pulaar word *maabo* 'qui est de la caste des tisserands', and the *maabo* 'tisserand et chanteur' in the book *Silâmaka et Poullôri* by Christiane Seydou. The *maaba* entertainers are not very much popular in Maroua. The live *maaba* are: *Gaadal Kalaki* who has a reputation that he never lies, *Abdu Daro* who can also play *dummbô* and *wommbere*, *Ngonna Baayo* in Miskin, and *Buuba Yaaro* in Maroua.

The deceased *maaba* still remembered are: *Maaba Gonozo*, *Bakari Maaba* in Bindir, *Maaba Saali Wulnde* and *Kayse Hoore Yeegal*.

It is said that the *maaba* just talks with his mouth. His speciality is enumerating eminent personalities.

##### 5. *Mbooku*

*Mbooku*, or poem sung by *mboo* singers, is loved by the Fulbe traditionalists.

Like *daacol* 'herdsman's song', *mbooku* originated with the herdsmen. It is said that the *mboo* people started singing these poems when they brought the cattle to graze in the *yayre* or *yaéré* during the dry season. The *yayre* is a place that can supply them with water even in the dry season. They probably started singing the poems for amesement in the cattle camp.

The *mboo* singers consists of one *limtoowo* or main singer, and several *jabantoo* or assistant singers. They perform the *mbooku* standing, and waving their heads to the right and left. This reminds us of the similarity between the *mboo* singers and the Mbororo singers.

The *mboo* singers used to have the patronage of chiefs and rich men. Now they sometimes go out to earn money from the wealthy Fulbe ivory dealers and so forth in Central Africa. Since their voice has been broadcast very often, they became too famous to sing among the poor. Their charge is considerably high.

They are, however, gradually getting old. Due to the lack of successors, the *mbooku* might disappear from the Diamaré prefecture within several decades. There is an urgent need to protect them with an appropriate cultural policy.

The complete study of the *mbooku* poems is being carried out as a joint project by Mr. Eldridge Mohammadou, and myself. For years he has been collecting them, and has transcribed some of them. Although he wants to check the errors and the meanings of some words which are very authentic and difficult for townfolks to understand, he did not have that chance, for he has been concentrating on the study of history. Since 1969, I have been specializing in the Fulbe oral literature, and collected some *mbooku* poems. As he knew my field of interest, he proposed the joint research. He gave me all his typed manuscripts to check in Maroua: The following are the names of the poems we are studying:

<i>Beeda</i>	'a story of an old ewe'
<i>Baaba Laamu</i>	'a chief's father'
<i>Daakaaje</i>	'paramours'
<i>Hayaatu Balda</i>	'Hayaatu from Balda'
<i>Jammbaago</i>	'there is no peace'
<i>Kuluyel Maayo</i>	'small red bird in the river'
<i>Marwa</i>	'Maroua'
<i>Weelo</i>	'Hunger'
<i>Zamanu wonni</i>	'the present age is spoiled'
<i>Zigila</i>	'famous Musgum thief called Zigila'

The most famous *mboo* singer is probably *Ardo Aakal* who now living in *Fattude Marwaare*, since he was originally from Maroua. During the rainy season

he often goes to Bangui for performances with his assistants.

A singer called *Ali Kura* is said to have become the head of the *Kalaawo* quartier three kilometers from 'Bogo. No one knows whether he is still considered a *mboo* singer or not, for some people think that being a head of quartier is a high ranking job, and such a person should not go out singing for a penny. It seems to me that there is a possibility of discovering numerous minor *mboo* singers in the province of Diamaré.

Finally I would like to present a list of performers of Fulbe oral arts.

LOCATION	PERFORMANCE	GENRE
'Balaza	Usmaana Wommbere	Wommbere
'Bogo	Njidda Burji	Ciidal
	Siddi Danki	
	Sa'iidu Borno	Daacol
	Moodibbo Maamudu Naa'ibi	Gime pulfule
	Ali Kura	Mbooku
	Ardó Aakal	
	Duudaandu	Wommbere
	Kulo Wommbere	
Dammbay	Ardó Mbala	Mbooku
Dargala	Ardó Basiiru	Mbooku
	Ardó Doolum	
Dumru	Fiyooŕe Baylaaji Tato	Baylaaji
	Bukar Dummo	Dummo
	Buuba Dummo	
	Sammo Moolooru	Moolooru
Gaba	Gudoy 'Balaza	Renngerenge
Gazawa	Maalum Gazawa	Wommbere
Gidigis	Yuusufa	Algayta
	Mal-Aaji Gidigis	Dummo
Ginlay	Buuba Gerdele	Daacol
Katuwal	Mal-Mamma	Busraa'u
Kodek	Waabi Garayya	Garayya
	Baaba Zanndu	Ngewtaaji
Kojoleewo	Ardó Bello	Mbooku
	Ardó Garga	
Kooseewa	Moodibbo Buuba	Gime Pulfule
Malam Peetel	Pudfitto	Ciidal
Marwa	Daada Aysa her Pongre	Busraa'u
	Ubbo Daneejo her Judaandu	

Marwa	Soore Dumbo her Loopeere Abba Ulakdi Asta Jumba her Barmaare Laanyel Pamaro Teyla Mulvuday Bap Faalama her Barmaare Mal Buuba Goni Iisa her Fattude Jawro Babba Ali Jawjawru her Fattude Buusawre Jaalige Maywa her Loopeere	Dumbo Ngewtaaji  Gime pulfulé  Jawjawru Moolooru
Meeme	Saali Siisi Meeme	Dumbo
Mindif	Mal Saali Juulirde	Gime pulfulé
Miskin	May Madiwele Mal Buuba Jagalay Ardo Jonka	Algayta Gime pulfulé Moolooru
Pette, Caka Maaje	Maamudu Wafdu	Ngewtaaji
Tankiru	Sambo Tankiiru	Mbooku
Tankiiru, Gada Maayo	Ardo Awdi	Mbooku
Yoldeewo	Osmaanu Abba Mbonna har Tapayel	Mbooku